

GUIDE

FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL

For the attention of the Member States



EUROPEAN
HERITAGE LABEL



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1. Context

The European Heritage Label (EHL) is a new European Union initiative. It builds on an earlier intergovernmental initiative launched in 2006. It was established by Decision No 1194/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011.

European Union involvement in the European Heritage Label is expected to strengthen coordination among the Member States and thus ensure the development and proper application of common, clear and transparent selection criteria. Moreover, new selection and monitoring procedures will help to bring the sites into line with the Label's objectives.

The general objectives of the European Heritage Label are to strengthen 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, and to strengthen intercultural dialogue.

The European Heritage Label is different from other initiatives in the field of cultural heritage such as the UNESCO World Heritage List, the Unesco Conventions on Intangible Cultural [Heritage](#) or the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes:

- it will only designate sites which have played a significant role in the history of Europe and/or EU integration;
- it is not about a site's beauty or architectural quality, but rather its symbolic value;
- it is not about conserving sites, but rather the activities on offer and their educational dimension, especially for young people;
- it will make labelled sites more effective by promoting networking among them, which will facilitate peer learning and boost momentum.

The Label seeks to stress the symbolic value and raise the profile of sites which have played a significant role in the history and culture of Europe and the building of the European Union.

This guide aims to provide some additional practical information specifically for the national coordinators nominated by the Member States participating in the Label and their staff to ensure smooth implementation of the various EHL procedures at national level as well as effective coordination with the Commission.

2. Participation in the European Heritage Label

Participation in the EHL is open to the Member States on a voluntary basis (Article 4 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

2.1 Member States

On 4 June 2012, the following 22 Member States had confirmed their participation: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, Slovakia and Romania.

Only sites located in those 22 Member States are eligible for the EHL. This also applies to transnational sites, where all participating sites without exception must be located in one of these Member States (see section 5 of this guide for specific information about transnational sites).

The five countries which have not yet confirmed their participation may join the EHL at a later stage by notifying the European Commission in a letter.

All new Member States which join the EU after 1 January 2012 will may participate in the EHL following their accession. The Commission will contact them in due course to ask them if they wish to participate.

2.2 Definition of sites

In the context of the EHL a broad definition of ‘sites’ is used (Article 2 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

1) ‘Sites’ means natural, underwater, archaeological, industrial or urban sites, monuments, cultural landscapes, places of remembrance, cultural goods and objects and intangible heritage associated with a place, including contemporary heritage (recently built sites or sites which have played a specific role in recent European history).

2) ‘Transnational site’ means:

(a) several sites, located in different Member States, which focus on one specific theme in order to submit a joint application; or

(b) one site located on the territory of at least two Member States.

3) ‘National thematic site’ means several sites, located in the same Member State, which focus on one specific theme in order to submit a joint application.

For all these categories, contemporary heritage may also be covered.

In the case of cultural goods and objects, as well as intangible heritage, there must be a link to a clearly identifiable physical space in which the information and educational activities will be carried out.

3. National coordinators

Each Member State which participates in the EHL must nominate a national coordinator to ensure effective exchange of information and coordination with the Commission. Some Member States have also designated a contact point for the sites. The national coordinators (and the contact points, if relevant) will be the sole contacts for the Commission in the Member States for any issue related to the EHL. Annex 2 contains the list of national coordinators and contact points, along with their contact details.

The national coordinators are under the direct responsibility of the relevant national ministries. Their key tasks are as follows (additional tasks may be defined at a later stage):

- Effective dissemination at national level of all the practical information received from the Commission on the selection and monitoring procedures of the EHL. Extensive information can be found on the Commission's web site (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm) and in the Guidelines for candidate sites (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm).
- Transmitting to the Commission, within the deadline, the application forms for the pre-selected sites using the document made available for this purpose (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm).
- Transmitting the monitoring reports to the Commission within the deadline.
- Assisting the Commission, if the panel of experts in charge of assessing the sites during the selection or monitoring procedure ask for further information on a site.
- Assisting the Commission if it is necessary to organise a site visit for the panel of experts at the selection or monitoring stage.

As the Member States are responsible for pre-selecting sites at national level, whenever a potential candidate site contacts the Commission for information on how to participate in the EHL, the Commission will refer them to the relevant national coordinator. The contact details of the national coordinators will also be published on the Commission's website.

If a Member State replaces its national coordinator, the relevant national ministry must immediately inform the Commission and forward the new contact details.

If a national coordinator decides to leave, the relevant national ministry must replace him or her within the shortest possible time and forward the new contact details to the Commission.

If necessary, the Commission may organise meetings in Brussels of the national coordinators' network.

4. Selection procedure

4.1. General procedure

The selection of sites will take place in two stages. Sites must first be pre-selected at national level. The final selection will then be carried out at European level by a panel of independent experts under the European Commission's responsibility.

The pre-selection of sites is the responsibility of the Member States (Article 10 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). No site may participate in the selection procedure unless it has first been pre-selected at national level.

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, each Member State may establish its own procedures for the pre-selection, as well as its own calendar. However, it is obliged to comply with the following three conditions:

- The pre-selection must be based on the common criteria for the EHL (Article 7 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).
- The common application form must be used (Article 9 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).
- The application forms for the pre-selected sites must be transmitted to the Commission by the national coordinator no later than 1 March of the year of the selection procedure.

If one of these three conditions is not met, the applications will not be taken into account for the final selection.

The Commission expects to receive the application forms in the language(s) of the national pre-selection, provided that it (they) is (are) included in the 23 official EU languages. In addition, for the sake of the efficiency of the selection process and considering that the debates between panel members will most probably take place in English, it is essential that the Commission receives an English version of the application form as well.

Each Member State may pre-select up to two sites every two years, in accordance with the calendar in Annex 1.

4.1.2 Selection at European level

Once the pre-selection stage has been finalised, the Commission will publish the list of all the pre-selected sites on its website and inform the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions. Thus, those Institutions and any other person or entity may send the Commission any comments which might have an impact on the selection of those sites. Such observations will be attached to the application form relating to the site in question.

The European panel will evaluate the application forms relating to the pre-selected sites with reference to the action's objectives and criteria. The panel will also take into account any comments forwarded to the Commission concerning the list of pre-selected sites, as mentioned above.

If necessary, the panel may ask, via the Commission, for further information from the candidate sites. Visits to the sites may also be organised. However, these visits should remain the exception rather than the rule.

If the panel requires additional information about a site or if it is considered necessary to organise a visit to a site, the Commission will contact the national coordinator.

The Commission will cover the costs incurred by the panel members' visit.

On the basis of all this information, the European panel may recommend a maximum of one site per Member State.

The European panel will prepare a report to be transmitted to the Commission by the end of the year of the selection procedure.

That report will be published on the European Commission's website and sent to the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions for information.

The Commission will then formally designate the sites to be awarded the Label with due regard for the panel's recommendations.

All sites that are awarded the Label will receive from the Commission a plaque bearing the logo of the EHL that must be put up at the entrance to the site. Any signposting outside the site is the responsibility of the local or national authorities concerned.

An awarded site's visibility will increase by being integrated into the EU's communication and promotion strategy for the European Heritage Label. All sites in receipt of the Label will be invited to attend the annual conference of site managers; they will also benefit from networking opportunities and peer learning.

4.2. Transitional years: 2013 and 2014

The year 2013 is reserved for Member States which did not participate in the intergovernmental label and would like to be involved in the 'new' Label. The four Member States concerned are Austria, Estonia, Denmark and the Netherlands (Luxembourg, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and the UK may also participate if they wish, since they did not participate in the intergovernmental label). **Only those four Member States are allowed to propose pre-selected sites for the Label in 2013. By way of an exception they may pre-select up to four sites, all of which can potentially be selected.**

Member States must transmit their application forms for the pre-selected sites to the Commission by 1 March 2013 at the latest. The final designation of the sites will take place in 2014.

The second transitional year (2014) will be reserved for Member States which did participate in the former intergovernmental initiative of the EHL. The Member States concerned are Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain (provided they would like to participate in the 'new' Label). **Only those 18 Member States may**

propose pre-selected sites for the Label in 2014. By way of an exception, they may pre-select up to four sites all of which can potentially be selected.

They may propose sites which received a label within the intergovernmental initiative (see section 9 below).

Member States must transmit their application forms for the pre-selected sites to the Commission by 1 March 2014 at the latest. The final designation of the sites will take place in 2015.

The normal selection procedure described in paragraph 4.1 will be introduced from 2015 onwards.

It is important to stress that direct contact between a Member State or a site and the European panel of independent experts is not allowed. Whenever a contact is needed, it must take place exclusively through the Commission.

5. Transnational sites and national thematic sites.

5.1 Transnational sites

In accordance with Article 12 of Decision 1194/2011/EU, a transnational site must comply with all of the following conditions to be eligible for the Label award:

- (a) full compliance with the EHL criteria (Article 7 of Decision 1194/2011/EU) by each participating site;
- (b) designation of one of the participating sites as the coordinator (i.e. the single contact point for the Commission);
- (c) application under a common name;
- (d) where relevant, demonstration of a clear thematic link.

Applications for transnational sites must follow the same procedure as for single sites.

Without exception, each of the sites involved in a transnational site must be located in one of the Member States participating in the EHL (see section 2).

Consultations among sites wishing to prepare an application for a transnational site must involve all the relevant national authorities from an early stage. The necessary contacts must be made via the national coordinators.

Each site participating in a transnational site must fill in an application form. All the forms must be submitted together by the coordinator to the national authority for the pre-selection procedure. The transnational sites must be pre-selected by the Member State of the

coordinator¹ site within the limit imposed on the number of sites this Member State may nominate for each selection procedure. The other participating sites do not count in the quotas for the Member States concerned).

If a Member State pre-selects a transnational site, it must propose it on behalf of all the Member States concerned, after obtaining the agreement of those Member States. The required contacts must be made via the national coordinators. All the application forms, including section B of the application form filled in by the coordinator, must be submitted to the Commission jointly by the national coordinator nominated by the Member State of the coordinator site.

If a transnational site and a single site both meet the EHL criteria with the same level of quality, in the final selection at EU level priority will be given to the transnational site. If a transnational site is selected, the Label is awarded to the transnational site as a whole under its common name. Each of the participating sites will have the right to display the EHL plaque at the entrance, but the plaque will clearly indicate the common name of the transnational site.

5.2 National thematic sites

In accordance with Article 13 of Decision 1194/2011/EU, to be eligible for the Label transnational sites must comply with all of the following conditions :

- (a) demonstrate the European added value of a joint application compared to individual applications;
- (b) show a clear thematic link;
- (c) ensure that each participating site complies fully with the EHL criteria (Article 7 of Decision 1194/2011/EU);
- (d) designate one of the participating sites as the coordinator, which will be the single contact point for the Commission;
- (e) apply under a common name.

Applications for national thematic sites must follow the same procedure as for single sites. They must be pre-selected by the Member State concerned within the limit imposed on the number of sites it may nominate for each selection procedure. The other participating sites will not count in the quotas of the Member State concerned.

Each site participating in a national thematic site must complete an application form. All the forms must be submitted jointly by the coordinator to the national authority for the pre-selection procedure.

¹ It is important to distinguish between the ‘coordinator’ in the context of transnational sites, i.e. the site which takes on the leadership for the preparation of the application, the implementation of the project and the monitoring of a transnational site (Article 12 of Decision 1194/2011/EU) and the ‘national coordinator’ as described in section 2 of this Guide, whose role is to ensure effective coordination with the Commission.

If a national thematic site is selected, the Label is awarded to the national thematic site as a whole under its common name and not to individual participating sites. Each of the participating sites will have the right to display the EHL plaque at the entrance, but the plaque will clearly indicate the common name of the national thematic site.

6. Monitoring procedure

The EHL will be awarded to sites on a permanent basis provided they continue to meet the criteria and to respect the project and the work plan they submitted in their application. Hence, each site will be monitored on a regular basis (Article 15 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

Member States are responsible for monitoring all sites located on their respective territory.

Member States must collect all the necessary information and prepare a report every four years in accordance with the calendar in Annex 1. That report will include one sub-section for each site located on the territory of the Member State in question. To ensure a consistent approach to the monitoring procedure the Commission, in cooperation with the European panel, will produce a template for the monitoring reports in time for the launching of the first monitoring procedure.

The monitoring of a transnational site is the responsibility of the Member State of the coordinator. In cooperation with the coordinator site, the Member State will collect the necessary information from all the sites participating in the transnational site, including those which are not located on its own territory. This information must then be put together in one section of the report referred to above.

The first monitoring procedure will take place in 2016 and the reports must be sent by the national coordinators to the Commission by 1 March at the latest.

The Commission will then submit all the national reports to the European panel.

By the end of 2016, after examining the national reports, the European panel will issue its own report on the state of the sites which have been awarded the Label. This report will include a short section on each site, if necessary including recommendations to be taken into account by the sites for the following reporting period (2016-2019).

7. Withdrawal of the Label

If the European panel establishes that a site no longer meets the criteria and that it no longer complies with the project and work plan submitted in its application, it can launch a procedure leading to the withdrawal of the Label from the said site (Article 16 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

This procedure will be carried out in two stages which can last up to 18 months each:

- In the first stage, the European panel will initiate a dialogue with the Member State concerned via the national coordinator 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 can 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 can decide to launch a second stage of the procedure. In this second stage, the European panel will formally notify the Commission of the problems encountered with the site. The notification will be accompanied by a statement of reasons and a set of practical recommendations on how to improve the situation. If, 18 months after receipt of the notification, the practical recommendations have not been implemented by the site, the European panel will issue a recommendation to the Commission to withdraw the label from the relevant site.

The Commission will then formally withdraw the Label in the course of the following designation procedure (Article 14 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). The site in question will be obliged to return to the Commission the plaque bearing the logo of the European Heritage Label.

The same procedure will apply in the case of transnational sites and national thematic sites. The above mentioned dialogues will be carried out with the Member State of the coordinator. If the European panel recommends the withdrawal of the Label, this will apply to the transnational site or the national thematic site in its entirety. However, in exceptional cases where the coherence of the sites will not be 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 authority on the other must take place via the Commission and the national coordinator in order to ensure effective coordination. If necessary, the European panel may decide to visit the site concerned at any time in the procedure. In this case the Commission will ask the national coordinator to organise the visit. The costs incurred by the panel members will be covered by the Commission.

8. Renunciation of the Label

A site that has been awarded the European Heritage Label may at any time decide to renounce the label voluntarily (Article 16 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). In this case, the said site must notify the Member State concerned of its decision by letter. The national coordinator will in turn inform the Commission of the renunciation by forwarding a copy of the letter. The Commission will then formalise the renunciation in the course of the following designation procedure. Such a renunciation is final. The site must return to the European Commission the plaque bearing the logo of the European Heritage Label.

9. Sites already in receipt of the label under the intergovernmental arrangements

Member States may decide to propose these sites for the new EHL either in the second transitional year (2014) or under the full scheme from 2015 onwards.

If one of these sites wishes to participate in the 'new' Label, it must submit an application using the application form. It will be assessed under the same procedure and criteria that apply to other sites. In practical terms, for any site, receiving the 'new' Label means :

- being entitled to display the plaque bearing the logo of the European Heritage Label at the entrance to the site;
- greater visibility for the site as a result of being integrated in the EU's communication and promotion strategy for the European Heritage Label;
- being invited to attend the annual conference of site managers, with the benefit of networking opportunities and peer learning.

Sites which have already been awarded the label under the intergovernmental arrangements should receive extensive information about the requirements and benefits of the new EHL.

10. Sources of information

In accordance with Decision No 1194/2011/EU, the Commission, in close cooperation with the European panel of independent experts, has prepared the application form² which must be used by all candidate sites, as well as guidelines for candidate sites.³ Numerous pages dedicated specifically to the EHL are also available on the European Commission's web site (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm).

National coordinators and staff in charge of implementing the EHL at national level are urged to read Decision No 1194/2011/EU carefully, as well as the application form and the guidelines for candidate sites, and to consult the web site regularly.

² The application form is available at the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm

³ The guidelines for candidate sites are available at the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm

Annex 1: Calendar

Year	
2011	Entry into force of the Decision Preparatory work
2012	Preparatory work
2013	First selection of sites for the Member States which did <u>not</u> participate in the intergovernmental initiative (transitional year 1) and which would like to participate in the ‘new’ Label. The Member States concerned are Austria, Estonia, Denmark, and the Netherlands (Luxembourg, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and the UK may also participate if they wish, since they did not participate in the intergovernmental label). By way of an exception they may pre-select up to four sites. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2013 at the latest.
2014	First selection of sites for Member States which did participate in the intergovernmental initiative (transitional year 2). The Member States concerned are Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain (provided they confirm their wish to participate in the new Label). By way of an exception they may pre-select up to four sites. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2014 at the latest.
2015	First ‘normal’ selection procedure open to all the Member States participating in the EHL. They may pre-select up to two sites. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2015 at the latest.
2016	First monitoring procedure. The Commission must receive the monitoring reports by 1 March 2016 at the latest.
2017	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2017 at the latest.
2018	Evaluation of the Label
2019	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2019 at the latest.
2020	Monitoring procedure. The Commission must receive the monitoring reports by 1 March 2020 at the latest.
2021	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2021 at the latest.

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.
...	...

List of national coordinators (and contact points)

Austria

- National coordinator (and contact point) :

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Belgium

- National coordinators (and contact points) :

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Cyprus

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- National coordinator (and contact point) :

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Estonia

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France

- National coordinator :

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Ireland (Ireland will not participate in EHL in the first round of selection in 2013, but will review its position on participation for the 2015 process)

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Lithuania

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Luxembourg has not confirmed its participation in the action yet.

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