

**CHARTER
OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF CULTURE OF
SOUTH EAST EUROPE (SEE)**

Preamble

We, the Ministers of Culture of South East Europe,

Considering South East Europe as one of the rare regions in the world in which there is a natural and impressive blend of ancient cultures and civilisations and the highest values in material and non-material cultural heritage, together with inter-faith co-habitation;

Having regard to the fundamental changes that have taken place in the political and ideological spheres within our region.

Recognising that regional and international developments and processes of integration in various areas have created new possibilities for the countries of our region to increase their mutual co-operation and co-ordination;

Recalling the commitment of the countries of the region to work together on cultural policies within the framework of European integration and co-operation;

Realising that it is high time for us, in the context of preserving and promoting cultural diversity of the region, to create coherent well-structured opportunities for co-operation in the field of culture;

Acknowledging that cultural diversity and the exchange of cultural experiences constitute an indispensable element of societies organised and functioning on the basis of the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

Considering that diversity and identity are consolidated and respected most when we come closer to one another, co-operate, exchange information and try to create an all-embracing cultural arena where everyone can find his natural place.

Recognising that sharing cultural values, exchanging experiences and patrimony constitutes a unique instrument for maintaining peace, prosperity and harmony in the region;

Affirming that our cultural heritage and patrimony is part of European culture and an added value to the principles uniting the peoples of Europe;

Aware that cultural policies and programmes could be better conceived, adopted and implemented at cross-border level, through common efforts, strategies and mechanisms;

Are resolved to establish through the present Charter a Council of Ministers of Culture for the South East Europe (hereinafter referred to as: Council), the aim of which is to create a forum for cultural freedom and exchange in the South East Europe and, for the first time, to place co-operation in the field of culture at higher political and decision-making levels in our region.

Chapter I – Objectives

Article 1

The objectives of the Council are:

- (1) to promote a prevailing spirit of dialogue, peace, understanding, integration and comprehensive cultural policies in the South East Europe;
- (2) to put together efforts towards exploring and using the potential of culture for the purposes of sustainable development in the region;
- (3) to create a new forum for dialogue and interaction between the Ministers of Culture and other government and non-government structures to construct joint cultural strategies, opportunities and projects, and to exchange information and experiences.

Article 2

The above objectives will be pursued through:

- (1) undertaking joint cultural projects, thus assisting in bringing closer the cultures of South Eastern European countries and in encouraging co-habitation and peace among them by respecting diversity;
- (2) promoting and supporting, by political, legislative and administrative structures, the co-operation and co-ordination of independent, cultural organisations and institutions in the South East Europe;
- (3) increasing the participation of civil society in cultural life, with the aim of creating areas for new experiences in the field of culture;
- (4) promoting European inter-border, inter-regional and even broader co-operation among the participating states;

(5) promoting exchanges and studies to contribute to improvement and harmonisation in the area of cultural legislation among the Council member countries;

(6) promoting and conceiving projects and programmes for research and surveys in the social-cultural area, with the aim of assisting in the exchange and improvement of cultural information at regional level;

(7) creating regional management strategies for cultural needs to be defined and put into action, thus assuring the integration of cultural activities into contemporary economic and social goals, including cultural tourism;

(8) creating joint programmes to facilitate mobility for artists and cultural professionals, as well as the exchange of cultural artefacts and art works in the region;

(9) undertaking programmes with a view to improving cultural education for the younger generation of artists and cultural professionals in the region;

(10) co-operating in the field of copyright protection, with a view to improving compliance with applicable international conventions;

(11) undertaking common efforts to ensure the effective application and implementation of bilateral and multilateral international treaties in the field of culture, as agreed by the South East European countries;

(12) employing the potential of the existing programmes of the Council of Europe, UNESCO, EU and other non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations, in order to achieve synergy between the different international initiatives to the advantage of the South East Europe;

(13) assisting the non-EU countries to accelerate the process of integration into the European Union, through genuine cultural policies, strategies and actions in respect of values established by the E.U.

Chapter II – Membership

Article 3

The Council is set up on the basis of political will and the joint initiative of the member countries. Membership of the Council is open to all South East European countries accepting the objectives and principles of this Charter by signing it.

Article 4

Ministers of Culture of all the countries of South East Europe can be members of the Council.

Article 5

Applications for membership are to be addressed to the President of the Council and will be presented for approval at the first meeting of the Council.

Article 6

The Council is open to the participation of other countries at the level of observer. The status of observer confers the right to participate in meetings, discussions, and debates, but not in the deliberation process, nor in the rotation system of the presidency.

Chapter III – Organisation and functioning

Article 7

The Council is composed of the Ministers of Culture of the South East European countries.

Article 8

The Council meets at least once a year under the chair of the Minister of Culture of the country holding the Presidency. Additional meetings may be hosted at special events by other member Ministers.

The Presidency of the Council rotates on an annual basis. The order of rotation is determined by the alphabetical order of the member countries, as it is recognized by U.N.).

Article 9

Under the auspices of the Presidency are prepared the agenda of the annual meeting, the draft of the conclusions to be adopted by the meeting and the common project proposals to be agreed upon by the Ministers of Culture.

Article 10

The decision-making process on joint projects and policies and the conclusions of the Council meetings will be realised by the member countries through consensus among the participants.

Article 11

The Council meetings aim to exchange experiences, organising dialogue and debate on matters of common interest, besides finalising, deciding and building up areas for joint cultural priorities in their agenda of collaboration, based on the principles agreed in this Charter.

The Council agrees to update and revise its policies, strategies and projects in conformity with the cultural priorities of the South East Europe.

Article 12

Each Minister, as a member of the Council, assigns the highest level official under his/her authority as a contact person for the Council.

Article 13

The officials assigned from each Minister of Culture will form the Committee of officials whose tasks are:

- a) establishing a network for assuring continuity and the smooth functioning of joint cultural platforms and strategies in the field of culture;
- b) implementing and realising the undertakings and projects agreed by the Council.

Article 14

With the aim of organising, proposing projects and preparing the meetings of the Ministers of Culture, the Committee of Officials will meet at least once a year.

Article 15

Three representatives from the Committee of Officials (drawn from the former, current and future chair states respectively) will serve as a Secretariat and carry out the preparatory work for the meeting of the Committee of Officials.

Article 16

All activities organised by the Council or enjoying its support will make clear reference to the Council and the South East European countries in any publicity or promotional material.

Chapter IV - Final Provisions

Article 17

The present Charter enters into force for each country upon the signature of each Minister of Culture, provided that a minimum of five signatures are obtained.

Article 18

For countries acceding in future, the Charter will enter into force on the date of the notification of their signatures to all the other parties.

In witness whereof the undersigned, have signed the present Charter.

Done in Copenhagen 31st of March 2005, in English language, in a single copy which shall remain deposited in the archives of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Albania. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Albania shall transmit certified copies to each of the signatory and acceding governments.

Blendi Klosi
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports

Bozo Biskupic
Minister of Culture

Monica Octavia Musca
Minister of Culture and
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Dragan Kojadinovic
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Vesna Kilibarda
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Borislav Abadieiev
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