

Brussels, 9 March 2010

Culture: Commission proposes EU-wide European Heritage Label

The European Commission has today proposed to establish the 'European Heritage Label' as an EU-wide initiative. The aim of the Label is to highlight sites that celebrate and symbolize European integration, ideals and history. The proposed Decision to establish the Label will be submitted to the EU's Council of Ministers and the European Parliament for adoption and could come into effect in 2011 or 2012.

"I believe that the European Heritage Label will help to increase public awareness of our common yet diverse cultural heritage as well as to stimulate cultural tourism and intercultural dialogue," said Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.

The Commission's proposal builds on a 2006 intergovernmental project involving 17 Member States. Expanding the European Heritage Label into an initiative of the European Union will give it greater credibility, visibility and prestige.

Sixty-four sites have received the label under the existing scheme, based on selections by individual Member States (see annex for list). They range from the house of Robert Schuman, the French statesman who was one of the founding fathers of the EU, in Scy-Chazelles (Lorraine), to the Gdansk Shipyards in Poland, birthplace of Solidarność, the first independent trade union in a Warsaw Pact country, which helped trigger events that would finally unite the continent after the Cold War.

Under the proposed new scheme, each of the 27 Member States would be able to nominate up to two sites per year to receive the new European Heritage Label. A panel composed of independent experts would assess the nominations and choose up to a maximum of one site per year in each country to receive the designation. Participation in the scheme would be voluntary.

The main benefits of the European Heritage Label would be:

- new opportunities to learn about Europe's cultural heritage and the democratic values underpinning European history and integration
- increased awareness of European cultural tourism, bringing economic benefits
- clear and transparent criteria for participating Member States
- selection and monitoring procedures that would ensure that only the most relevant sites received the label.

The proposed EU European Heritage Label differs from other cultural heritage initiatives such as the UNESCO World Heritage List or the Council of Europe's 'European Cultural Routes' because it would:

- designate sites which have played a key role in the history of the European Union
- choose sites on the basis of their European symbolic value rather than for their beauty or architectural quality
- stress the educational dimension, especially for young people.

Annex: sites which have received the European Heritage Label under the existing scheme:

European Heritage Label – sites previously selected by Member States

COUNTRY	SITE ¹
BELGIUM	Palace of the Prince-Bishops at Liège
	Stoneware of Raeren (German-speaking community)
	Archaeological site of Ename
	Archaeological site of Coudenberg
BULGARIA	Archaeological site of Debelt
	Memorial Vassil Levski
	Historic town of Rousse
	Boris Christoff Music Centre
CYPRUS	Fortifications of Nicosia
	Castle of Kolossi
	Site of Kourion
	Circuit of 6 churches with Byzantine and post Byzantine frescos, Troodos
CZECH REPUBLIC	Castle of Kynžvart
	Zlín, town of Tomáš Bat'a
	Vítkovice coal mine at Ostrava
	Memorial of Antonín Dvořák at Vysoká u Příbrami
FRANCE	Cluny Abbey
	House of Robert Schuman, near Metz
	Pope's Palace Court, Avignon
GREECE	Acrópolis, Athens

¹ These sites were selected by Member States under intergovernmental arrangements. In order to ensure the overall coherence of the European Heritage Label, sites in the European Union which were awarded the label under the intergovernmental system and which wish to obtain the new Label, will need to be re-assessed against the new criteria.

COUNTRY	SITE ¹
	Knossos Palace
	Archaeological site of Poliochne
	Byzantine site of Monemvasia
HUNGARY	Royal castle of Esztergom
	Szigetvár fortress
	The Reformed college and great church at Debrecen
	Royal palace of Visegrád
ITALY	Birthplaces of Rossini, Puccini and Verdi
	Birthplace of Alcide De Gasperi
	Ventotene Island
	Capitole Place in Roma
LATVIA	Historic centre of Riga
	Rundāle Palace
	Town of Kuldīga
LITHUANIA	Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis' works
	Historical centre of Kaunas
	Žemaitija (lowlands) region and the Hill of Crosses
	Museum of Genocide Victims (1940-41) at Vilnius
MALTA	Catacombs of Rabat
POLAND	Gdańsk Shipyards
	Hill of Lech at Gniezno (Cathedral, church, palaces, museum)
	Cathedral St Vaclav and Stanislav in Kraków
	Town of Lublin
PORTUGAL	Braga cathedral
	Convent of Jesus at Setúbal

COUNTRY	SITE ¹
	General library of the University of Coimbra
	Abolition of the death penalty
ROMANIA	Archaeological site of Istria
	Cantacuzino Palace at Bucharest
	Romanian Athenaeum at Bucarest
	Park Brâncuși at Târgu Jiu
SLOVAKIA	Pre Romanesque Ecclesiastical Architecture, St Margaret church, Kopčany
	The Castle of Červený Kameň
	The Barrow of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik at Bradlo
SLOVENIA	Memorial church of the Holy Spirit at Javorca
	Franja Hospital at Dolenji Novaki
	Zale Cemetery at Ljubljana
SPAIN	Crown of Aragon Archive
	Yuste Royal Monastery
	Cap Finisterre
	Students Residence, Madrid
SWITZERLAND	St Peter Cathedral in Geneva
	Castle of La Sarraz
	Hospice of St Gotthard