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E uropean Heritage Label



European Heritage
Label

The history of the *European Heritage Label* began in 2005 as one of the responses to the gap between the European Union and its citizens, and a lack of knowledge of the history of Europe cited by the French Minister of Culture and Communication during the Meetings for Europe and Culture in Paris on 2 and 3 May 2005¹. The action was initiated in 2006, as a result of the intergovernmental initiative formed in several European countries (France, Hungary, and Spain) who signed a declaration for the establishment of a European heritage list during the Granada Meetings devoted to Intercultural Dialogue held on 27 and 28 April 2006.

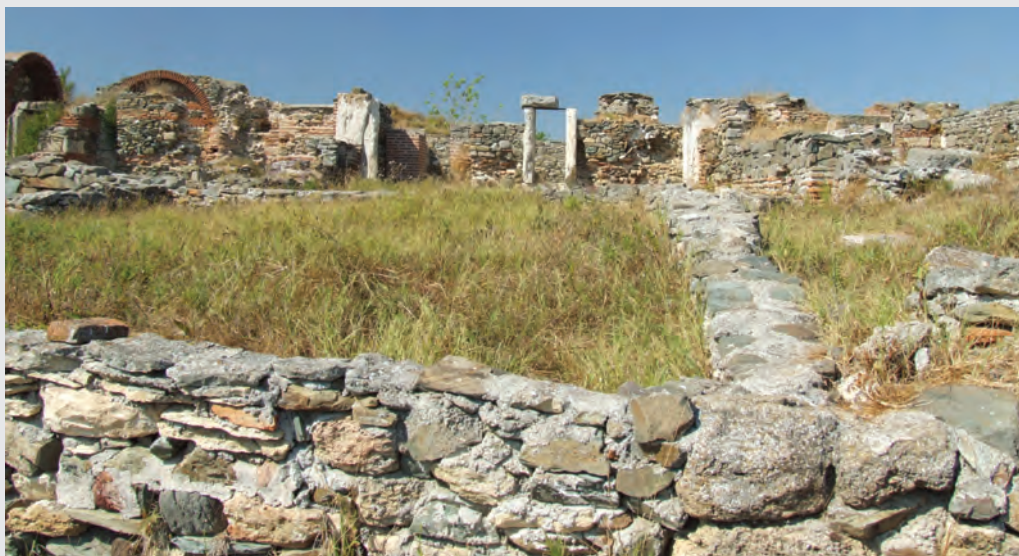
Its aim was to strengthen European citizens' sense of belonging to Europe and to promote a sense of European identity by improving knowledge of Europe's common history and heritage, especially among young people.

In the framework of the intergovernmental initiative the *European Heritage Label* has been awarded to 64 sites in 17 EU countries and Switzerland. The Acropolis in Athens was the site chosen as the first monument listed on the European Heritage list, *to pay homage to the birth of democracy in Europe*. Among the other sites awarded the *European Heritage Label* there are such places as the Cluny Abbey, the Gdańsk Shipyards, the University of Coimbra General Library, St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva, the Roman Athenaeum in Bucharest, and the Iron Curtain in Germany. A full list of the sites awarded to date is attached as an appendix.

The first European Parliament resolution where the *European Heritage Label* was mentioned was issued on 29 November 2007 and was devoted to a Renewed European Union Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism (2006/2129(INI) with the expressed will that support has to *be given for the creation of a European Heritage label aimed at highlighting the European dimension of the European Union's sites and monuments*². In the next resolution from April 10, 2008 devoted to the European agenda for culture in a globalising world (2007/2211(INI)) it was stressed that *a European heritage label should be established with a view to emphasising the European dimension of cultural goods, monuments, memorial sites, and places of remembrance, which all bear witness to Europe's history and heritage*³.



Piazza del Campidoglio,
Rome.
Picture by
Piotr Koźurno



Histria
Archaeological Site.
Romania.
Picture by
CristianChirita

Already in the early stages, the practical arrangements for the initiative have shown some weaknesses and it has not therefore managed to fulfil its potential. Therefore, Member States asked the European Commission in the Council conclusions of November 2008⁴ to transform the current intergovernmental European Heritage label into a formal action of the EU in order to improve its functioning and ensure its long-term success. Following this request, the European Commission published its proposal for a decision establishing "a European Union action for the European Heritage Label" on 9 March 2010. The European Parliament and the Council have begun their work on this legislative proposal. The European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education appointed as its rapporteur Chrysoula Paliadeli (S&D group, Greece). The committee voted unanimously on the report on October 27th 2010.

On December 16th 2010 the European Parliament adopted by 497 votes to 18 with 41 abstentions a Legislative Resolution on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label (COM (2010)0076 - C7-0071/2010 - 2010/0044(COD))⁵. Those decisions have opened a path for further negotiations that will lead in the foreseeable future to the final conclusions and application of this initiative.

The basis for such an action was the Treaty of the European Union that establishes citizenship of the Union and encourages citizens to seek solutions to promote European integration through the discovery of a common culture and history. The *European Heritage Label* is complementary to the other EU initiatives, such as the European Capitals of Culture or European Cultural Routes.

Sites that can become candidates for the label are monuments, places of remembrance, natural, underwater, archaeological, industrial or urban sites, cultural landscapes, cultural goods and ob-





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House of Robert Schuman in Scy-Chazelles, France.

Picture by TCY.

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maison_de_Robert_Schuman_%C3%A0_Scy-Chazelles.jpg



jects, and intangible heritage associated with a place, including contemporary heritage. Candidates for the European Heritage Label should have a symbolic European value and should have played a significant role in the history and culture of Europe and have links with key European events or personalities, as well as with cultural, artistic, social, scientific, technological, environmental or industrial movements.

Up to now, the candidates for the *European Heritage Label* have been selected independently by participating countries. The new initiative at the EU level will introduce precise objectives, strict criteria for site selection, and a strong monitoring and evaluation system so as to ensure that labeled sites have met the commitments undertaken at the application stage.

The selection procedure is proposed to be carried out in two stages. The first stage, pre-selection of the sites for the attribution of the *European Heritage Label* would be under the responsibility of the Member States, in close cooperation with local and regional authorities. Each Member State would pre-select up to two sites every two years, instead of annually as proposed by the Commission. The second stage for the final selection should take place at the European Union level by the independent experts. The geographically balanced panel of independent experts would be composed of 13 members nominated by the European Parliament (4), the Council (4), the Commission (4) and the Committee of the Regions (1) similarly to the rules that apply to the selection of European Capitals of Culture. The experts should have substantial experience and expertise in the field of culture, heritage, European history, or other fields relevant to the objectives of the *European Heritage Label*. A nomination for the expert position would be valid for three years. The *European Heritage Label* would be awarded to the sites on a permanent basis. It may be revoked or the beneficiary may relinquish it.

The *European Heritage Label* should seek to supplement (but not duplicate) initiatives such as the UNESCO World Heritage List or the European Cultural Routes. It should increase and improve access to heritage sites for all, especially young people, and have an educational dimension.

The *European Heritage Label* aims to emphasize Europe's common history in a concrete way and contribute to enhancing the value and raising the profile of the Member States' heritage. In addition, it should facilitate understanding among European citizens of their shared history and of the process of EU integration, leading to an increased sense of European identity. Furthermore, it should promote the intensification of intercultural and interterritorial dialogue through the promotion of regional diversity and multilingualism.

These objectives can be achieved through the *European Heritage Label*, which will expand access to heritage sites of European society in general, encourage the development of art education, raise awareness of cultural and historical importance, especially among young people, and promote the sharing of experience and exchanging of best practices across Europe. In these sites, artistic and cultural activities such as events or residencies will be organised. In addition, access for the widest possible public, including people with disabilities, will be ensured through site adaptations or staff training, and through the use of the Internet. Moreover these sites will contribute to the economic attractiveness, tourism promotion and sustainable development of regions, in particular through cultural tourism.

The Label can be attributed not only to tangible, but also intangible heritage, such as for example the abolishment of the death penalty in Portugal – although, there should be a physical place attributed to this site, which would bear a plaque with the heritage logo.

Strong emphasis will be put on networking among the labelled sites. In the rather modest budget for this Action some funds will be devoted to the regular exchange of information and best practices. Already during the French presidency of the European Union the Minister of Culture and Communication met with the managers of the "labelled" sites and the relevant national administrations in Avignon on 3 and 4 December to set up a European network of "labelled" sites. The Hungarian presidency is organizing a conference in Budapest in June 2011 for the sites and other stakeholders involved or interested in this initiative

As expressed by Chrysoula Paliadeli, the EP Member, the European heritage label embodies a symbolism related more to values and ideas



Cervený Kamen Castle. Picture by Rado Bahna



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(such as democracy, freedom and coexistence in diversity) than to beauty or aesthetics⁶. It would be interesting to learn if Europeans think similarly. Before issuing the resolution a survey was conducted of Europeans' impressions of the European Heritage Label. According to a survey conducted in February 2007 in five EU countries, during a three-day conference in Paris on the theme "Heritages of Europe, European Heritage?", European views on this matter are very different. More than half of Europeans believe that the fact of having a European cultural heritage "reinforces the sense of belonging to Europe", what can be considered a positive result and as much as 83% of them consider that their cultural heritage "is part of European heritage". However, there are unfavourable reviews, particularly concerning the definition of the European Heritage Label. As an example, almost half of Europeans consider that it is nothing more than the sum of national heritages and that it is a shared common heritage. A point of interest is the fact that the notion of heritage itself varies according to the country, so for example for 63% of the French it refers mainly to architecture and historic monuments, while the Germans understand the notion of heritage as history, traditions and ways of life. The Italians single out architecture at a rate of 38%, but also painting, archaeology and film are mentioned. This is all a confirmation of the words of the president of the French National Heritage Institute and former French Ambassador to UNESCO Jean Musitelli, who said: "European heritage is a fact that is still to be invented"⁷.

Europe is a continent of great cultural and linguistic diversity. The goal that the European Union has established for itself in the pursuit of a strong European identity is far-reaching and difficult to implement. The *European Heritage Label* is a very interesting initiative for this purpose and clearly distinct from existing ones, presenting an opportunity to deepen the knowledge of Europeans, while motivating them to perceive what unites, rather than what divides us.



Catacombs of Rabat. Picture by Piotr Koźurno

Sites awarded the European Heritage Label under the intergovernmental EHL initiative

1. Belgium 1. Palace of the Prince-Bishops of Liege (Wallonia Region) 2. Raeren stoneware (German-speaking community) 3. Former palace in Brussels- archaeological site of Coudenberg (Brussels-Capital Region) 4. Historic town of Ennepe (Flanders Region)

2. Bulgaria 5. Archaeological Site in Debelts (Burgas Region) 6. "Vasil Levski" Memorial in Karlovo 7. Historical and Architectural Ensemble in the City of Rousse 8. Boris Christoff Music Centre in Sofia

3. Cyprus 9. Nicosia Fortifications 10. Kolossi Castle 11. Site at Kourion 12. Circuit of six churches with Byzantine and post-Byzantine frescos (Troodos Region)

4. Czech Republic

13. Kynzvalt Castle 14. Antonín Dvůrák Memorial in Vysoká 15. Zlín, Tomas Bat'a industrial town (shoe factory) 16. Coal mine in Vítkovice, Ostrava

5. France 17. Abbey of Cluny 18. House of Robert Schuman in Scy-Chazelles 19. Court of honour of the Palais des Papes, Avignon

6. Germany 20. The Reformation 21. Iron Curtain

7. Hungary 22. Szigetvár Fortress 23. Calvinist Church and College in Debrecen 24. Visegrad Royal Castle 25. Esztergom Royal Castle

8. Italy 26. Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome 27. Isola Ventotene 28. House Museums of Puccini, Rossini and Verdi 29. House museum of Alcide de Gasperi in Pieve Tesino

9. Latvia 30. Historical Centre of Riga 31. Rundale Palace 32. Kuldīga Town

10. Lithuania 33. Works by Mikalojus Konstantinas Ciurlionis, composer and painter 34. Historical Centre of Kaunas 35. Sacred Forests of Žemaitija and the Hill of Crosses 36. Museum dedicated to the victims of Soviet genocide (between 1940 and 1991) in Vilnius

11. Malta 37. Catacombs of Rabat

12. Poland 38. Gdansk Shipyards 39. Lech Hill (cathedral,

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Cathedral of Braga,
Portugal.
Detail.
Picture by
Jose Goncalves

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church, Episcopal palace, museum) in Gniezno 40. St. Wenceslas and St. Stanislas Cathedral on Wawel Hill in Krakow 41. City of Lublin

13. Portugal 42. Cathedral of Braga 43. Monastery (church) of Jesus in Setubal 44. General Library of the University of Coimbra 45. Abolition of the death penalty

14. Romania 46. Histria Archaeological Site 47. Cantacuzino Palace in Bucharest 48. Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest 49. Brancusi Ensemble (Targu-Jiu)

15. Slovakia 50. Pre-roman religious architecture: Saint Margaret's Church in Kopčany and Saint 51. George's Church in Kostol'any por Tribecom 52. Cerveny Kamen Castle 53. The Barrow at Bradlo and Native House of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik 54. Kremnica Mint

16. Slovenia 55. Zale Cemetery, Ljubljana 56. Franja Partisan Hospital, Dolenji Novaki 57. Memorial Church of the Holy Spirit, Javorca

17. Spain 58. Archive of the Crown of Aragon 59. Royal Monastery of Yuste 60. Cape Finisterre 61. Madrid students' residence

18. Switzerland 62. Cathedral of St. Peter in Geneva 63. Castle of La Sarraz 64. Hospice of St. Gothard

St. Wenceslas and St. Stanislas Cathedral on Wawel Hill in Krakow.

Picture by Maciej Szczepańczyk



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- Press release, The Committee of Culture and Education. www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+IM-PRESS+20101025IPR90068+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=PL
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