



STEERING COMMITTEE FOR CULTURE, HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE (CDCPP)

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**Council of Europe Offices
55 Avenue Kléber, 75016 Paris**

The European Heritage Days (EHDs)

DOCUMENT FOR INFORMATION

The Bureau:

- **is invited** to take note of the preparation of the 5th European Heritage Days Events to be held in Nicosia (Cyprus) on 14-16 October 2012.

BACKGROUND

The Council of Europe launched the European Heritage Days (EHD) in 1985, and in 1999 was joined by the European Union to create the joint action, which has continued up to the present day.

Held in September each year, EHD events – often called Heritage Open Days - take place in the 50 States party to the European Cultural Convention.¹ During this time, doors are opened to numerous monuments and sites, many of them usually closed to the public, allowing Europe's citizens to enjoy and learn about their shared cultural heritage and encouraging them to become actively involved in the safeguard and enhancement of this heritage for present and future generations.

The cultural events highlight local skills and traditions, architecture and works of art, but the broader aim is to bring citizens together in harmony even though there are differences in cultures and languages. The European secretariat's close cooperation with the group of national coordinators ensures the success of the EHDs. Each year, national and regional events are organised around a special theme, which vary in each country from year to year. They include such topics as; specific forms of heritage (e.g. farmhouses, musical instruments, culinary traditions, garden architecture); specific periods in history (e.g. the Medieval heritage, the Baroque heritage); society's approaches to heritage (e.g. heritage and citizenship, heritage and youth). The selection of trans-national themes illustrated by cross-border activities are jointly set up by the different countries.

The aims of the European Heritage Days are to:

- raise the awareness of European citizens to the richness and cultural diversity of Europe;
- create a climate in which the appreciation of the rich mosaic of European cultures is stimulated;
- counter racism and xenophobia and encourage greater tolerance in Europe and beyond the national borders;
- inform the public and the political authorities about the need to protect cultural heritage against new threats;
- invite Europe to respond to the social, political and economic challenges it faces.

In order to harmonise all the national and regional events and to unite them under the European flag, several principles were defined in 1991:

- EHDs should take place during a weekend in September;
- EHDs allow the general public to visit monuments and sites all over Europe usually closed to the public;
- buildings that are open all year round can contribute to the programme, providing that they offer special activities, such as guided visits, exhibitions, concerts, lectures;
- visits should be free of charge or offered at a reduced price;
- the programme should include the organisation of specific activities that will involve the general public and, in particular, young people and school pupils; all participating countries are asked to use the official name "European Heritage Days". Those countries that set up such initiatives before 1991 under a different name are invited to mention clearly that it takes place "within the framework of the European Heritage Days";
- the logos of the EHD, the CoE and the EC should appear on all promotional material; the EHD flag should be flown from all buildings open to the public during the event.

¹ European Cultural Convention, CETS No. 018, Paris (19/12/1954), <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=018&CL=ENG>.

Since 1999, the EHDs have a permanent slogan: "Europe, a common heritage". This was the theme of the Council of Europe's Campaign (1999-2000), decided upon during the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the CoE's member states (Strasbourg, 1997). The Campaign was aimed at enhancing the value of European cultural and natural heritage whilst respecting its cultural diversity.

PROGRESS

The "European Dimension" of the EHDs

The EHDs are organised on a national basis reflecting the fact that for the most part responsibility and management of heritage is still largely national and subject to the principle of subsidiarity. National Coordinators (NCs), nominated in each participating state, take responsibility for the development, management, promotion and marketing of national events.

The national dimension is a fundamental pillar and must be fostered.² However, the economic, social and cultural value of the EHDs to individuals and to Europe as a whole lies in the promotion and development of the 'European Dimension' of the programme. The NCs recognise that development of European audiences for national events raises the profile of these initiatives and increases the desire of people to put on events and also to visit them³. Perhaps as important, the European dimension of the programme has the capacity to increase tourism, promote Europe as a destination and generally to facilitate transnational economic/cultural community exchange. Arguably, this European dimension may induce citizens to embrace their Europeanness, through the celebration of a common cultural heritage.

In 2011 a concerted effort was made to assess how to foster the European Dimension of the Programme. In December 2011 the two Secretariats hosted a meeting in Strasbourg for the National Coordinators on the theme of the 'European Dimension'. Its purpose was to identify the challenges that this type of cross-border cooperation posed for the NCs and to find ways to respond to them⁴.

There were some important decisions taken at this meeting and unanimously agreed to. The first was that the EHDs programme should actively foster the 'European Dimension' through assisting in the development of cross-frontier joint event development. The Secretariat will facilitate collaboration between different NCs on several of the proposals that were put forward by the national delegations at the December meeting. These will not be mini-projects, which develop inside the EHDs programme, rather they will be independent programmes of collaboration, which will be given strategic assistance and advice on how to find independent funding. Local civil society associations and private partners will also be able to assist in the development of these cross – frontier events.

All information regarding the development of this Programme is available on the [EHDs website](#).

The EHD Forum

The annual European Heritage Forum, to which all participating states are invited and welcomed, is part of the EHD Programme for the 5th year now. This Forum offers an opportunity for the interchange of ideas and experiences in the context of the EHD programme. Although EHDs

² For a [list of national events](#) visit the Council of Europe EHD's website.

³ For information on past collaboration on events see document CDCPP(2012)11.

⁴ Reference to December meeting [report DGIV/PAT/JEP\(2011\)14](#).

provides the context for the annual Forum, the presentations and discussions always range much more widely, around three core aims:

- To take stock of changing practices, methods and techniques in the interpretation, communication and dissemination of cultural heritage. The Forums will contribute to updating the debate on changes facing society; encouraging people to take a new look at heritage.
- To be a meeting place for a broad range of professional categories which may vary according to the theme chosen each year: heritage professionals, cultural mediators, public administration and local authority officials, tourism and cultural industry professionals, teachers and educators in school and out-of-school contexts, the initial and in-service vocational training sectors, researchers, members of voluntary organisations, and representatives of international governmental and nongovernmental organisations.
- To provide input to a process of networking experience and know-how.

NEXT STEPS

The 5th International EHDs Forum 2012

The 5th European Heritage Forum will take place in Nicosia, during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU⁵.

There will be three very important Heritage Days activities held during this event, 14 - 16 October: the launch of 5th EHDs Forum in Cyprus; the 5th EHDs Forum itself; the annual National Coordinators Meeting.

The general theme of the Forum proposed by the host state, Cyprus: "Communicating Heritage" is very much in the mainstream of the cultural heritage debate within Europe. It will be developed through sub themes: **Audience Building; Fostering Democratic Participation; Empowering Decision Making.**

The Programme of the events is available on the Council of Europe Website of the European Heritage Days: [EHDs' website](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/ehd/default_EN.asp?)
(http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/ehd/default_EN.asp?)

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⁵ Reports from all preceding Forums are to be found under [DGIV/PAT/JEP\(2011\)11](#) and [DGIV/PAT/JEP\(2010\)12](#) (2011 and 2010) on the EHDs website.