



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:

***Polesje region - European common heritage***

### Initiator of the project:

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### Event background:

Polesia is a marshy region lining the Pripjat River in Southern Belarus (Brest, Pinsk, Kalinkavichy, Homel), Northern Ukraine (in the Volyn, Rivne, Zhytomyr, Kiev, and Chernihiv Oblasts), and partly in Poland (Lublin) and Russia (Bryansk). It is a flatland within the watersheds of the Southern Bug and Prypyat rivers. The two rivers are connected by the Dnieper-Bug Canal, built during the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski, the last king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

There is an extraordinary, but typical for the region, village, called Wyrki – which always lies on the border: Rus and Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Chelm and Podlasie and Polesie. It had been inhabited by people speaking in a different language, professing a different religion (Orthodox population, speaking in Polish - Ukrainian language, Catholic population often immigrants - Polish Masurian dialect and Jews with their various accents) but having strong conviction that it is their common traditions, culture, crafts, which affect the unique character of this place and making them united in diversity.

### Origins of the event proposal:

The idea was inspired by the proposal that was made in Wroclaw during the 4<sup>th</sup> European Heritage Forum to organize cross-border events in the framework of EHD. It is based on the similarities in tangible (architecture) and intangible (folk songs etc.) heritage.

The project will benefit the tangible and intangible cultural heritage from Belarus and neighboring countries (Poland, Ukraine and Russia) which have the common borders and heritage. The representatives of those countries would share their experience on various aspects of the safeguarding of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and use with the view of identifying the best existing practices to combine the protection and the realization of appropriate activities, which may contribute to the social and economic development of local communities. All participants will benefit from the expertise of international experts (including ICOMOS) on modern trends in related fields. The workshop may become an impetus for the development of the sub-regional and even regional network of cooperation in the capacity-building for the safeguarding of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and its use for sustainable development.

### **Short description of the event:**

Due to complicated and difficult history of the region the main purpose of the project is to organize and hold the international expert meeting with the participation of experts from Poland, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus to raise awareness and disseminate best practices of safeguarding of the tangible and intangible common cultural heritage and further use of it for sustainable development in the light of the UNESCO Convention of 2003.

***Polesje region - European common heritage*** is an opportunity to expand the strategy on cultural heritage as well. The synergy of different but common activities is the best way not only to preserve and promote this European region but to create the whole set of actions accordance with the strategy of sustainable development.

The publication of the album and producing the film devoted to the best examples of the common tangible and intangible cultural heritage from Poland, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus will be created in the frameworks of the project.

One of the planned activities is to do an art festival in the place of the Polesje region with specific wooden churches. Folk groups from countries involved can represent their music, dance, craftsmanship, paintings. A gathering (round table) of architects and ethnologists can be going on at the same time at the same place discussing similarities, their historic background and European routs.

### **European dimension of Polesje:**

The wooden architecture structures in the region were added to the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List on January 30, 2004 in the Cultural category.

European dimension of Polesje project is associated with the common history and common culture which are to be admire together and common problems to solve together as well (for example: Chernobyl disaster influence). Nowadays the most serious issues are associated with high unemployment rates. Cross-border projects may have an important factor of tourism development, can involve and unite people in rural, sometimes depressed regions to revive their spirit and stimulate economic development.

By using European Heritage Days as a project which not only shows the local history and heritage but strengthens the sense of self-consciousness and which prepares young people to take part in the economic and social development of the communities. It is happening but in a small-scale and the good examples should go from above because eventually the most important role is played by local players - administrations, educational establishments, ngoses etc.