

The policies of preserving Estonian cultural heritage

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The present overview touches upon major activities that have taken place in the field of heritage protection during the last five years. First, we will briefly describe today's actions and after that, we will give a short slide show on the most important activities.

When looking back, we can note that until the second half of 1990ies heritage protection mainly tackled with historical monuments. At the end of 1990ies a change took place in the prevailing approach.

The most important key words of the new decennium are:

1. Networking

We have moved from the narrow approach of historical monument protection on to the protection of surroundings:

- Intertwining of heritage and environment protection (e.g. compilation of town atlases describing valuable surroundings and architectural monuments in the second half of the 1990ies);
- Linking cultural heritage as well as heritage landscapes with county landscape planning and development plans;
- International heritage protection co-operation programmes (e.g. Baltic Sea heritage co-operation since 1997; Swedish-Estonian aid programmes (restoration and training etc) and other.

2. Organisational changes

- In 2002 the National Heritage Board was established (1997-2001 it functioned as the National Heritage Inspectorate). The Inspectorate that dealt with monitoring of heritage protection became an institution organising heritage protection.

- In 2002 a cultural heritage department was established in the ministry of culture. The department gathered under one umbrella all organisations dealing with memory preservation in the ministry's field of governance – museums, heritage protection, (public) libraries. The task of the department is to develop and manage measures targeted to cultural monuments.

3. National programmes of cultural monuments

- Objective: interpreting problematic fields and developing and implementing concrete long-term measure plans aimed for this purpose.
- Implementing the national programme “Schools in Manor Houses (2002-2012)”, the 2005 budget amounts to approx. 0.5 million euros and the national programme “Preservation and Development of Sacred Places (2003-2013)”, the 2005 budget is approx. 1.5 million euros.
- The national programme “Estonian Farm Architecture” is now under preparation (deadline in November 2005).
- Reconstruction of single monuments with national importance – St. John's Church in Tartu (opened in June this year); reconstruction of St. Alexander Church in Narva and St. John's Church in St. Petersburg. In Tartu and Narva the reconstruction work is managed by foundations.

Monument programmes have paved the way to regional cultural heritage programmes. National measures are targeted to keeping unique regional traditions alive. There the tangible

and intangible heritage is seen as a one whole (i.e. the same measure allocates support to cultural activity, museums and monuments).

Here, the thought arose to give heritage protection a wider scope through the concept of cultural heritage.

4. National regional cultural heritage programmes

- The national programme “South-Estonian language and culture (2005-2009)” with the annual budget amounting to approx. 150.000 euros; the programme “Setomaa Cultural Programme” (starting from 2006 it will be a national programme 2006-2010 with the annual budget of approx. 200.000 euros), the cultural space of Kihnu island (approx. 20.000 euros).

4.1. National cross-sectorial programmes

The first programme uniting different authorities but co-ordinating one field is *the National Strategy for Digital Preservation of Estonian Cultural Heritage* (starting from 2006 it will become the national programme 2006-2010; with the budget of approx. 65.000 euros since the year 2005).

Cross-sectorial programmes constitute a new step – a co-operation network of different memory institutions (museums, libraries, archives, television and radio) is being developed to co-ordinate similar activities.

5. Cultural heritage and EU structural funds

- Support to cultural heritage if its use helps to raise the regional competitive strength (especially economic activity); the broader objective is to misplace economic disparity between regions, to support activities uniting the community. By June 2005 cultural heritage has received support (among them museums) amounting to more than 3 million euros (this applies for the period of 2004-2005).

- The European Economic Area and Norwegian Financial Mechanism – the Ministry of Culture is planning to support “Schools in Manor Houses” from this measure.

In conclusion we can say that preservation of cultural heritage does not any more imply only protecting and preserving single monuments and heritage landscapes but is closely linked to regional development, promotion of economical activity and strengthening of infrastructure. This leads us to the starting point of the general national strategy for cultural heritage preservation.