

FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE, FOR A PROFESSION WHICH IS NECESSARY

Cultural Heritage is the set of expressions, tangible and intangible, through which human creativity shows its culture. Its loss and deterioration are irreplaceable: we lose our past and our memory and an inspiration for innovation and cultural production. As if this were not enough, it also minimizes the economic and social potential of Cultural Heritage.

We agree that the richness of the legacy of Spanish State's Cultural Heritage has meant a great contribution to Universal Culture. This potential must be legitimated by society, which will establish what needs to be preserved: interventions in Cultural Heritage need to be based in the recognition of its value by the entire society and in the assumption of the necessity to protect society's Heritage. We need a society worried about its past and aware of its active role in Heritage defense.

In this context, and according to E.C.C.O (European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations): the basic role of a Conservator/Restorer is Cultural Heritage preservation in benefit of present and future generations. Conservator/Restorer profession contributes to the perception, appreciation and comprehension of the context, the importance and the physical properties of Cultural Heritage. This definition was ratified in the 2015 Berlin Declaration by the 22 countries that form E.C.C.O. It was also ratified by the Nájera Declaration, which united under a common framework all the educational centers and all the associations that defend the qualified Conservator/Restorer's profession.

In order to achieve this social mandate, the Conservator/Restorer's profession must reach a recognition similar to that of Cultural Heritage. This condition doesn't seem to be achieved, producing not only unbearable working conditions, but also unwanted actions and, above all, omissions in the imperative task of protecting Cultural Heritage.

Those of us who have studied Conservation/Restoration during, at least, four years in Universities and Higher School of Cultural Assets Restoration and Conservation, have the obligation to follow a very strict ethical code and to understand the deterioration processes in order to respond with actions that guarantee the durability of Cultural Heritage. This training that we have received has an international recognition which prepares us to exercise our profession. But, in the meantime, we can watch the growth of

irregular training proposals that seem to legitimate the execution of highly specialized interventions to people without the required official training.

We must apply high quality standards, and this makes necessary a regulation of the access to job vacancies and projects as demanding as the training received. However, we do not find these conditions in the real labor market: the ground rules are not defined and the investments in Cultural Heritage are in constant decrease. Some laws, such as the Public Procurement Law, make hinders the access to job opportunities and facilitate job insecurity.

If this situation continues, there is a certain probability that our professionals choose to migrate looking for better opportunities and we will end up attracting less qualified professionals, as it is already happening in health sector.

We sense ultimately a low social sensitivity towards Cultural Heritage, that directly touches all of us and that is reflected both in the lack of criteria and of the financing Conservation/Restoration interventions. We suffer from the absence of legislation and of coherent Cultural Policies. There are not enough professionals in the design of protection policies, in the public administrations and in the museums. There is a lack of ambition and of planning, except when Cultural Heritage can be used by politicians as a social binder or a touristic resource.

The lack of social recognition is enhanced by the absence of sanctions to interventions that clearly are crimes against Cultural Heritage. No report progresses, as Conservation is considered to be only related to aesthetics.

With this Manifesto we make a general call to Spanish society, and particularly to its politics and leaders, so they pay attention to a profession that is necessary and they resolve the uncertainties that overshadow its action capacity.

The memory of our Cultural Heritage is at stake.

Professionals in Conservation/Restoration of Cultural Heritage of Spain, facing the current situation of the custody and protection of our Heritage, we demand:

1. The immediate definition, unification and regulation of the Conservator/Restorer profession and its studies and degrees, in order to end with the professional intrusion that causes so much harm to our Cultural Heritage.
2. A clear and efficient legislation, so that any intervention of conservation/restoration in the public sphere is planned, directed and executed by Conservation/Restoration professionals that have the necessary training and experience. The awards of public tenders to the projects with the lower price must be avoided, because they sentence the sector to indigence and force professionals to work in precarious conditions.
3. We demand the adjustment, or the adequate interpretation, of the public procurement legislation, according to the excellence and the specificity that these types of interventions require. The Bureau of Procurement should count on qualified professionals to draft and to evaluate the projects, so that the Conservation/Restoration of our Heritage is not only a based on economic criteria, that favour big enterprises against SMEs dedicated to Conservation/Restoration of Cultural Heritage. Free competition on equal terms must be allowed, in order to ensure the protection of our Cultural Heritage and its legacy to future generations.
4. That Conservation/Restoration interventions are guided by a sustainable long-term vision, always considering three phases: first, investigation and dissemination; second, intervention; and third, the maintenance of the Cultural Asset. Public Administration should be equipped with competent technicians for the supervision of these standards.
5. That a distinction is made between projects regarding movable and immovable property, as well as their execution. In the case of projects on monuments, a distinction of their artistic elements should be made. The planning of the interventions on these elements should be carried out by professionals specialised in Conservation/Restoration and the consequent contracting of technicians or companies truly specialised in this area.

In Madrid, the 25th May of 2018

Spanish IIC Group (International Institute of Conservation)
ACRE (Spanish Conservation/Restoration Association)