COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

of 20 December 1974

to Members States concerning the protection of the architectural and natural heritage

(75/65/EEC)

1. Chapter 3 entitled 'Urban development and improvement of amenities' of the second part of Title II of the Programme of Action of the European Communities on the Environment, approved by the Council on 22 November 1973 [1], provides for a number of studies on environmental problems closely associated with urban and regional development. All of these studies include the examination of the various aspects of preserving the Community's architectural and natural heritage.

   Furthermore, in its resolution of 13 May 1974 [2] on the protection of Europe's cultural heritage, the European Parliament recommended a considerable stepping-up of efforts to preserve this heritage.

   The work already carried out within the framework of the abovementioned studies shows that the architectural and natural heritage which reflects Europe's cultural identity is now seriously threatened with decay and disappearance and urgent measures are needed. This finding applies equally to the urban and rural environment.

2. In recent years, two important steps have been taken to cope with the problem of the decay and the rapid disappearance of the architectural and natural heritage, namely :

   — the convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted in November 1972 by UNESCO, and the

   — 'European Architectural Heritage Year'.

   Since the architectural and natural heritage is generally felt to be a determining factor in the quality of life, both these initiatives are of major importance for the protection and improvement of the environment in the Community.

3. The UNESCO convention calls upon acceding States to draw up national inventories of immoveable property forming part of the world cultural and natural heritage. It also requires that the acceding States should undertake to ensure appropriate protection for the property thus selected. The convention also provides for the setting up of a fund to assist countries not possessing sufficient resources to provide adequate protection for certain property acknowledged to be of universal value. The fund will also contribute to the training of specialists in this field. Apart from its direct value for the preservation of the fixed architectural and natural heritage, this convention is also of distinct importance as regards the protection of numerous species of wild flora and fauna existing in the protected areas. If the Member States could accede to this convention at an early date, this would also provide a very substantial support for the activities undertaken in connection with 'European Architectural Heritage Year'.

4. 'European Architectural Heritage Year' 1975 is an initiative stemming from the Council of Europe. It is to take the form of a campaign spread over three years and is designed to highlight the architectural heritage as a factor determining the quality of life, as well as improving the preservation of this heritage. The campaign is aimed at the public authorities of all levels, the professional interests concerned and the general public and is to culminate in 1975, which is to be styled 'European Architectural Heritage Year'. It is intended to mark the beginning of a vast movement for the preservation and restoration of this heritage. This campaign, which the European Parliament has already welcomed in its resolution of 13 May 1974 on the protection of Europe's cultural heritage, is to consist in two main types of action, namely :

   — pilot projects for restoration and renovation of numerous decaying buildings and sites in the participating countries ;

   — creating public awareness and the general desire to preserve and restore the architectural heritage, which is a necessary condition for the implementation of a policy in this field at all levels of public administration.

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[1] OJ No C 112, 20. 12. 1973, p. 1.
[2] OJ No C 62, 30. 5. 1974, p. 5.

Since the start of the campaign, several European countries which are not members of the Council of Europe have joined in its activities and news of similar movements is starting to come in from other continents.

5. In view of the interests at stake and of the urgency of the problems involved, and having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, the Commission recommends that Member States :

— sign or ratify, provided they have not already done so, and if possible before the end of 1975, the convention on the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage, adopted by UNESCO in November 1972 ;

— actively support the actions taken in execution of the initiatives of the Council of Europe in connection with the 'European Architectural Heritage Year, 1975'.

Done at Brussels, 20 December 1974.

For the Commission

The President

François-Xavier ORTOLI