



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

pursuant to Article 294(6) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

concerning the

**position of the Council on the adoption of a Decision of the European Parliament and of
the Council establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label**

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1. BACKGROUND

Date of transmission of the proposal to the European Parliament and to the Council 11 March 2010.
(document COM(2010) 76 final – 2010/0044 COD):

Date of the opinion of the Committee of the Regions: 9 June 2010.

Date of the position of the European Parliament, first reading: 16 December 2010.

Date of transmission of the amended proposal: Not applicable.

Date of adoption of the position of the Council: 19 July 2011.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE PROPOSAL FROM THE COMMISSION

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.

To this end the Label will seek to stress the symbolic value and to raise the profile of sites which have played a significant role in the history and culture of Europe and/or the building of the European Union, and to increase European citizens' understanding of the history of Europe and the building of the European Union, and of their common yet diverse cultural heritage, especially in relation to the democratic values and human rights that underpin the process of European integration.

The Label is also expected to help increase cultural tourism, bringing possible economic benefits.

3. COMMENTS ON THE POSITION OF THE COUNCIL

3.1 General comments on the Council position at first reading

The Commission can fully accept the Council position which is the outcome of constructive negotiations between the three institutions. It is in line with the essential objectives and the underlying approach of the Commission's initial proposal.

3.2 Agreement at the stage of the Council's position

The Council's position is the result of intensive inter-institutional negotiations which followed the adoption by the European Parliament of its position at first reading on 16 December 2010. Informal and technical meetings have resulted in compromise on a number of outstanding issues.

Following the negotiations, Coreper reached agreement on the text on 15 April 2011. On 9 May 2011, the Chairwoman of the CULT Committee of the European Parliament, Ms Doris Pack, sent a letter to the Hungarian Presidency confirming that should the Council adopt as its position at first reading the text approved by the Coreper (subject to legal-linguistic verification), she would recommend to the CULT Committee and then to the Parliament as a whole in plenary session, that the Council's position be accepted without amendment at Parliament's second reading. The Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Council reached a political agreement on this basis on 19 May 2011.

The main points which were negotiated and agreed upon by the three institutions are the following:

- In a first stage, the European Heritage Label will be open to the participation of Member States only. In the course of the first evaluation of the action, the appropriateness of enlarging its geographical scope will be examined.
- The selection of sites will take place every two years in order to prevent the number of labelled sites increasing too quickly, which could harm the overall quality and prestige of the new label.
- Several sites located in the same Member State will have the possibility to focus on a specific theme to put forward a single application ("National thematic sites").
- "Transnational sites" will be counted in the quota of the Member State which initiated the application only in order to avoid introducing additional management complexity and in order not to discourage Member States from actually taking part in these sites.
- The transitional provisions which will apply in particular to the sites which were already awarded a label within the previous intergovernmental initiative were maintained in the text. They were however simplified and it was stated more clearly that during this period, the sites would be assessed on the base of the criteria of the new initiative and would follow the same procedure as that for the other sites.

4. CONCLUSION

The Commission fully supports the results of the inter-institutional negotiations and can therefore accept the Council's position at first reading.