



Dear readers, dear friends,

I am pleased to say that the European Historic Houses Association continued to deliver on its mission over the course of 2015. Let us not mince words; the Association is riding high on the occasion of its 30th anniversary. We continue to defend our priorities with enthusiasm and, together with our partners, we are more than ever able to convey the fact that cultural heritage is a valuable resource for economic growth, employment and social cohesion in Europe.

The highlight of the past months was, of course, but not only, our annual General Assembly (#General Assembly) . During this event, representatives of our member associations discussed on the various objectives for the year to come and shared best practices with regards to the running of a historic house. Furthermore, it was the occasion to present the European Historic Houses Award to Baron Baudouin della Faille d'Huyssse the owner of the castle of Leeuwegem. The jury was particularly impressed by the ongoing remarkable renovation of the gardens.

I would also like to draw your attention to the publication of two important reports.

Firstly, the innovative “Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe” report, gathering the available data on cultural heritage in Europe. This study will prove an important tool at both European and national levels, helping us to underline even more the importance of cultural heritage and its preservation.

Secondly, the European Parliament resolution on the European Commission’s communication “towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe”. Now all institutions have called for a European approach to cultural heritage, and I would particularly like to highlight the recommendation for reduced VAT-rates for the renovation of historic buildings; a measure that, if implemented, could greatly improve the affordability of historic houses.

Merry Christmas,

Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem

The General Assembly

From the 1st to the 4th of October, the European Historic Houses Association organised its annual General Assembly in Belgium. Hosted with the support of the Association Royale des Demeures Historiques et Jardins de Belgique, the event included a successful, visits to historic houses in the area around Ghent and a prestigious gala dinner attended by, among others, S.A.R. the Prince Lorenz of Belgium. It was an opportunity for the association to present its accomplishments, as well to agree on the priorities and challenges for the years to come.

During these discussions, the issue of financing appeared as one of the main priorities for the association. Indeed, the high legal standards for the renovation of cultural heritage can prove a significant financial burden. The European Historic Houses Association strongly believes that authorities should provide fiscal incentives to support owners in the service they provide to our common heritage. In that regard, the recommendations of the European Parliament in its recent resolution "Towards and Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe" were very encouraging.

The need to sustain Europe's cultural heritage was also apparent during the conference "Europe's Private Heritage at Risk" on the 2nd of October. Mr. Nymand-Christensen, the Deputy Director of the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, emphasized that good cooperation between public authorities and owners is vital to the sustainability of cultural goods. During the panel discussions that ensued, different speakers highlighted the issue of the illicit trafficking of cultural goods and called for an increased collaboration between owners and authorities to recover stolen goods and encouraged owners to strictly adhere to the standardized criteria of Object ID for their inventories.

Next year, the programme of the General Assembly will be split in two, with the traditional visits and gala dinner being hosted by the Österreichischer Burgenverein in Austria in May, and the General Assembly itself as well as the annual European Historic Houses Conference taking place in October in Brussels. The team of the EHHA looks forward to once again hosting its members for enriching visits and discussions.



From left to right: Françoise Bortolotti (Interpol), Ghislain d'Ursel (Hex Castle), Lucas Verhaegen (Belgian Federal Police)



A group picture in front of the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria

Alliance 3.3

On 22 October 2015, the European Heritage Alliance 3.3 met to take stock of the latest developments in the field of cultural heritage.

The potential of a European Year of Cultural Heritage was high on the agenda, and the different members exchanged views with Walter Zampieri, Head of Unit for Cultural Diversity and Innovation at the Education and Culture DG of the European Commission on this topic. The members of the Alliance believe such a Year would be a tremendous opportunity to raise awareness about the multi-faceted benefits heritage brings to the economy, society, culture and environment.

Furthermore, the Alliance discussed on the dissemination of the report “Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe” and on how partners of the Alliance may combine their efforts to work towards a shared agenda for strategic action, as well as to seriously tackle issues of common concern such as climate change or environmental policy.

Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe

In June, we saw the publication of the groundbreaking “Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe” report. This study by a European consortium of researchers and heritage experts attempts to collect the available data on the contribution of cultural heritage to Europe’s societies, to its economy, its culture and its environment. For us the publication of this report is a major step forward, especially considering the fact that it was originally initiated following a proposal of the Alliance 3.3, which noted the limited availability on good data on the value of cultural heritage.

This report was very well received by policy makers during a meeting of the Intergroup for tourism development and cultural heritage at the European Parliament and we are sure that it will prove a valuable tool in convincing both European and national institutions of the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage.

European Historic Houses Awards

For the year 2015, the jury of the European Historic Houses Award decided to set its sights on the Baron Baudoin della Faille d'Huyse and the castle of Leeuwegem (<http://www.leeuwegem.be/>) . The high-quality renovation that preserved the authentic character of the historic gardens particularly impressed the jury this year.

At the occasion of the annual European Historic Houses Gala Dinner at the castle of Laarne, the winners had the pleasure to receive their price in presence of SAR the Prince Lorenz of Belgium.



European Parliament Report on Cultural Heritage

On September 8, the European Parliament adopted a resolution entitled “Towards and Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe”. This is the last in a series of encouraging communications and reports from the European institutions and we are sure that this political momentum.

One highlight from the Parliament’s resolution is the call for fiscal measures to encourage the renovation and preservation of cultural heritage managed by private bodies. With this recommendation in hand, the association and its members will contact the relevant policy-makers to see this idea included in real legislation.

Action Plan for the Irish Historic House

On the 30th of November, Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem attended the presentation of an 'Action Plan for the Sustainable Future of the Irish Historic House in Private Ownership'. This action plan has been prepared in close cooperation between the Irish Historic Houses Association and the Irish Ministry of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Practically it consists of nine actions that can be taken to increase the link between the houses and the local communities, to encourage renovation through fiscal incentives, to promote heritage assets and to develop a public value approach. A committee has been set up consisting of representatives of historic houses as well as of the ministry to ensure the implementation of this action plan

EPBD Consultation

At the end of October the European Historic Houses Association, together with a real estate coalition of associations, consisting of the European Property Federation, the International Union of Property Owners, the European Group of Valuers' Associations and the European Landowners' Organization replied to consultation of the European Commission on the revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. Besides answering the questions of the questionnaire, we also cooperated with these partners on drafting a letter to Mr. Cañete, the Commissioner on Climate Action & Energy.

Upcoming Events

- **EHHA – Executive Committee Meeting: 10 February, 2016 (Vienna, Austria)**
- **ELO – Forum for the Future of Agriculture: 22 March, 2016 (Brussels, Belgium)**
- **EHHA – Next Generation Conference/Weekend: 15-17 April, 2016 (Bouray-sur-Juine, France)**
- **EHHA – Field Trip Vienna: 5-7 May, 2016 (Vienna, Austria)**
- **Europa Nostra – European Heritage Congress: 23-27 May, 2016 (Wolfsburg, Germany)**
- **EHHA – General Assembly: 5-6 October 2016 (Brussels, Belgium)**

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