

Declaration on the Preservation and Adaptation of the Castles and Manors Heritage in the Baltic States

The Estonian Manor Association, the Latvian Association of Castles and Manors, and the Lithuanian Association of Castles and Manors,

hereinafter referred to as the “Associations”,

representing more than 200 members - historical castles and manors in all the three Baltic States owned by public and private bodies with common objective to revive and maintain castles and manors as substantial part of our cultural and historical heritage,

recognizing similarity of problems and challenges the Baltic States and Associations are facing in the fast changing, variable and unpredictable world, and especially in the sphere of cultural heritage,

stressing the importance of culture and tourism and their synergy as an economic factor, as well as need for cross-sector networks between cultural heritage and tourism stakeholders for developing joint and clear interdisciplinary policies and strategies for a diverse, sustainable and prosperous cultural tourism,

noting The Memorandum of Understanding among the Estonian Manor Association, the Latvian Association of Castles and Manors, and the Lithuanian Association of Castles and Manors on Cooperation in the Preservation of Cultural and Historical Heritage signed at Mezotne palace, Latvia on the 27th of May, 2014,

recalling the respective national policies, all respective bilateral and/or trilateral agreements signed among the Baltic States, the Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Council conclusions of the 21st of May, 2014 on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe, as well as respective international conventions, recommendations, charters, declarations, resolutions, etc.,

Calls on the parliaments and governments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania, state and municipal authorities, within their respective spheres of competence, to:

1. recognize the value of well-preserved and diverse castles and manors heritage as substantial part of cultural heritage and important asset not only for the Baltic States, their national identity and prosperous cultural tourism, but also for the whole Europe and to use its potential for growth and society wellbeing of the entire region;
2. enhance dialogue with the Associations within the respective policy planning and their implementation, and legislative processes, as well as the cultural heritage co-operation both in the Baltic States and the Baltic Sea Region States;
3. pay equal attention to all historic castles and manors regardless of their ownership;
4. have complex approach to proper protection, conservation, restoration, reconstruction, revitalization, interpretation, adaptation and management not only of castles and manor-houses themselves, but also all other surrounding components forming united complex and its economic life, including auxiliary buildings, parks and gardens, greenery, crafts, etc., and adequate funding;
5. foster traditional crafts, knowledge and skills that are necessary to the safeguarding, maintenance, adaptation, sustainable management and development of castles and manors heritage to ensure the permanent protection;
6. exploit synergies of the heritage, tourism and information and communications technologies for the cross-sector innovations and digitization of the cultural heritage;
7. avoid the use of resources allocated from the European Union and state funds to be targeted on fast results and low costs thus limiting the possibility to use traditional materials and methods of the highest quality as well as reducing time allotted for restoration and reconstruction;

8. develop and implement the favourable taxation and state aid base that takes into account specific nature of the historic and cultural relevance of the estate complex as well as resources invested in its restoration and preservation;
9. set as the priority and accordingly to target all available EU structural and investment funds, and national financial instruments for the complex research, conservation, preservation, restoration, adaptation and management, as well as for the easier access and public use of historic castles and manors within the EU operational programmes 2014–2020;
10. facilitate the use of different financial instruments in the future and liken an investment in heritage management to an investment in the quality of life and vitality of the Baltic States region;
11. allocate adequate resources to reach new standards set by fast developing technologies, increasing requirements of quality and services to be in line with European and global level of competence;
12. give priority for and facilitate the development and implementation of artistic, cultural, educational and economic activities in the historic castles and manors - the traditional centres of regional and local communities;
13. develop a joint approach by public and private stakeholders of transport and tourism industries in order to improve awareness, accessibility, visibility and attractiveness of rural areas and smaller destinations particularly in period of geopolitical and economic constrains and population decline;
14. support cultural tourism development projects with a cross-border, interregional and transnational perspective in order to facilitate the development of cost-effective, relevant and sustainable solutions for the Baltic States and the Baltic Sea Region thus avoiding fragmentation;
15. facilitate implementation of the Baltic Route of Historic Parks and Gardens, creation of the Baltic Castles and Manors Network and the Baltic Castles and Manors Route and extension of it as a trans-European tourism route - Castles and Manors Route of the Council of Europe - in a long run.

Associations are convinced that the heritage attracts and connects, acts as an identifier and symbol, and has an important function for growth. Globally changing world and socioeconomically oriented functions of the heritage brings the prospect of new forms of cooperation and management, which in turn lead to new development opportunities. This puts the heritage at the centre of strategies and their implementation to address.

In view of the above Associations request to establish the working group(s) from the representatives of relevant state and municipal authorities as well as members of Associations to address jointly issues of concern regarding sustainable management and development of cultural heritage, and attach particular importance to castles and manors.

Signed at Vecgulfbene manor, Latvia on the 13th of March, 2015 in triplicate in the English language.

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