



Education and Culture DG

Culture Programme



European Heritage Days  
Journées européennes  
du patrimoine



COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## 'European Dimension' Event Summary

### Event title:

***Castles and Fortresses – common European History***

### Initiator of the project:

***Helle – Silvia Solnask*** / Estonian Heritage Society

### Partner countries:

Estonia, Finland, Sweden

### Event background:

Castles and fortresses have international context in terms of their founders and builders, but also considering the historic events. At the same time castles are important landmarks and historic monuments for the local inhabitants. Getting to know the castles and fortresses of other countries around the Baltic Sea would strengthen the identity of people of those areas and of the area as a whole.

Castles and fortresses across Europe represent a common and/or shared European history. Although they often point to a shared history, in every country the castles are different and unique architectural monuments.

It was felt that though getting to know the castles and fortresses of other countries around the Baltic Sea, would create a stronger identity between Europeans in this region and in Europe as a whole. The topic was inspired by the need to educate about and also protect castles as good sources of common history, ties between various nations, movement of architects and craftsmen etc.

### Origins of the event proposal:

The idea to propose such type of common heritage originates from earlier experiences, incl. cultural tourism - we have witnessed a great deal of interest from the public, but also seen common concerns and problems from the owners in attempting to preserve historic castles and fortresses and make them accessible for the public.

There is a common history behind many of the castles in Europe, and definitely links to many European countries. The platform of the EHD is perfect to draw attention to these monuments of our common heritage - open days, voluntary work etc.

**Short description of the event:**

Firstly, a list of castles and fortresses that form either a historic, constructional, military or cultural unity or "cultural path" should be made. Activities around the castles could include e.g. introduction in various forms (open doors, exhibitions, guided walks, seminars), voluntary maintenance work on site, sign-posting the castles with information boards in 2-3 languages.

Attention on European level would help secure national and European funding for the preservation and restoration of these historic monuments, the international background of various events organized will stress the common European heritage.

The event would focus on historic castles and fortresses, similar built heritage and architectural monuments, the landscapes surrounding this heritage, the historic context of building and using this heritage. The activities in this event would include open doors in the castles, joint travelling exhibition around the Baltic Sea, guided walks, international conference, and voluntary work with schoolchildren etc.

**European dimension of Castles and Fortresses:**

This type of heritage is present in all European countries; they unite and often represent the common history of countries, whilst at the same time presenting us with common challenges in preserving and restoring these historic landmarks. Preserving and introducing European castles and fortresses allows people to recognize their own history, and a common European heritage at the same time. This heritage may serve as a tool to strengthen the European identity of people.

The value of the event lies in bringing forward the common history and heritage of Europe through a single type of monuments that in the past have played an important role in the development of Europe. Introducing a larger public to castles and fortresses would require very similar activities in every country: open the doors free of charge, organize guided walks, maintenance work, exhibitions and seminars.