

WHO WE ARE

The European Historic Houses Association is an organisation based in Brussels and is the voice of privately-owned historic houses and gardens across Europe, representing and defending the built heritage' interests at the European Union level. It is dedicated to the protection, conservation and promotion of the European artistic, cultural and architectural heritage. Our membership comprises of 22 European national Associations, which represents no less than 50 000 private historic houses.

May 2014

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Historic houses and gardens are hence a unique treasure chest full of European culture as in them we find Picture Galleries in the form of private collections, Cathedrals in the form of private chapels, theatres in the form of small private music rooms, Libraries in the form of ancient family archives and Museums in the interior halls, usually boasting extraordinary handcrafted pieces of the time.



VISION

THE 7 COMMANDMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN HISTORIC HOUSES ASSOCIATION

Recognizes that private historic houses across Europe, no matter their sizes or location, are outstanding symbols of Europe's history, culture and identity, and need, as such, to be discovered, admired and preserved for future generations to witness their beauty and maintain their memory;

Considers the undeniable and tremendous cultural, environmental social, economic, touristic, historical, botanical and architectural impacts these houses and their surroundings represent for the European Union and its Member states;

Takes note that cultural heritage generated € 335 billion in 2010¹ for the European tourism sector, of which 35% derived from private historic houses who receive very little in return;

Assesses that approximately 9 million direct and indirect jobs¹ are created in the cultural heritage sector, and that those involved with historic houses can't be outsourced and are, for the most part, local employment;

Deplores the fact that private historic houses and their owners' voices are unfortunately not taken sufficiently into account, as they should be, at the decision-making levels (European, national, regional, local), as well as all crafts that are specific to their conservation;

Reiterates the necessity of public and private bodies to be involved in the protection and promotion of private historic houses, and cultural heritage in general;

Underlines the importance to raise citizens' and tourists' awareness of historic houses in Europe and of the local services that can be provided to them. Indeed, historic houses are unique in the world, a specificity of Europe and should be, as such, cherished.

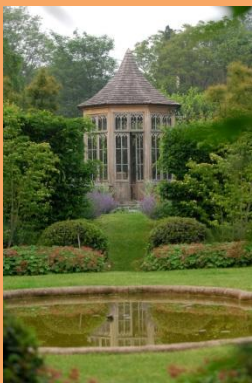
¹ Council of the European Union, 14976/10, §10



“This rich tangible and intangible heritage we share in Europe is a vital part of our identity. It plays a central role in promoting local growth and fosters social inclusion. It helps build confidence in local communities. It attracts tourism. It builds bridges between the past and the present, the local and the global.”

Mrs Androulla Vassiliou

EU commissioner for Culture and Education (2013)



PRIORITIES

HISTORY & CULTURAL VALUES

Historic Houses are outstanding symbols of Europe’s history, culture and have contributed as such to forge its deeply rooted identity. This fact is all the more important as it is true to any private built heritage without any regards to the size, the amount of recognition, the location and the revenue. Heritage is part of every citizen’s daily life, as they have developed emotional attachments to it, and they are the roots of our civilisation. Nonetheless, they remain very fragile and are in need of care and protection.

Historic houses offer significant cultural and historical educational potential that should be enhanced and promoted by owners, but also through the help and cooperation of local collectivities, governments, service providers and cultural stakeholders. There is a need to ensure that citizens can learn of their history, can enjoy historic houses and built heritage’s beauty and can play an active role in maintaining their memory. It is also crucial to raise awareness on the importance of protecting the movable objects inside these houses, from theft and illicit trafficking.

ENVIRONMENT

European private historic houses are key elements in Europe’s constant efforts to protect the environment, through the preservation of biodiversity, sustainable management for the forest and land surrounding the property, and their efficiency in saving energy. With regards to the latter, contrary to popular belief that historic houses are high energy consumers, this private heritage was actually built for continuity through its construction. Indeed, the fact that some houses have already crossed centuries indicates that their long-term sustainability can be better than that of modern buildings. Historic houses can thus play an important part in ensuring the achievement of the European Union’s 2020 20 % reduction of energy consumption target. In order to improve their energy efficiency, there is nonetheless a necessity to consider historic buildings as specific cases which need to be addressed at national level *in concordance with heritage conservation laws*.

Furthermore, historic houses and their surrounding environment are of meaningful importance in the preservation of Europe’s green heritage and its culturally significant landscapes. And one can’t omit the crucial role of private gardens and parks in the protection of biodiversity and preservation of ecosystem services through pollination. Owners of historic houses care for Europe’s very diverse and essential flora and fauna, both in cities and in the countryside, and do so through practices in favor of the sustainable management of their lands with forestry and agriculture. This message engages citizens and politicians who are increasingly concerned for the environment.

TOURISM

Approximately 50% of tourism activities in Europe derive from cultural tourism. In this sense, Europe is a unique and attractive destination for its built heritage and offers many opportunities of enjoyment with its attractions, beauty and history. Tourism is as such of major importance for historic houses' owners and cultural stakeholders, as Europe welcomes new flows of tourists every year, intent on discovering both its renowned and hidden treasures. Indeed, historic houses and their gardens are of primary importance for their historical, cultural, environmental and majestic appeal.

It is crucial to promote sustainable tourism that encompasses the necessity to protect the cultural and built heritage. Indeed, there is a dichotomy between tourism's importance for Europe's economy and society, and the need to not let our cultural heritage be degraded and spoiled through uncontrolled mass tourism. Consequently, cultural tourism has to be managed sustainably with appropriate measures taken at all decision-making levels, notably through a positive financial environment for owners.

LOCAL TERRITORY & EMPLOYMENT

Historic Houses and gardens are a key component of the continent's heritage, contributing to the economic and social growth of the EU, on all levels. But most particularly, historic houses have always relied on long-lasting bonds and partnerships with their local communities to thrive. Their safeguard and sustainable management accompanies an enhancement of the local economy, as service providers can profit from the diverse opportunities surrounding the maintenance of historic houses and the tourism derived from opening the house to the public. Indeed, historic houses represent a major lever for local employment and for the preservation of various types of craftsmanship specific to the maintenance of these particular houses. As more than 90% of surveyed owners employ local skilled workers on their property, historic houses are able to provide significant local growth and employment, for a Europe in dire need of both, as they act as education and formation centers for apprenticeships.

Nonetheless, the economic situation has seen a drop in numbers of trainees and apprenticeship involved with the historic houses' sphere, in major positions such as marble and bronze workers, restorers, plasterers, glaziers, silversmiths, mosaic artists, painters, and such. Owners may also be faced with excessive labor costs. Notwithstanding these obstacles, craftsmen and local businesses are vital parts of the maintenance and safeguard of historic houses across Europe, and this relationship offers tremendous positive social and economic impacts for Europe.



“Europe as a political body needs to recognize the value of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. Cultural heritage reveals what it has meant to be a European throughout time. It is a powerful instrument that provides a sense of belonging amongst and between European citizens.”

***New Narrative for Europe
European Commission, April
2013, Brussels***



WHAT DO HISTORIC HOUSES & GARDENS NEED IN 2014 AND BEYOND?



European historic houses and gardens have significant social, economic, touristic, historical, botanical, architectural, cultural and environmental impacts. They represent a unique niche that still needs, in 2014, to be acknowledged and considered by politicians, decision-makers and the civil society, on all levels. Indeed, their voice is hardly heard or understood. Politicians and authorities remain oblivious to owners' plight, as houses are left on the market and specialized jobs are disappearing. They need to acknowledge that the cultural tourism sector, at EU level, represents revenue higher than the automobile or the agriculture sector.



1) At political level, historic houses should be considered for their **needs and specificities** when building and implementing European policies. It is our mission to demonstrate to politicians how private historic houses and gardens are a political advantage and should not be considered as obstacles.



2) As such, **initiatives in favor of protecting, promoting and maintaining private historic houses** should have sufficient support for their proper management and should receive the necessary means to function accordingly to the added value they provide. It implies the recognition of historic houses as meaningful SMEs and the establishment of a positive financial environment, with less burdensome procedures, a better access to funds, reduced VAT for renovations, and more.



3) **Historic houses need more visibility**, which can be acquired through the various mediums and mechanisms of popular media, now an integral part of daily life. Capturing public imagination and involvement is a fundamental and timely issue in the world of heritage, which seeks to enlighten citizens in the act and importance of conservation.

4) Stakeholders involved in the preservation and promotion of historic houses and gardens also need to work in unity. **Cooperation between public and private bodies, service providers and such, is essential**, as well as involving local communities and the younger generations that will soon be responsible of protecting this significant heritage. Alone, we are not strong enough; we must join forces to defend our community's interests. We should also admit and accept that we can do better for our sector.



5) Finally, we wish to rehabilitate the **hidden heritage sites and houses located in remote areas**, as these lesser known treasures are nonetheless rich in art works, culture, biodiversity, craftsmanship, traditions and gastronomy. They also play an active role in regenerating their surrounding territories, cities, villages, and regions that have significant cultural value as well as creating and supporting local jobs and growth.

MEMBERSHIPS

Arbeitskreis für Denkmalpflege - Germany

Associação Portuguesa das Casas Antigas - Portugal

Associacio de Castell I Edificis Catalogats de Catalunya - Spain

Asociación de Propietarios de Casas Historicas y Singulares - Spain

Association Royale des Demeures Historiques & Jardins de Belgique - Belgium

Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane (ADSI) - Italy

Bygnings Frednings Foreningen (BYFO) - Denmark

Czech Association of Castle and Manor House Owners – Czech Republic

Domus Antiqua Helvetica - Switzerland

Estonian Manor Association - Estonia

Finnish Landowners' Organization - Finland

Historic Houses Association – United Kingdom

Irish Historic Houses Association - Ireland

La Demeure Historique - France

Latvian Castles & Manor Houses Association - Latvia

Lithuanian Association for Castles and Manor Houses - Lithuania

Österreichischer Burgenverein - Austria

Swedish Landowners' Organization - Sweden

Vereniging Particuliere Historische Buitenplaatsen - Netherlands

Vieilles Maisons Françaises (VMF) - France

Vieilles Maisons Historiques de Serbie - Serbia

