



Cultural partnership between Armenia and Germany under the auspices of the UNESCO

Preamble

Europe is becoming increasingly aware of its individuality within its diversity and the intertwined common historic and cultural roots of this diversity. The enlargement of the European Union with a large number of accessions, predominantly countries from Central and Eastern Europe, does not only prove that there is a growing awareness of the European context, but that the larger union offers new possibilities for political action as well.

However, we have to realize that the two Eastern "outposts" of Christian-European culture, Georgia and Armenia, have - up to now - not been part of this process. Although Georgia is known to some extent, primarily via the role of its former President Shevardnadze in the process of German unification, the general level of knowledge about Armenia is disturbingly low in Germany. Even historic facts about the Armenian church as the oldest of the Christian churches, and Armenia as the first Christian nation - since 301 - are widely unknown. Armenia's Christian religion has not only been the basis for the conservation of its cultural heritage, but was the main reason for the very survival of the Armenian people during the attempted genocide by the "Young Turks" around 1915. Religion still is the driving force behind the strong feeling of solidarity among the Armenians dispersed around the world due to this persecution. Contemporary Armenia feels to be part of the occidental culture.

Due to our appreciation of Europe's cultural diversity we consider our tasks to be:

- to distribute our knowledge and our admiration for the achievements of Armenia's cultural history as well as its contribution to Europe and
- to provide a forum for cultural and personal exchange with the Eastern "outpost" of European civilization

by promoting and supporting partnerships between cultural organisations and educational organisations.



BOUND

by the World Heritage Convention of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and in the spirit of the constitution of UNESCO
the world heritage sites

GEGHARD MONASTERY and **LORSCH ABBEY**
Republic of Armenia Federal Republic of Germany

under the patronage of the Director General of the UNESCO World Heritage Center
have agreed on a
friendly collaboration

recognizing common cultural values and democratic principles, and sharing the conviction of common responsibility for the preservation, cultivation and presentation of the sites entrusted to us.

June 2002

Hambardzum Minasyan
Armenian National Commission for UNESCO

Prof. Dr. Joachim-Felix Leonhard
UNESCO Commission Memory of the World

Father Nersis
Holy Geghard Monastery

Dr. Hermann Schefers
Museumszentrum Lorsch

Ernst-Ludwig Drayss
Kuratorium Weltkulturerbe



Initiators

Guided by these objectives, the two UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites, **Geghard Monastery** in Armenia and **Lorsch Abbey** in Germany, established in 2002 the first, and hitherto only, partnership between two world cultural heritage sites.

In historic times, Geghard and Lorsch played important roles in their respective geographies - Lorsch as a spiritual and cultural centre in the Europe of the early Middle Ages, Geghard as one of the most important religious centres of Christianisation in the early fourth century. Moreover, both Geghard and Lorsch are important sites of their respective liturgical tradition.

This partnership originated out of a private initiative of interested citizens.

In Germany, the partnership is under the sponsorship of the **State of Hesse** and initiated by the private association "Kuratorium Weltkulturdenkmal Kloster Lorsch" and its partners "Noah - Verein zur Förderung der kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen Armenien und Deutschland e.V." and "Stiftung UNESCO-Weltkulturerbe Kloster Lorsch". Financially supported is the partnership widely by private sponsors like Johannes Kärcher and also by its supporting associations. In Armenia the organizing institution is the **Armenian Apostolic Church**, represented by His Holiness Karekin II., Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians. The cooperation of Geghard and Lorsch is assisted by the respective national UNESCO commissions.

The objectives of the partnership are basically those principles formulated in Article 1 of the UNESCO constitution: international cooperation in all areas of intellectual activities, exchange in areas of education, science and culture, as well as publications and exhibitions.

<p style="text-align: center;">The partnership is open, and not only restricted to the locations Geghard and Lorsch.</p>

Consequently, in the pursuit of our objectives, we are working to establish **relations between people** from Armenia and Germany and cultural organisations.

Previous and current activities - events

In the course of our partnership, many projects have been pursued and realised during the last ten years, as it is done today, predominantly covered by private financing - up to now.

Unfortunately, a partnership and cooperation on the monastic level - directly between the world cultural heritage sites Geghard Monastery and Lorsch Abbey - has not been able to be established; due to the lack or change of the respective contact persons. In May 2012, his Holiness Karekin II. took the initiative to write to the responsible authorities in Germany ("Ministerium und die Staatliche Verwaltung Schlösser und Gärten in Hessen") inviting for a meeting in Armenia. Unfortunately, this has not come about. Since then, Bishop Hovakim from Armenia and Dr. Herman Schefers from the world cultural heritage site in Lorsch, have been in contact and are still attempting to arrange a meeting.

During the year 2013 an exchange of visits is planned. Also the cooperation has to re-written and the frames of activities have to be widened especially towards the rural areas of Armenia

Irrespective of this, there have been the following activities on a private level.

The following overview shows examples of previous and current activities:

1. Student exchanges
2. Organisation of several concert tours of the Geghard Monastery Choir and LUYS in Germany and Austria
3. Production of several CDs of spiritual Armenian music and Armenian folk music with the Geghard Monastery Choir and LUYS
4. Cultural journeys of German groups to Armenia
5. Organisation and realisation of journeys to Armenia for potential investors from agriculture and industry
6. Events taking place in Germany covering Armenia (gala concerts, lectures, exhibitions as well as involvement in events as the "Armenische Kulturtage" - "Armenian Culture Days")
7. Initiation and support as cooperation partner of the exhibition "Sevrugian" in the "Museum for World Cultures" in Frankfurt
8. Financial support of youth centres in Nork und Arabkir (Yerevan)
9. Granting of three scholarships to Armenian singers (members of the Geghard Choir) to study in Germany
10. Organisation and financing of German language courses for young Armenians
11. Production of a photo book about the partner monastery Geghard
12. Massive financial support for construction works at Armenian churches from German supporters and sponsors, organized by the association "Noah"
13. Production of a CD with the children's choir of the youth centre Arabkir
14. Production of a Komitas CD with Hasmik Baghdasaryan
15. Organisation of performances by Robert Amirkhanian in Germany, production of a CD "The Voice of Armenia"
16. Initiative and organisation: "Schillerschule Heidenheim" (German school) resp. "Neuer Kammerchor" (German choir) visit Armenia giving concerts (55 persons, mainly students)
17. Joint projects of the "Neuer Kammerchor" in Heidenheim, Germany, Armenian choirs and Robert Amirkhanian. New compositions of "Liebe und Frieden" ("Love and Peace") by Robert Amirkhanian. World premiere in Germany
18. Support of the Nagash project with John Hodian and LUYS
19. In the course of the partnership, regular visits to Armenia (twice a year) by a German delegation visiting Geghard, Nork, Arabkir and Etchmiadzin

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Yerevan, Lorsch March 2013