

EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL  
**GUIDELINES**  
FOR CANDIDATE SITES



EUROPEAN  
HERITAGE LABEL



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## 1. Introduction

These Guidelines are based on the [Decision No 1194/2011/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011, establishing the **European Heritage Label** action.

The **European Heritage Label** recognises sites that have a symbolic European value and have played a significant role in the history, culture of Europe and/or the building of the European Union.

Launched in 2006 as a joint initiative by national governments (“intergovernmental European Heritage Label initiative”), the European Heritage Label is today a European action implemented at European level.

The sites awarded the European Heritage Label are carefully selected at national and European level for their symbolic value and the activities they offer to raise awareness of their significant role in the history and culture of Europe and/or the building of the European Union.

With the attribution of the European Heritage Label, heritage sites will become part of a network of sites that have shaped the history of Europe.

The European Heritage Label sites provide opportunities for all European citizens to connect with their rich cultural heritage and enhance their knowledge of the European Union. Spanning from the dawn of civilisation to the Europe of today, these sites invite visitors and especially young people to discover all types of cultural heritage from a European perspective.

### 1.1. Objectives

The **European Heritage Label** contributes to strengthening European citizens’ sense of belonging to the European Union, in particular that of young people, based on shared values and elements of European history and cultural heritage, as well as an appreciation of national and regional diversity. The action also contributes to strengthening mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue.

The European Heritage Label focuses on the sites’ **symbolic value** and the importance of raising the profile of sites that have played a significant role in the history and culture of Europe and/or the building of the Union. It increases European citizens’ understanding of the history of Europe and the building of the Union and of their common yet diverse cultural heritage, especially in relation to the democratic values and human rights that underpin the process of European integration.

Therefore, candidate sites for the **European Heritage Label** are invited to submit with the application for the attribution of the label a **project**, the implementation of which is to begin by the end of the designation year at the latest. The project shall include activities aiming at raising awareness of the European significance of the site. It will also include educational activities, especially for young people, which increase the understanding of the common history of Europe and of its shared yet diverse heritage

and which strengthen the sense of belonging to a common space. In addition, candidate sites are invited to submit a **work plan** permitting to evaluate their operational capacity to carry out the project in relation to the European Heritage Label.

## 1.2. Criteria for the attribution of the European Heritage Label

The attribution of the European Heritage Label is based on the following criteria:

- (a) the **symbolic European value** of a site and its **significant role in the history and culture of Europe and/or the building of the Union**;
- (b) the **project** proposed for the European Heritage Label;
- (c) the **work plan** permitting to evaluate their operational capacity to carry out the project in relation to the European Heritage Label.

More precisely, the applications of candidate sites are assessed on the basis of the following elements:

- (a) The candidate site must have a **symbolic European value** and played a **significant role in the history and culture of Europe and/or the building of the Union**;

The candidate sites must therefore demonstrate one or more of the following:

- i. their cross-border or pan-European nature;  
As regards their cross-border or pan-European nature, candidate sites should demonstrate how their past and present influence and attraction extends beyond the national borders of a Member State.

- ii. their place and role in European history and European integration, and their links with key European events, personalities or movements;  
As regards European movements, these can include inter alia cultural, artistic, political, social, scientific, technological or industrial movements that are relevant at European level and include a number of European countries.

- iii. their place and role in the development and promotion of the common values that underpin European integration.  
Candidate sites should demonstrate that they have made a significant contribution to the development and promotion of one or more of these common values.

Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union states that "*the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.*"

The common values that underpin European integration are also described in detail in the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#).

(b) the **project** proposed for the European Heritage Label;

Candidate sites for the Label must submit a project for the European Heritage Label, the implementation of which is to begin by the end of the designation year at the latest. The project must include all of the following elements:

- i. raising awareness of the European significance of the site, in particular through appropriate information activities, signposting and staff training;
- ii. organising educational activities, especially for young people, which increase the understanding of the common history of Europe and its shared yet diverse heritage and which strengthen the sense of belonging to a common space;
- iii. promoting multilingualism and facilitating access to the site by using several languages of the Union;
- iv. taking part in the activities of networks of labelled sites in order to exchange experiences and initiate common projects.
- v. raising the profile and attractiveness of the site on a European scale, by exploiting the opportunities offered by new technologies and digital and interactive means and by seeking synergies with other European initiatives.

The organisation of artistic and cultural activities which foster the mobility of European culture professionals, artists and collections, stimulate intercultural dialogue and encourage links between heritage and contemporary creation and creativity is to be welcomed whenever the specific nature of the site allows this.

Candidate sites are invited to provide an **implementation plan** for their project for the European Heritage Label by using the template attached to the application forms for the European Heritage Label and provided in Annex 2 of these guidelines. In the project implementation plan, the candidate site needs to provide a list of actions that the candidate site proposes to implement for each element of its projects, with the following information:

- a brief statement on the present situation on site, highlighting why the action is needed
- intended outcomes: what is the action planning to achieve and for whom (target groups)?
- A provisional start date for each action
- Indicators and how the candidate site plan to assess whether the action has achieved its intended outcomes and objectives

The proposed project can already be in place at the time of the application or the candidate sites commit themselves to implement it if they receive the label. In the latter case, the project implementation is to begin during the designation year (i.e. the year after the selection of the site at European level).

- (c) the **work plan** permitting to evaluate their operational capacity to carry out the project in relation to the European Heritage Label.

Candidate sites for the Label must submit a **work plan** which demonstrates that the sites have the **operational capacity** to implement the proposed project. All the following elements will be considered in assessing the candidate sites' work plan:

- (i) ensuring the sound management of the site, including defining objectives and indicators;
- (ii) ensuring the preservation of the site and its transmission to future generations in accordance with the relevant protection regimes;
- (iii) ensuring the quality of the reception facilities such as the historical presentation, visitors' information and signposting;
- (iv) ensuring access for the widest possible public, inter alia, through site adaptations or staff training;
- (v) according special attention to young people, in particular by granting them privileged access to the site;
- (vi) promoting the site as a sustainable tourism destination;
- (vii) developing a coherent and comprehensive communication strategy highlighting the European significance of the site;
- (viii) ensuring that the management of the site is as environmentally friendly as possible.

Applicants must have the operational capacity to deliver their project. In the application form, the candidate sites will be asked to demonstrate their capacity by submitting:

- A one-page operating budget statement for the overall management of the site (conservation works excluded), including annual running costs, communication costs, cultural, educational, research, networking activities costs. It should also identify the principal sources of income available to the site.
- A one-page statement on their organisational structure and human resources allocated to the implementation of the project.

Applicants are also invited to indicate in the application if the site has received other international recognition or is part of other international networks such as: the European Union Cultural Heritage Prize / Europa Nostra Award, the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Member State's Tentative List for World Heritage, the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the Natura 2000 list of natural heritage sites or any other international recognition.

As regards the criteria concerning the project and the operational capacity, each site is assessed in a proportionate manner, taking account of its characteristics.

In the application stage, the project and the work plan must encompass at the same time a long-term vision of how the candidate sites intend to highlight its European significance as well as a short- and medium-term series of activities to give concrete expression to that vision.

As the European Heritage Label is attributed on a permanent basis, the site's project and work plan shall be regularly updated and adjusted over the years in the light of evolving circumstances, as part of the Monitoring on a regular basis provided for in the [Decision No 1194/2011/EU](#)

## 2. Who can apply for the European Heritage Label?

The **European Heritage Label** is open to sites in the 25 Member States that participate in the action: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. As a result, only sites located in those 25 Member States are eligible for the European Heritage Label. This also applies to transnational sites, where all participating sites without exception must be located in one of these Member States.

For the purpose of the European Heritage Label, “**sites**” means monuments, natural, underwater, archaeological, industrial or urban sites, cultural landscapes, places of remembrance, cultural goods and objects and intangible heritage associated with a place, including contemporary heritage.

In the case of cultural goods and objects, as well as intangible heritage, there shall be a clear link of such heritage sites with a physical space in which the **project** for the European Heritage Label as indicated above is implemented (e.g. museum, exhibition hall, library, archives facilities, public or private property, etc.). The access for the widest possible public should be ensured.

## 3. How are the sites selected?

The selection of the **European Heritage Label** sites is carried out in two stages.

### 3.1 Pre-selection at national level

Member States participating in the **European Heritage Label** action are responsible for the pre-selection of sites. Heritage sites are invited to submit applications to the [National coordinator](#) in the relevant country.

Each Member State may pre-select up to two sites under each Selection, in accordance with the Calendar set out in Annex 1 of these Guidelines.

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, each Member State establishes its own procedures for the pre-selection of sites, as well as its own calendar.

Candidate sites shall use the application forms made available by the Member States for single, national thematic and transnational site applications. This form shall be filled in by all candidates and sent to the National coordinator responsible for pre-selection of sites at national level.

Member States shall transmit the application forms for pre-selected sites to the Commission **by 1 March of the year of the selection procedure**.

Application forms shall be submitted in the language(s) used for the pre-selection at national level, provided that it (they) is (are) among the 24 EU official languages. In addition, with a view to a more efficient selection process by the independent experts, the application forms shall also be submitted in **English**.

For all questions concerning the pre-selection procedure, candidate sites shall contact the National Coordinator in their Member State.

### **3.2 Selection at Union level**

The final selection of sites is carried out by a European panel of independent experts under the responsibility of the European Commission. The European panel evaluates the applications related to the pre-selected sites on the basis of the overall and specific objectives of the action and criteria for the attribution of the Label. If necessary, on behalf of the panel, the Commission may ask candidate sites for further information regarding the application.

The European panel issues a report on the pre-selected sites with recommendations for the attribution of the label.

After the submission of the report, the Commission designates the sites to be awarded the label, having due regard to the recommendation of the European panel.

Candidate sites should note that, under the [Decision No 1194/2011/EU](#), the Panel has until the end of the selection year to submit its report to the European Commission. Therefore, the designation for the European Heritage Label by the Commission takes place early in the year following the selection. In other words and as an example, for the 2021 Selection, the European Commission will formally nominate the sites to receive the Label in early 2022.

Candidate sites which are not selected for the attribution of the **European Heritage Label** may submit new applications for pre-selection at national level in the following years.

The label is awarded on a permanent basis provided that they continue to meet the criteria for the award of the label and that they respect the project and work plan submitted with the application for the label.



## 4. National thematic sites and transnational sites

The **European Heritage Label** is awarded to **three types of sites**:

- **Single site**: a 'site' as defined above submits an application;
- **National thematic site**: several sites, located in the same Member State, focus on one specific theme and submit a joint application;
- **Transnational site**: several sites, located in different Member States, focus on one specific theme and submit a joint application, or one site located on the territory of at least two Member States submits an application.

When a national thematic or a transnational site is selected for the attribution of the label, the label is awarded to the national thematic or transnational site as a whole and under a common name.

If a transnational site meets all the criteria, priority is given to that site during the selection.

### 4.1 National thematic sites

In order for a national thematic site to be eligible for the attribution of the European Heritage Label, it shall comprise a reasonable number of participating sites. Moreover, it shall comply with all of the following conditions:

- (a) demonstration of the European added value of a joint application compared to individual applications;
- (b) demonstration of a clear thematic link between the individual sites;
- (c) full compliance with the criteria for the attribution of the European Heritage Label by each participating site
- (d) designation of one of the participating sites as the site coordinator for the national thematic site, and single contact point for the Commission;
- (e) application under a common name that should be concise and may not include the names of the individual sites.

Applications for national thematic sites follow the same general procedure as for single sites. They are pre-selected by their Member State within the limit of maximum two sites per selection year.

Candidate sites will fill in the application form for national thematic sites. The application form is in two parts:

Part 1 "The Joint Application": this section is to be filled in by the site coordinator;

Part 2 "Specific information about each sub site": this section needs to be filled in by each sub-site separately.

The site coordinator will collect all the contributions and submit the national thematic site application form to the national coordinator to be considered for the pre-selection at national level.

Whenever a national thematic site is selected, the European Heritage Label is given to the national thematic site as a whole under its common name, and not to the participating sites individually. Each of the participating sites has the right to display the European Heritage Label plaque at its premises, with the plaque clearly indicating the common name of the national thematic site. This has to be taken into account for all communication activities, at both European and local level, to avoid any risk of confusion. Particular attention will be paid to this aspect as part of the Monitoring on a regular basis provided for in the [Decision No 1194/2011/EU](#).

## 4.2 Transnational sites

Each participating site in a transnational site shall be located in one of the Member States participating in the action. Transnational sites shall demonstrate very clearly the added value of a joint application by participating sites compared to single applications.

In order for a transnational site to be eligible for the attribution of the European Heritage Label, it shall comply with all of the following conditions:

- (a) full compliance with the criteria for the attribution of the European Heritage Label by each participating site;
- (b) designation of one of the participating sites as the coordinator of the transnational site which will be the single contact point for the Commission. In the case of one site located in two or more Member States, there are two options: either the site is managed jointly by different organisations in the various Member States concerned and one of these organisations must be the site coordinator, or it is managed by one single transnational body and one of the Member States must take leadership and responsibility for the pre-selection and monitoring process;
- (c) application under a common name that should be concise and must not include the names of the individual sites participating in the transnational site;
- (d) where appropriate, demonstration of a clear thematic link between the participating sites.

Applications for transnational sites shall follow the same procedure as for single sites. They are pre-selected by the Member State of their site coordinator, within the limit of the maximum two sites that this Member State can nominate per selection year (note that the other participating sites shall not be counted for the quotas of their Member State).

Consultations between the sites participating in a transnational site must involve all the relevant national coordinators from an early stage.

Candidate sites will fill in the application form for transnational sites. The application form is in two parts:

Part 1 "The Joint Application": this section is to be filled in by the site coordinator;

Part 2 "Specific information about each sub site": this section needs to be filled in by each sub-site separately.

The site coordinator will collect all the contributions and submit the transnational site application form to the national coordinator to be considered for the pre-selection at national level.

If a transnational site is pre-selected by a Member State, it must be proposed by this Member State on behalf of the other Member States, once those Member States have given their agreement. All the application forms, including the cover form must be submitted to the Commission jointly by the national coordinator of the Member State of the coordinator site.

If a transnational site and a single site both meet the criteria of the EHL with the same level of quality, priority shall be given to the transnational site in the selection at the European level.

If a transnational site is selected, the European Heritage Label will be given to the transnational site as a whole under a common name and not to the participating sub-sites individually. In other words, if the European Heritage Label is given to a transnational site comprising 5 participating sub-sites, then one Label will be given to the transnational site and not 5 Labels to 5 individual sub-sites. Each of the 5 sub-sites has the right to display the EHL plaque at the entrance, but the plaque shall clearly indicate the common name of the transnational site. This shall be taken into account for all communication activities, at both European and local level, to avoid any risk of confusion. Particular attention shall be paid to this aspect during the monitoring process.

## **5. Designation of sites to be awarded the European Heritage Label**

The Commission designates the sites to be awarded the European Heritage Label, having due regard to the recommendation of the European panel. The European Heritage Label is awarded on a permanent basis subject to the conditions laid down for the Monitoring of sites awarded the European Heritage Label (see Section 6) and to the continuation of the European Heritage Label action.

Candidate sites should note that, under the [Decision No 1194/2011/EU](#), the Panel has until the end of the selection year to submit its report to the European Commission. Therefore, the designation for the European Heritage Label by the Commission takes place early in the year following the selection year. In other words and as an example, for the 2021 Selection, the European Commission will formally nominate the sites to receive the Label in early 2022.

## 6. Monitoring of European Heritage Label sites

Each site awarded the label is **monitored on a regular basis** in order to ensure that it continues to meet the criteria for the attribution of the Label and that it respects the project and work plan submitted with the application. Monitoring of sites awarded the label takes place **every four years** in accordance with the calendar in Annex 1.

Member States are responsible for the monitoring of all the sites located on their respective territory. The Commission will provide a **common monitoring form** for the Member States to ensure a coherent approach to the monitoring procedure. The National Coordinators shall collect all the necessary information from the sites, fill in the monitoring form and submit it to the Commission **before 1<sup>st</sup> March** of the monitoring year.

Monitoring of transnational sites is the responsibility of the National Coordinator in the Member State of the site coordinator. In cooperation with the site coordinator, the National Coordinator shall collect the necessary information from all the sites participating in the transnational site, including those located outside the respective territory. This information shall be synthesised and included in the monitoring form.

The European Panel examines the Monitoring forms and issues a **report on the state of the sites awarded the label**, including if necessary recommendations to be taken into account for the following monitoring period.

## 7. Withdrawal or renunciation of the European Heritage Label

If the European panel establishes that a site no longer meets the criteria or that it no longer complies with the project and operational capacity submitted in its application, it can launch a **procedure leading to the withdrawal** of the Label from the said site. This procedure shall be carried out in two stages, which can last up to 18 months each:

- In the first stage, the European panel shall initiate a dialogue with the Member State concerned with a view to facilitating the necessary adjustments to the site. Whenever the European panel judges that the adjustments have been made or sufficient guarantees have been given, it may decide to close the procedure.
- If, 18 months after the beginning of the dialogue, the European panel judges that the necessary adjustments have not been made, it may decide to launch a second stage of the procedure. In this second stage, the European panel shall formally notify the Commission of the problems encountered with the site. The notification shall be accompanied by a statement of reasons and a set of practical recommendations on how to improve the situation. If, 18 months after reception of the notification, the practical recommendations have not been implemented by the site, the European panel shall issue a recommendation to the Commission to withdraw the Label from the site.

The Commission shall then formalise the withdrawal of the Label in the course of the following designation procedure. The site must return to the Commission the plaque bearing the logo of the European Heritage Label.

The same procedure shall apply in the case of national thematic sites and transnational sites. The abovementioned **dialogues shall be held with the Member State** of the site coordinator. If the European panel recommends the withdrawal of the Label from a national thematic site or a transnational site, this withdrawal shall apply to the national thematic site or the transnational site in its entirety. However, in exceptional cases where the coherence of national thematic site or the transnational site is not undermined, the European panel may recommend limiting the withdrawal to the participating site concerned.

Throughout this procedure, all contacts between the European panel on the one hand and the site in question and the relevant national coordinator on the other must take place **via the Commission and the national coordinator** in order to ensure effective coordination.

A site that has been designated under the European Heritage Label may at any time decide to **renounce the Label voluntarily**. In this case, it must notify the National Coordinator of its decision by letter. The National Coordinator must in turn inform the Commission of the renunciation by forwarding a copy of the letter. The Commission shall formalise the renunciation in the course of the following designation procedure. The site must return to the European Commission the plaque bearing the logo of the European Heritage Label.

## 8. The European panel of independent experts

A European panel of independent experts has been established to **carry out the selection and the monitoring at Union level**. It ensures that the criteria for the attribution of the European Heritage Label are properly applied by the sites across the Member States.

The European panel consists of 13 members appointed by the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. The members of the European panel are appointed for three years.

Applicant sites are not permitted to contact a member of the European Panel.

The Commission **does not allow any contacts** between the European Heritage Label sites and the members of the European panel on issues linked to the European Heritage Label without prior authorisation. The Commission ensures the coordination between the Member States and the European panel.

## 9. Communication concerning the European Heritage Label

The European Commission and the European Heritage Label sites share the responsibility for communication and information concerning the Label and ensuring its visibility at European level.

Heritage sites awarded the European Heritage Label are required to give prominence to the **logo of the European Heritage Label** on all their publications, posters, programmes and other products realised by the site.

The Commission ensures the visibility of the European Heritage Label at European level, in particular by **maintaining a specific website** with general information on the European Heritage Label and the network of heritage sites awarded the Label.

## 10. Networking between European Heritage Label sites

Heritage sites attributed the Label will be part of the **network of European Heritage Label sites** providing opportunities for networking, exchange of good practices and experience, peer learning activities, and a favourable ground for initiating cooperation and common projects.

## 11. Budget available for the European Heritage Label

The European Heritage Label has a symbolic value. The budget earmarked under Creative Europe programme for the European Heritage Label as a special action covers the cost for implementing the action at European level, including the European panel of independent experts, communicating information concerning the European Heritage Label and ensuring its visibility at Union level and foster networking activities between the sites awarded the European Heritage Label.

European Heritage Label sites are encouraged to explore, where appropriate, the possibility of seeking financial support from EU programmes and funds. A mapping of such funds for Cultural Heritage is shared by the Commission on a regular basis.

## 12. Contact

- For additional information or general questions about the application process, please contact the [National coordinator](#) in your Member State.
- For very specific questions, you may also contact the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, at

## Annex 1: Calendar

2011	Entry into force of the Decision
2013	First selection of sites for the Member States which did not participate in the intergovernmental initiative
2014	First selection of sites for the Member States which participated in the intergovernmental initiative
2015	Selection
2016	Monitoring
2017	Selection
2018	Evaluation of the label
2019	Selection
2020	Monitoring
2021	Selection
2022	–
2023	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2023 at the latest.
2024	Monitoring procedure. The Commission must receive the monitoring reports by 1 March 2024 at the latest. Evaluation of the label
2025	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2025 at the latest.
...	...

## Annex 2: Project Implementation Plan template

<b>Project Implementation Plan template: The listing of activities to implement your project</b>					
<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Present situation</b> <i>Specify here the need the action aims to address</i>	<b>Details of actions</b> <i>Specify here the action to implement. The number of actions below is indicative (add/remove as required)</i>	<b>Intended outcome</b> <i>Specify here what the action intends to achieve and for whom</i>	<b>Start date of action</b> <i>Specify here when the action started or is planned to start</i>	<b>Indicator</b> <i>Specify here how you intend to assess whether the action has achieved its intended outcome(s)</i>
Activity 2.1: Raising awareness of the European significance		Action 1			
		Action 2			
		Action 3			
Activity 2.2: Organising educational activities		Action 1			
		Action 2			
		Action 3			
Activity 2.3: Promoting multilingual access		Action 1			
		Action 2			
		Action 3			



Activity 2.4: Taking part in networking activities		<i>Action 1</i>			
		<i>Action 2</i>			
		<i>Action 3</i>			
Activity 2.5: Raising the profile and attractiveness		<i>Action 1</i>			
		<i>Action 2</i>			
		<i>Action 3</i>			
Activity 2.6: Artistic and cultural activities (optional)		<i>Action 1</i>			
		<i>Action 2</i>			
		<i>Action 3</i>			