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European Heritage Days
Journées européennes
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EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS
A joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Union

Brainstorming Session

on

The Future of the European Heritage Days

Paris (France)
21 February 2011

REPORT

2010 marked the 25th anniversary of the European Heritage Days. The generous coverage by the Turkish authorities of the events held in Istanbul in October 2010, allowed for this Brainstorming Session which was to provide guidelines for the future running of the EHD events at European level.

1. Opening of the meeting + 2. Presentation of participants

Participants representing EHD coordinators, EHD events organisers (past, present and future), CDPATEP representatives and EU representatives were welcomed by the CoE Secretariat and Ms Paulina Florjanowicz agreed to chair the Session. A complete list of participants is to be found at **Appendix 1** to this Report.

3. Past experience

Sarah Wolferstan presented her Evaluation of the 2009 EHD events based on coordinators' 2009 evaluations and their comments posted on the Forum/Chat in 2010. This was the first time that an attempt had been made to draw up an analysis of the information received from the various countries. This wealth of information available could be exploited not only to improve future events but also to identify particular training needs, such as improvement in networking. The evaluation process itself needed to be improved. Questionnaires, for example, needed to be revised to avoid misunderstandings and to target relevant information.

EHD coordinators agreed that it was very difficult to provide comparable information as the events were run very differently in each country. The idea of a common theme throughout the 50 participating states had been discussed many times before without reaching common agreement.

Sheamus Cassidy underlined that the EHD were successful at reaching people at a national and local level, but he recognised the feeling that was coming through in the evaluation that the European wide visibility needed to be improved. He felt that having a broad common theme could help to raise the European visibility and at the same time such themes could pick up on strategic aims such as the EU 2020 strategy aiming at smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. He had the feeling that the EHD had a great - yet still untapped potential – to reach out to people across Europe and he said that common branding may be an issue to consider. His mention of the advantages of branding the events was picked up by Cathie Burton who encouraged an umbrella brand for all the events which would then be extrapolated and adapted to local use.

Paulina Florjanowicz suggested to simply use the yearly themes announced by EC (like Year of Innovation) as grounds for national themes.

Coordinators also expressed the frustration that there did not seem to be any incentive nor actual need for coordinators to work together. The training foreseen should help improve the network. Case-studies could also help bring smaller groups of coordinators together on a regional topic. It was agreed that a simple Fact Sheet would be prepared to help coordinators explain the added value of the EHDs as a European event and to help promote the network. The Irish coordinator suggested funding for cross-border projects would improve cooperation.

The proposal of a common EHD launching date in all countries was also discussed. Many participants expressed their reticence claiming, from experience, that this was often ineffectual. For this idea to work, much more interest from Europe wide media, especially TV stations, is required. However, it was also felt that the European event needed a visible starting date and a clear communication strategy.

4. Future of EHDs

Susan Williamson presented her report on the Future of the EHDs which had already been submitted to the CDPATEP Bureau in December for discussion. After recalling the 16 recommendations made in the document, she focused on the relevance of the programme for EU and CoE countries as the EHDs provided a platform for the organisations' works, such as the implementation of the 4 CoE heritage Conventions or the neighbourhood policy of the EU. There was also a need to bring the EHDs closer to other heritage events such as the joint EU/CoE Joint Regional Programmes in SEE and the Kyiv Initiative countries; the European Heritage Heads Forum, the International Heritage Photo Exhibition, the European Heritage Awards and the European Heritage label.

Sheamus Cassidy pointed to the current challenges facing the EHDs in a time of recession. There is a need to clearly communicate the results these days are achieving. He referred to the experience in Ireland, where evaluation showed that there was a ten-fold return on the investment as a result of the EHD event in 2008. He also said that in his view it is important to highlight the success the days are having in drawing in new visitors to heritage buildings and sites.

Cathie Burton said she understood that the funding currently available for the events in different countries was widely divergent. However, she pointed towards alternative ways of promoting the EHDs, for example better use could be made of the internet, virtual exhibitions and networking through modern tools such as Facebook and Twitter.

Monica Urian de Sousa pointed out the importance of creating synergies between different actors at national and European levels, that could act as multipliers. Regarding the EU level, the European Commission intends to create synergies between the EHDs and the European Heritage Label, as well as the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage and various cooperation projects in the field of heritage co-funded by the EU Culture Programme. Involving various stakeholders in the Forum (e.g. politicians and decision-makers) and applying a cross-sector approach (e.g. heritage, business, education, etc) would be beneficial in raising the visibility of the EHDs and bringing in fresh ideas about communication and impact assessment.

It was felt that the EHD website was too cluttered and the CoE secretariat undertook to try to make it more attractive. The fact that it was incorporated in the Council of Europe site restricted its design. The possibility of hosting the EHD site outside the CoE site was mentioned, though this implied additional hosting and maintenance costs. The address of the current EHD website itself (www.ehd.coe.int or www.jep.coe.int) was questioned and some felt that a more explicit address (such as "european-heritage-days.com") would be better. Others however felt that the shorter version was easier to retain especially as in any case a Google search for European Heritage Days directed one to the correct site.

5. Timing of events: Spring v. Autumn

Discussion on the timing of the EHD events had also met with diverging views as had the month in which the EHDs were held nationally. September remained a favourite for the national EHDs as this allowed coordinators half a year to prepare for them. The discussion on whether training of coordinators should be held before or after the national events concluded that holding the training sessions one or two months after the EHDs in September was the best time for coordinators with recent experience still fresh in their minds. It was also felt very important to keep the training, the annual coordinators meeting and the EHD Forum together, and it was acknowledged that the Forum should be a tool for further development of the EHD.

6. Format of the 2011 events

It was agreed, for the time being, to stick to the proposed format for the 2011 EHD Events to be held in Wroclaw (Forum; Annual Meeting of Coordinators; Training of EHD coordinators). An evaluation would be held after this year's events to decide on how future events should be organised.

Paulina Florjanowicz provided practical details on the 2011 events in Wroclaw (the venue, the programme, etc.). She also proposed a Poster Exhibition which would provide statistics on past national events in other countries based on the evaluations. The exhibition could be displayed in Wroclaw and could be available after for other venues such as the European Parliament, etc.

After discussing the themes and speakers of the Forum, the draft programme (document DGIV/PAT/JEP(2011)1 dated 22 February 2011) was adopted. Natasha Walker who had facilitated the 2010 events recommended that Round Tables should not exceed 10 persons and she supported the cross-sectoral approach to involve stakeholders from the CSR and other societal areas during the table discussions.

Cathie Burton had been approached to come up with a proposal for EHD coordinator training to help improve their media work and create successful networks. After an analysis of the situation, she presented her training proposal which would include two well-known trainers in the field:

- Rene Wyndham, experienced broadcast journalist (BBC, ITV, Euronews) and Trainer: Council of Europe (interview skills), Reuters (training for TV presenters);
- Julio Romo, leading specialist on social media, member of the social media board of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (UK industry body).

Both had agreed to undertake the training in 2011 and Cathie Burton would coordinate this training. Future training could target other aspects of coordinating the EHDs. This year the focus was on "making the media work for you" and "creating a reputation as guardians of cultural heritage".

Cathie recommended the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter) to get the European dimension of the EHDs across and it was agreed that as a first step, a EHD Facebook would be set up by the CoE and coordinators encouraged to join.

It was agreed that for 2011 training should remain restricted to the EHD coordinators.

7. Visibility – Proposal

The 2009 coordinator evaluations as well as the 2010 evaluations received to date all pointed to the fact that the visibility material provided so far (posters, leaflets) were hardly ever used by countries. It was agreed that production of this material in 2011 should be stopped (if still possible) and to make the material available only on line.

It was decided that the secretariat would provide services in the form of fact sheet, press material and material concerning the EHD and emphasizing the European dimension for websites.

Coordinators had been asked to provide a translation of the “European Heritage Days” to include this in the visibility material which would now be available on the website only.

Anna Trigona presented a maquette of the recently updated EHD website section on “Young People and Heritage”. Cathie Burton and other participants considered that the section was too hidden, there was too much text, etc. Efforts would be made to improve it. Some coordinators also suggested applications (downloadable from iTunes, etc.) to better target young people. A quiz for young people was also mentioned. These suggestions would be discussed after the 2011 events.

8. Conclusions

Paulina thanked participants for their valuable contribution to the Session and looked forward to welcoming them in Wroclaw for the 2011 events.

Appendix 1

1. Participants

Ms Athena Aristotelous-Cleridou

WL/LT: E

Ministry of the Interior
 Department of Town Planning and Housing
 Head of Planning and Conservation Sector
 Headquarters
 27 Diagorou Av., Kritikos Building
 CY-1097 Nicosia
 Cyprus/*Chypre*
 Tel: +357 22 408 155
 Fax: +357 22 670934
 E-mail: aaristotelous@tph.moi.gov.cy

Ms Paula Dumont

WL/LT: E/F

Aattaché
 Ministerie van het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest
 Directie Monumenten en Landschappen
 Vooruitgangstraat 80
 BE-1035 Brussels
 Belgium/*Belgique*
 Tel: +32 2 204 29 60
 Fax: +32 2 204 15 22
 E-mail: pdumont@mbhg.irisnet.be

Ms Paulina Florjanowicz

WL/LT: E

Director
 National Heritage Board of Poland
 Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa
 ul. Kopernika 36/40
 PL-00-328 Warsaw
 Poland/*Pologne*
 Tel: +48 22 826 93 52
 Fax: +48 22 826 93 52
 E-mail: pflorjanowicz@nid.pl

Ms Malgorzata Fokt-Willmann

WL/LT: E/F

Déléguée représentant le Comité Directeur du patrimoine culturel
 et du paysage du Conseil de l'Europe (CDPATEP)
 Chargée des Relations Internationales
 Département de Protection des Monuments Historiques
 Ministère de la Culture et du Patrimoine national
 ul. Ksawerow 13
 PL-02656 Warsaw
 Poland/*Pologne*
 Tel: +48 22 848 1319
 Fax: +48 22 84855353
 E-mail: mfoktwillmann@mkidn.gov.pl

Mr Mark Lawson

Policy Officer
 Historic Scotland
 2.6 Longmore House
 Salisbury Place
 Edinburgh
 EH9 1SH
 SCOTLAND
 Tel: +44 131 668 8819
 Tel: +0131 668 8083
 E-mail: mark.lawson2@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

WL/LT: E

Ms Orane Proisy

Responsable du pôle réseaux et musées
 Département des affaires européennes et internationales
 Direction générale des patrimoines
 6 rue des Pyramides
 F-75001 Paris Cedex 01
 France
 Tél: +33 (0)1 40 15 32 86
 Fax: +33 (0)1 40 15 33 07
 E-mail: orane.proisy@culture.gouv.fr

WL/LT: E/F

Ms France Quémarec

Responsable du pôle coopération patrimoniale et formation
 Département des affaires européennes et internationales
 Direction générale des patrimoines
 Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication
 6 rue des Pyramides
 F-75041 Paris Cedex 01
 France
 Tel: +33 (0)1 40 15 33 06
 Fax: +33 (0)1 40 15 33 07
 E-mail: france.quemarec@culture.gouv.fr

WL/LT: E/F

Mr Marcin Rembacz

EHD National Coordinator
 National Heritage Board of Poland
 Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa
 ul. Kopernika 36/40
 PL-00-328 Warsaw
 Poland/*Pologne*
 Tel: +48 22 826 93 52
 Fax: +48 22 826 93 52
 E-mail: mrembacz@nid.pl
 Web: www.edd.com.pl / www.edd2011.pl

WL/LT: E

Ms Patricia Ruelleux

Head of European Affairs Department
 Directorate for European and International Affairs
 Conseil Général de la Seine-Saint-Denis
 1, Avenue Youri Gagarine
 F-93006 Bobigny
 France
 Tel: +33 (0)6 11 67 82 48
 E-mail: patricia.ruelleux@laposte.net

(apologised for absence/excusée)

Ms Isabell Smyth

Head of Communications & Education
 The Heritage Council
 Church Lane
 Kilkenny
 Ireland/*Irlande*
 Tel: +353 (0) 56 777 0777
 Fax: +353 (0) 56 777 0788
 E-mail: ismyth@heritagecouncil.ie
 Mobile: +353(0) 87 967 6889

WL/LT: E

Ms Brigitte Vander Bruggen

Coordinatrice des Journées européennes du patrimoine en région Bruxelles-Capitale
 Direction des Monuments et des Sites de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale
 CCN-Rue du Progrès 80
 Boîte 1
 BE-1035 Bruxelles
 Belgium/*Belgique*
 Tel: +32 2 204 24 49
 Fax: +32 2 204 1 522
 E-mail: bvanderbruggen@mrbc.irisnet.be

WL/LT: E/F

Ms Ebru Uguz

EHD National Coordinator
 Directorate General of Cultural Heritage and Museums
 Ministry of Culture and Tourism
 II. TBMM
 TR-06100 Ulus/Ankara
 Turkey/*Turquie*
 Tel: +90 312 310 49 60 – 2006
 Fax: +90 312 310 4969
 E-mail: ebruuguz@gmail.com
 E-mail: ebru.uguz@kulturturizm.gov.tr

(apologised for absence/excusée)

Ms Natasha Walker

Natasha Walker Associates NWA
 Am Stiftbuckel
 In der Neckarhelle 124
 D-69118 Heidelberg
 Germany/*Allemagne*
 Tel: +49 172 625 6486
 E-Mail: natashantwalker@yahoo.de
 Internet site/site internet: <http://natashafacilitator.wordpress.com>

WL/LT: E

Ms Susan Williamson

Consultant
 6 Davenant Road
 Oxford OX2 8BX
 United Kingdom/*Royaume-Uni*
 Tel: +44 01865 556477
 E-mail: susanwilliamson.oxford@gmail.com

WL/LT: E

Ms Sarah Wolferstan

Centre for Applied Archaeology
 Institute of Archaeology
 University College London
 341-34 Gordon Square
 UK-London WC1H 0PY
 United Kingdom/*Royaume Uni*
 Tel.: +44 (0)20 7679 4778
 E-mail: sarah.wolferstan@ucl.ac.uk

WL/LT: E

2. European Union / Union Européenne

Mr Sheamus Cassidy

Programme Manager
European Commission
Directorate General for Education and Culture
Directorate C - Culture, Communication and Multilingualism
Culture Programme and Actions Unit
Place Madou 1
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium/*Belgique*
Tel: +32 2 29 97955
Fax: +32 2 29 21954
E-mail: james-joseph.cassidy@ec.europa.eu

WL/LT: E

Ms Monica Urian de Sousa

Programme Manager
European Commission
Directorate-General Education and Culture
Unit D2: Culture Programme and Actions
MADO 16/005
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium/*Belgique*
Tel: +32 2 295 1738
E-mail: monica.urian-de-sousa@ec.europa.eu
Website: www.europa.eu/culture

WL/LT: E

3. Secretariat of the Council of Europe / Secrétariat du Conseil de l'Europe

**Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage /
Direction de la Culture et du Patrimoine Culturel et Naturel**

Mr Daniel Thérond

Deputy Director
Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 22 52
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 55
E-mail: daniel.therond@coe.int

(apologised for absence/excusé)

Ms Anna Trigona

Administrator
Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 30 34
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 55
E-mail: anna.trigona@coe.int

WL/LT: E/F

Ms Colette Heitz

Assistant
Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France
Tel: +33 (0)3 90 21 59 48
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 55
E-mail: colette.heitz@coe.int ; jep-ehd@coe.int

WL/LT: E/F

**Directorate of Communication /
Direction de la Communication**

Ms Cathie Burton

Media Division
Directorate of Communications
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex
France
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 28 93
E-mail: cathie.burton@coe.int
Mobile +33 (0)6 85 11 64 93

WL/LT: E