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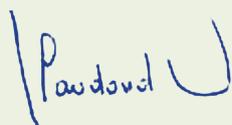


The Royal Association of Belgian Historic Houses clearly has very similar objectives to those of its fellow associations across Europe. Besides, the number of services given to its members is constantly increasing. All members of the Royal Association know what is at stake when it comes to the maintenance of historical monuments.

On the other hand, the Association presents some specific characteristics which give it an interesting outlook. First of all, it is chaired by a member of the Royal family, HRH the Prince Lorenz. Thus, without being linked to the State, it benefits from the moral support of the Monarchy which, in Belgium, has always been deeply involved in environmental and heritage issues. Secondly, it has taken over several run-down monuments which are now managed brilliantly.

This is how the Castle of Laarne, near Ghent, was beautifully restored in order to house furniture from the Middle Ages and, above all, one of the finest collections of silverware in Europe, inherited from Mr. Dallemagne. The Castle of Corroy-le-Château, recently handed down to the Association, is a sort of country museum of decorative arts. The Royal Association of Belgian Historic Houses has thus the ambition to become a nascent National Trust.

In this manner, the Royal Association is combining its traditional role of being a defensive association with that of affirming a real commitment in the field.




Baron Daniel Cardon de Lichtbuer
President of the Royal Association of Belgian Historic Houses & Gardens

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2011

THE VALUE OF HISTORIC HOUSES FOR TOURISM, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



On 30th September 2011 the European Historic Houses Association held its annual conference in the Royal Academies of Brussels during the 31st General Assembly. The event, which dealt with “the value of historic houses for tourism, economic and social development”, gathered close to 150 persons including representatives from DG Enterprise, DG Culture and Education and DG Research, as well as owners of private historic houses from various European countries and European associations defending cultural heritage such as Europa Nostra.

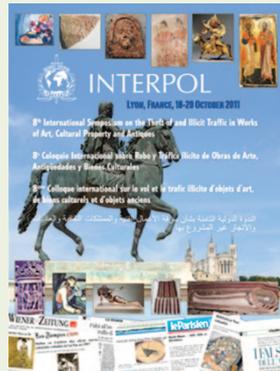
The objective of this conference was to work out how best to use private historic buildings as vehicles for economic and social development and to show how these can help boost tourism in Europe. Indeed, the European Historic Houses would like the EU institutions and decision-makers to recognise the key role private historic houses are playing for the tourism industry and the economy in general in the EU.

This was also an opportunity to share examples of best practices between owners of historic properties. Their testimony shed light on the sometimes arduous task of maintaining and managing a historic building and on the consequences which an opening to the public entails. The various options offered to owners regarding business activities conducted in historic houses and their parklands were also actively discussed. Indeed, the European Historic Houses wish to highlight the need for, on the one hand, a stronger cooperation and unity between stakeholders active in the field of cultural heritage and the real estate sector and, on the other hand, tailor-based financing instruments to better preserve and manage private historic houses in the EU.

PRIORITIES

INTERPOL 8th symposium on theft and the illicit trafficking of art objects, cultural goods and ancient objects

In line with the study on the illicit trafficking of cultural goods implemented under the auspices of DG Justice, Freedom and Security and conducted in partnership with the French research centre CNRS, the European Historic Houses Association took part in the 8th international symposium on theft and illicit trafficking of art objects, cultural goods and ancient objects which took place from October 18th to 20th in Lyon, France. The European Historic Houses Association was present as the representative of private owners of historic houses.



Being one of our Association's main concerns, illicit trafficking has always been high on our agenda and we wish to remind everyone of the fact that private historic properties are often the first victims of theft and illicit trafficking. This is why our Association keeps on raising awareness about the vulnerability of cultural goods by calling for more cooperation between the European police concerning the harmonization of legislation, the means of control and data analysis.

Among the conclusions that were made during the conference, it is worth noting that many of these recommendations concerned issues regarding private owners of historic buildings.

The participants RECOMMEND that member countries:

- Encourage owners and those responsible for premises hosting cultural heritage collections to take appropriate steps to secure the property;
- Review their legislation and, where necessary, adapt it to the needs of an effective protection of cultural heritage;
- Organize specialized training on the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property and related crimes with the assistance of involved bodies and institutions.

Update on the proposal of the Energy Efficiency Directive

The Directive establishes a common framework for the promotion of energy efficiency within the Union in order to ensure the achievement of the Union's target of 20% primary energy savings by 2020 and to pave the way for further energy efficiency improvements beyond that date. It lays down rules designed to remove barriers in the energy market and overcome market failures that impede efficiency in the supply and use of energy. In addition, it provides for the establishment of national energy efficiency targets for 2020.

The Directive mainly targets suppliers of energy, however, the scope of the Directive could affect private owners, especially on the question of the installation of smart metering which records consumption of electric energy and communicates recorded information back to the utility for monitoring and billing purposes. The European Historic Houses within the Coalition of European real estate community emphasized that the technical feasibility of smart metering installation as well as its maintenance and management is a major challenge for certain types of buildings and types of rooms in buildings which is sometimes compounded by local conditions.

The European Historic Houses are concerned by these specific points and we would like to see an exception for historic buildings (public and private) included in the Directive. Our proposition is likely to be adopted, however this exemption will probably be restricted to listed buildings.

Discussions on possible amendments are currently taking place in the European Parliament and could be our chance to obtain the changes we would like to see in the Directive.

For more information:

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The European Historic Houses is a European association, based in Brussels, voicing the interests of historic houses owners. Its work is aimed towards major issues linked to cultural heritage such as environmental issues (PPP Directive), fiscal issues (reduced VAT on restoration and maintenance work to historic monuments), the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and security issues (theft, keeping and illicit trafficking of cultural goods). The Association brings together 18 national associations from 16 European countries and represents more than 50,000 historic houses in Europe.