

## EDITO



Dear members,

*I am delighted to have the opportunity to address you today in this first issue of the quarterly newsletter of the European Historic Houses association.*

*As new President of the European Historic Houses Association, I decided to present you regularly our actions and achievements and share with you our hopes and challenges ahead.*

*The European Historic Houses with the support of you, its members, is getting the message about the importance of cultural heritage and private historic houses across to EU institutions, NGOs, universities and the general public. Therefore, I consider it is crucial to inform you about our activities to enhance our joint effort, what added value, we have been able to bring to our organisation.*

*2011 is a challenging year for our association and thus we feel more responsibility to report to all our members what is at stake at the EU level.*

*We hope that with this newsletter as our new tool we will manage to reach our objectives and send stronger messages to the EU institutions, and hope they will be heeded.*

*In faith,*



Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem  
Executive President



## 2011 MAIN PRIORITIES

### ■ TOURISM/CULTURE/ECONOMY :

Europe has the largest collection of monuments in the world of which private historic houses make up a large part. In addition to their cultural and social benefits, private historic houses have also a great economic value as they contribute to the production of various local and regional SME activities. This micro economy generated by private historic houses is a non-profit asset. Therefore, the European Historic Houses Associations aims to inform and encourage governments and policy-makers at the EU level to adopt measures (including VAT reduction, subsidies and others) which would enable to recognize and support historic house activities.

### ■ VAT :

The European Commission issued a consultation on the 'Green Paper on the future of VAT- Towards a simpler, more robust and efficient VAT system'. The objective of this Green Paper is to launch a broad based consultation process with stakeholders on the functioning of the current VAT system and how it should be reframed in the future. We had targeted some of the main questions in the EC paper that are of particular interest for the European Historic Houses, especially the question of reduced VAT rates for repair work and renovation.

### ■ ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OF CULTURAL GOODS :

The European Historic Houses Association is taking part as a partner in a study on the illicit trafficking of cultural goods. This study is under the auspice of DG Justice, Freedom and Security at the European Commission and conducted by the French research centre CNRS. The European Historic Houses will work on the part which focuses on the need for developing better cooperation and strengthening means of control, especially on Data analysis, comparison via the sending of questionnaires to our network.

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN BRUSSELS

Palais des Académies  
30<sup>th</sup> of September 2011

Conference on « Tourism and economic activities on cultural heritage »

- GALA DINNER -

## Sustainable development and Europe

### INTERVIEW

Questions from **JEAN DE LAMBERTY**,  
President of the French association  
"La Demeure Historique" to **RODOLPHE DE  
LOOZ-CORSWAREM**, Executive President of  
the European Historic Houses Association

**Note:** This interview will be published in a Guide under the title « Les Monuments Historiques acteurs du développement durable ».

- **Has the EU been able to influence perceptions of the role of historic houses amongst member governments and EU citizens?**

The European Union may have some influence on the perception of the place and role of private historic houses. However, European institutions should be doing more as these monuments make up part of the identity of the European Union. In times of economic, social and political crises which generate significant divisions among the different populations within the EU, we must build on what forms our common foundation: our heritage. This is the role that historic houses can play with the help of associations who defend cultural heritage. Together, they represent past memories but also living memories today.

The Treaty of Lisbon takes an important step forward with the inclusion of Article 3 (3) stating that the European Union "shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that



Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced." More and more EU policies are impacting on the situation of private historic houses. I wish to give two examples: the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Common Agricultural Policy for all matters related to landscapes, including gardens. Much remains to be done but the EU is becoming increasingly aware of the need to enhance cultural heritage to strengthen the sense of belonging in Europe.

- **The question of integrating sustainable development into all EU policies has created a new place for private historic monuments, either through the creation of jobs, through their social role, the role they play in preserving the attractiveness of certain regions, but it also generates new problems, new investments and new costs. Is, in your opinion, the specificity of "historic houses" sufficiently being taken into account?**

The sustainable development strategy of the European Union stems from the 2020 strategy that promotes smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It seems clear that the historic buildings can respond to each of these challenges because sustainable development can be defined as offering a better quality of life for all, for current and future generations. Indeed, we have already evoked the importance of this continuity in families and managers of historic houses who are able to perpetuate, often with courage (mostly with very little resources and financial aid), a tradition, a tale that includes economic aspects and plays a large part in tourism at local, regional and even national levels.

Moreover, I would like to highlight that in its conclusions of the 12th of October 2010, the Council of the European Union noted that "European cultural heritage is of exceptional economic importance for the tourism industry, generating an estimated annual revenue of **EUR 335 billion**, and many of the **9 million jobs** in the tourism sector are linked to it directly or indirectly. The market for conservation of this heritage is estimated at some **EUR 5 billion per year**". This shows how culture and private historic houses are an important part of the EU economy and why they must be taken into account in strategies for sustainable development.

The European Historic Houses Association represents approximately 50,000 private historic houses but also parks and gardens that are essential and unique elements of cultural and natural heritage of the European Union. We must make our voices heard at the national and European levels so that the place of historic buildings in private policies for sustainable development is fully taken into account, understood and recognized. The recognition of the economic and social burdens of European cultural heritage is gradually being accepted and taken into account by European institutions. There is no doubt that the historic houses as well as other professional organizations in Europe with whom we work closely and share the same principles, should get the important place they deserve in this debate.

*The European Historic Houses is a European association, based in Brussels, voicing the interests of historic houses owners. The association is working towards major issues linked to cultural heritage such as environmental issues (PPP Directive), fiscal issues (reduced VAT on work of restoration and maintenance in historic monuments), the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and security issues (keeping and illicit trafficking of cultural goods). The Association brings together 20 national associations from 18 member states and represents more than 50,000 historic houses in Europe.*