

**EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL
GUIDELINES
FOR CANDIDATE SITES**



**EUROPEAN
HERITAGE LABEL**



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1. Context

The general objectives of the European Heritage Label (EHL) 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 mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue.

To this end, the European Heritage Label will be awarded to sites which have a strong symbolic European value and which highlight the common history of Europe and the building of the European Union (EU), as well as the European values and human rights that underpin the process of European integration.

The aim of the Label is to give European citizens, especially young people, new opportunities to learn about our common yet diverse cultural heritage, about our common history and about the values and the role of the EU. The Label is also expected to help increase cultural tourism, bringing possible economic benefits.

The rules and procedures of the EHL are laid down in a legal text: Decision No 1194/2011/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 November 2011 establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label.¹ Candidate sites are therefore recommended to read Decision No 1194/2011/EU carefully before starting to prepare their application. The aim of these guidelines is to provide additional information on the different stages of the selection and monitoring procedures.

Further explanations of all the selection criteria are contained in the application form itself.²

A network of national coordinators and contact points for the sites has been established to help ensure effective implementation of the EHL. Candidate sites should get in touch with the contact point in their country for any question concerning their participation in the EHL and the pre-selection procedure at national level. The list of national coordinators and contact points along with their contact details is available at the following address : http://ec.europa.eu/culture/heritage-label/index_en.htm.

2. Added value and complementarity of the EHL with other existing initiatives in the field of cultural heritage

The European Commission and the European panel of independent experts in charge of assessing the proposals for sites (see section 12) will take great care to ensure that there is no risk of duplication or overlap between the EHL and other initiatives in the field of cultural

¹ Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) L 303 of 22 November 2011. This Decision is available at the following address: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:303:0001:0009:EN:PDF> .

² The application form is available at the following address : http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm

heritage such as the UNESCO World Heritage List, the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity or the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes (cf. Article 5 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

The main focus of the EHL will not be on the preservation of the sites, which should be guaranteed by existing protection regimes to ensure their transmission to future generations. Rather it will be on promoting the European dimension of sites, making them accessible to the widest possible public, in particular young people, and providing high-quality information and educational and cultural activities which stress the role and place of the site in European history and integration.

Specifically the EHL will:

- only designate sites which have played a significant role in the history of Europe and the building of the EU;
- choose sites on the basis of their European symbolic value, rather than their beauty or architectural quality;
- help European citizens, especially young people, learn about our shared cultural heritage, the history of Europe, the building of the EU, and the democratic values and human rights underpinning the process of European integration;
- encourage networking between the sites and heritage professionals, to share experience and best practice.

It is essential that candidates keep the specificity and distinctive nature of the EHL in mind when considering the relevance of an application or when filling in their application form.

It is, however, possible for a site already designated by the UNESCO or the Council of Europe or any other initiative in the field of cultural heritage to apply for the EHL as well, provided that it falls within into the criteria of the EHL. It might indeed be possible for some sites to be eligible both for the EHL and for another initiative at the same time, but for different reasons.

3. Who can participate?

3.1 Definition of sites

In the context of the EHL the definition of 'sites' used is a broad one (cf. Article 2 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). It includes: natural, underwater, archaeological, industrial or urban sites, monuments, cultural landscapes, places of remembrance, cultural goods and objects and intangible heritage.

In addition to 'single' sites, transnational sites and national thematic sites are also eligible for the EHL.

Transnational sites can be either (cf. Article 2 of Decision 1194/2011/EU):

- 'several sites, located in different Member States, which focus on one specific theme in order to submit a joint application'. In this case, the transnational site will consist of one coordinating site taking the leadership for all the selection and monitoring

procedures and one or several participating sites. The theme may be freely chosen by the sites, but it must have a strong symbolic European value.

or:

- ‘one site located on the territory of at least two Member States’. This category can potentially cover all sites which encompass or cross a border between two or more Member States, such as a bridge, a battlefield, a token of the past division of Europe or of the former internal borders of the EU, an archaeological site which pre-dates the drawing of national borders, etc. Besides being cross-border, these sites must also have a strong symbolic value for the process of European integration.

All sites involved in a transnational site must be located in one of the Member States which participates in the EHL (see list in section 3.2).

National thematic sites are several sites, located in the same Member State, which focus on one specific theme in order to submit a joint application (cf. Article 2 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

For all these categories, contemporary heritage (which includes recently built sites or those which have played a specific role in recent European history) may also be covered.

In the case of cultural goods and objects, as well as intangible heritage, there must be a link to a clearly identifiable physical space in which the information and educational activities will be carried out.

3.2 Geographical scope

Participation in the EHL is open to Member States on a voluntary basis (cf. Article 4 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).³

As at 29 May 2012, the following 22 Member States had confirmed their participation: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia.

As a result, only sites located in those 22 Member States are eligible for the EHL. This also applies to transnational sites, where all participating sites without exception must be located in one of these Member States.

Those who have not yet confirmed their participation will have the possibility of joining the EHL at a later stage by notifying the European Commission by letter.

All new Member States which join the EU after 1 January 2012 will have the opportunity to participate in the EHL following their accession. The Commission will contact them in due course to ask if they wish to participate.

³ However, 2013 and 2014 will be transitional years, see section 8 below. .

4. Objectives and selection criteria

The pre-selection at national level and the final selection at European level (see paragraph 5 below) will be based on the objectives and criteria laid down in relation to the Label and the application forms⁴ submitted by the candidate sites.

4.1 Specific objectives to be pursued by sites awarded the Label

To receive the Label sites should seek to attain the following specific objectives:

- (a) highlight their European significance;
- (b) raise European citizens' awareness of their common cultural heritage, especially among young people;
- (c) facilitate the sharing of experiences and exchanges of best practice across the Union;
- (d) increase and/or improve access for all, especially young people;
- (e) increase intercultural dialogue, especially among young people, through artistic, cultural and historical education;
- (f) foster synergies between cultural heritage on the one hand and contemporary creation and creativity on the other;
- (g) contribute to the attractiveness and the economic and sustainable development of regions, through cultural tourism in particular.

4.2 Criteria to be met by a site to obtain the Label

The Label is awarded on the basis of three categories of criteria (cf. Article 7 of Decision 1194/2011/EU):

1. the symbolic European value of a site;
2. the quality of the **project** proposed to promote its European dimension;
3. the quality of the **work plan**.

More precisely, **the panel will assess the bids, i.e. the application forms filled in by the candidate sites, on the basis of the following elements:**

- (1) Candidate sites for the Label must have a **symbolic European value** and must have played a significant role in the history and culture of Europe and/or the building of the Union.

They must therefore demonstrate one or more of the following:

⁴ The form to be used for applications is available at the following address: . http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm

- (a) their cross-border or pan-European nature: how their past and present influence and attraction extend beyond the national borders of a Member State;
 - (b) their place and role in European history and European integration, and their links with key European events, personalities or movements;
 - (c) their place and role in the development and promotion of the common values that underpin European integration.
- (2) Candidate sites for the Label must **submit a project**, the implementation of which is to begin by the end of the designation year (i.e. one year after the final selection of the site) at the latest, which includes all of the following elements:
- (a) raising awareness of the European significance of the site, in particular through appropriate information activities, signposting and staff training;
 - (b) organising educational activities, especially for young people, which increase the understanding of the common history of Europe and its shared yet diverse heritage and which strengthen the sense of belonging to a common space;
 - (c) promoting multilingualism and facilitating access to the site by using several languages of the Union;
 - (d) taking part in the activities of networks of sites awarded the Label in order to exchange experiences and initiate common projects;
 - (e) raising the profile and attractiveness of the site on a European scale, by exploiting the opportunities offered by new technologies and digital and interactive means and by seeking synergies with other European initiatives.

Artistic and cultural activities which foster the mobility of European culture professionals, artists and collections, stimulate intercultural dialogue and encourage links between heritage and contemporary creation and creativity are to be welcomed whenever the specific nature of the site this makes this possible.

- (3) Candidate sites for the Label must **submit a work plan** which includes all of the following elements:
- (a) ensuring the sound management of the site, including defining objectives and indicators;
 - (b) ensuring the preservation of the site and its transmission to future generations in accordance with the relevant protection regimes;
 - (c) ensuring the quality of the reception facilities such as the historical presentation, visitor information and signposting;
 - (d) ensuring access for the widest possible public, for example through site adaptations or staff training;

- (e) paying special attention to young people, in particular by granting them privileged access to the site;
- (f) promoting the site as a sustainable tourism destination;
- (g) developing a coherent and comprehensive communication strategy highlighting the European significance of the site;
- (h) ensuring that the management of the site is as environmentally friendly as possible.

As regards the criteria laid down in points (b) and (c) of paragraph 1, each site will be assessed in a proportionate manner, taking account of its characteristics.

While the first category of criteria (the symbolic European value of a site) is about what a site is and is therefore about the permanent features of a site, categories 2 and 3 refer to a specific project and work plan that are either already in place at the time of the application or that the candidate sites commit themselves to implement if they are awarded the EHL.

The project can be described as what a site will do to highlight its European dimension (for example in terms of information, educational activities, use of languages, and participation in European networks). The work plan can be described as how a site will achieve this (for example in terms of accessibility, reception facilities, communication strategy and promotion as a tourism destination).

It is important to understand that in the context of the EHL, the ‘project’ and its accompanying work plan must encompass at the same time a long-term vision of how a site intends to highlight its European dimension as well as a short- and medium-term series of activities to give concrete expression to that vision. As the Label will in principle be awarded on a permanent basis, the activities will of course need to be regularly updated and readjusted over the years in the light of evolving circumstances. During each monitoring procedure (see section 9) the European panel will check that these activities are still relevant and in line with the long-term vision that was put forward at the selection stage.

It must also be stressed that the implementation of the project and the work plan is to begin by the end of the designation year (i.e. one year after the final selection of the site) at the latest and that assurances of their effective implementation will be expected at the selection stage.

The specific cases of transnational and national thematic sites are considered under section 6.

5. How are the sites selected?

The selection of sites will take place in two stages. Sites must first be pre-selected at national level. The final selection will then be carried out at European level by a panel of independent experts under the European Commission's responsibility.

The first ‘regular’ selection procedure as described in this section will take place in 2015. Transitional provisions will apply throughout 2013 and 2014 (for more information on the transitional provisions, see section 8).

5.1 Pre-selection at national level

Member States are responsible for the pre-selection of sites (cf. Article 10 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). No site can participate in the final selection procedure at EU level unless it has first been pre-selected at national level.

Each Member State **can pre-select up to a maximum of two sites per selection year, in other words, every two years as of 2015** (see calendar in Annex).

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, each Member State can establish its own procedures for the pre-selection of sites, as well as its own calendar. However it is obliged to comply with the following three conditions:

- The pre-selection must be based on the common criteria for the EHL (cf. section 4 of these guidelines and Article 7 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).
- The common application form must be used (cf. Article 9 of Decision 1194/2011/EU and paragraph 7 below).⁵
- Member States must transmit the application forms for pre-selected sites to the Commission by no later than 1 March of the year of the selection procedure.

If one of these three conditions is not met, the applications will not be taken into account for the final selection.

The Commission expects to receive the application forms in the language(s) used for the pre-selection at national level, provided that it (they) is (are) among the 23 official EU languages. In addition, with a view to a more efficient selection process, and considering that the discussions of the panel members will most probably take place in English, it is essential for the Commission to receive English versions of the application forms as well.

For all questions concerning the pre-selection procedure, candidate sites must contact exclusively the contact point in their own country.

Once the pre-selection stage has been finalised, the Commission will publish the list of all the pre-selected sites on its website and will inform the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions. The European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions, the Member States or any other person or entity will thus have the opportunity of submitting to the Commission any observations which could have an impact on the selection of those sites. These observations will be attached to the application from the site in question.

⁵ The application form is available at the following address: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm

5.2 Selection at EU level

The final selection of sites will then be carried out by a European panel of independent experts under the European Commission's responsibility (cf. Article 11 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). For more information on the European panel of independent experts, see section 12.

The European panel will assess the application forms for the pre-selected sites on the basis of the objectives and criteria of the action. The panel will also take into account any observations that were sent to the Commission after the publication of the list, as mentioned above. If necessary, the panel may ask, via the Commission, for further information from the candidate sites. Visits to the sites may also be organised. However, these visits will remain the exception rather than the rule.

There may be no direct contact between a Member State or a site and the European panel of independent experts. Whenever contact is required, it must be organised exclusively through the Commission.

On the basis of all this information, the European panel will be able **to select no more than one site per Member State every two years.**

The European panel will prepare a report which will be transmitted to the Commission at the latest by the end of the year of the selection procedure. This report will include a recommendation for the Label award. It will also contain a brief evaluation of all the pre-selected sites, giving reasons for selecting them or not. Candidate sites have no right of appeal against the European panel's recommendation.

This report will be published on the Commission's website and sent to the European Parliament, the Council and the Committee of the Regions for information.

Early in the year following the selection procedure the Commission will formally designate the sites which are to receive the Label, taking due account of the panel's recommendation.

Candidate sites which are not selected may submit new applications for pre-selection at national level in subsequent years.

6. Transnational sites and national thematic sites

6.1 Transnational sites

Each site in a transnational site must be located in one of the Member States participating in the action.

In order to be eligible, a transnational site has to (cf. Article 12 of Decision 1194/2011/EU):

- ensure that each participating site complies fully with the criteria;

- designate one of the participating sites as the coordinator of the transnational site and the single contact point for the Commission. In the case of one site located in two or more Member States, there are two options: either the site is managed jointly by different organisations in the various Member States concerned and one of these organisations must be the coordinator, or it is managed by one single transnational body and one of the Member States concerned must take leadership and responsibility for the pre-selection and monitoring procedures;
- apply under a common name. This is the only name that will appear in all published material about the EHL. It should be concise and must not include the names of the individual sites participating in the transnational site;
- in the case of several sites focusing on one specific theme, clearly demonstrate the thematic link between the participating sites.

Applications for transnational sites will follow the same procedure as for single sites (see section 5).

They will be pre-selected by the Member State of their coordinator within the limit of the two sites which this Member State can nominate for each selection procedure (note that the other participating sites will not be counted for the quotas of the Member States concerned).

Consultations between the sites participating in a transnational site must involve all the relevant national authorities from an early stage. To this end, contacts should be made with the relevant national coordinators. Each participating site will have to fill in an application form. The coordinator must submit all the forms together to the national authority for the pre-selection procedure. The coordinator must also fill in section B in the application form.

If a transnational site is pre-selected by a Member State, it must be proposed by this Member State on behalf of all the Member States concerned, once those Member States have given their agreement. All the application forms, including section B of the application form to be filled in by the coordinator site, must be submitted to the Commission jointly by the Member State of the coordinator site for the selection procedure.

If a transnational site and a single site both meet the criteria of the EHL with the same level of quality, priority will be given to the transnational site in the final selection.

Applying as part of a transnational site should in no way be seen as an easy way of acceding to the EHL for single sites which do not fully comply with the criteria or do not reach the quality standards requested for the Label. Nor should transnational sites be seen by Member States as a way of increasing the number of labelled sites beyond the limit set for each selection year.

Transnational sites will therefore have to demonstrate very clearly the added value of joint applications by participating sites compared to single applications . The conditions set out in Article 12 of Decision 1194/2011/EU will be applied very strictly by the European panel.

It is also important to underline that whenever a transnational site is selected, the Label will be awarded to the transnational site as a whole under its common name and not to the participating sites individually. In other words, if the Label is awarded to a transnational site comprising 5 participating sites, then one Label will be awarded to the transnational site and not 5 Labels to 5 individual sites.

Each of the 5 sites will have the right to display the EHL plaque at the entrance, but the plaque will clearly indicate the common name of the transnational site. This will have to be taken into account for all communication activities, at both European and local level, to avoid any risk of confusion. The European panel will pay particular attention to this aspect during the monitoring procedures.

6.2 National thematic sites

To be eligible, a national thematic site should comprise a reasonable number of participating sites (cf. recital 14 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). Moreover, it should (cf. Article 13 of Decision 1194/2011/EU):

- demonstrate the European added value of a joint application compared to individual applications;
- show a clear thematic link between the individual sites;
- ensure that each individual site fully complies with the application criteria;
- designate one of the participating sites as the coordinator of the national thematic site, and single contact point for the Commission;
- apply under a common name. This is the only name that will appear in all published material about the EHL. It should be concise and may not include the names of the individual sites participating in the national thematic site.

Applications for national thematic sites follow the same procedure as for single sites (see section 5).

They will be pre-selected by the Member State concerned within the quota of the two sites it may nominate for each selection procedure.

Each participating site will have to fill in an application form. All the forms must be submitted jointly by the coordinator to the national authority for the pre-selection procedure and by the national authority to the European Commission for the selection procedure. The coordinator must also fill in section C in the application form.

As in the case of transnational sites, applying as part of a national thematic site should in no way be seen as an easy way of acceding to the EHL for single sites which do not fully comply with the criteria or reach the quality standards requested for the Label. Nor should national thematic sites be seen by Member States as a way of increasing the number of labelled sites beyond the limit set for each selection year. The European panel will apply very strictly all the conditions set out in Article 13 of Decision 1194/2011/EU.

The parallel with transnational sites also applies with respect to communication activities. Whenever a national thematic site is selected, the Label will be awarded to the national thematic site as a whole under its common name, and not to the participating sites individually. Each of the participating sites will have the right to display the EHL plaque at the entrance, with the plaque clearly indicating the common name of the national thematic site. This will also have to be taken into account for all communication activities, at both European and local level, to avoid any risk of confusion. The European panel will pay particular attention to this aspect during the monitoring procedures.

7. Application form

Candidate sites must use the common application form⁶ prepared by the European Commission. This form should be filled in by all candidates and sent to the national authority responsible for pre-selection at national level. Each Member State participating in the action for a given selection year should forward the application forms relating to the pre-selected sites to the European Commission, which will then forward them to the panel.

Pre-selection at national level and final selection at European level will be based on the criteria laid down for the Label and the application forms filled in by the candidate sites.

The Commission suggests that the panel recommend that candidates' application forms should not exceed 30 pages (Times New Roman 12), completed, including pictures and maps.

8. Transitional provisions for the years 2013 and 2014.

Transitional provisions will apply for the years 2013 and 2014 (cf. Article 19 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

The year 2013 is reserved for Member States which did not participate in the intergovernmental label and would like to participate in the 'new' Label. The four Member States concerned are Denmark, Estonia, Netherlands and Austria (Ireland, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden and United Kingdom may also participate if they wish, since they did not participate in the intergovernmental label). **Only these 4 Member States are allowed to propose pre-selected sites for the Label in 2013. As an exception they may pre-select up to four sites which can potentially all be selected.**

The application forms for the pre-selected sites must be transmitted by the Member States to the Commission by 1 March 2013 at the latest. The final designation of the sites will take place in 2014.

The second transitional year (2014) will be reserved for Member States which did participate in the former intergovernmental initiative of the EHL and which have confirmed their participation in the 'new' Label. The Member States concerned are Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia. **Only those 18 Member States may**

⁶ The application form is available at the following address: . http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/label/how-to-apply_en.htm

propose pre-selected sites for the Label in 2014. As an exception they may pre-select up to four sites which can potentially all be selected.

They may propose sites which had already received a label within the intergovernmental initiative (either in the second transitional year (2014) or under the full scheme from 2015 onwards).

The application forms for the pre-selected sites must be transmitted by the Member States to the Commission by 1 March 2014 at the latest. The final designation of the sites will take place in 2015.

During the two transitional years, all sites, including those sites which had already received a Label within the intergovernmental initiative, will be assessed by the European panel on the basis of the criteria described in section 4 and will follow the procedures described in section 5. However, if one of the sites does not meet the criteria, or if further information is needed, the European panel will initiate a dialogue with the Member State concerned via the Commission to see whether the application can be improved before a final decision is taken. Visits to the site may be organised if necessary.

The sites awarded the 'new' Label will benefit from the communication arrangements described in section 13.

The regular procedure described in section 5 will apply as from 2015. It will be open to all the Member States participating in the EHL and will take place every second year (see calendar in Annex).

It is important to stress that direct contact on the EHL between a Member State or a site and the European panel of independent experts is not allowed. Whenever a contact is needed, it must take place exclusively through the Commission.

9. Monitoring of sites

The EHL will be awarded to sites on a permanent basis provided that they continue to meet the criteria and comply with the project and the work plan they submitted in their application. Hence, each site will be monitored on a regular basis (cf. Article 15 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

Member States are responsible for monitoring all sites located on their respective territory. They will be required to collect all the necessary information from the sites and prepare a report every four years in accordance with the calendar in Annex. This report will include one sub-section for each site located on the territory of the Member State. In order to ensure a coherent approach to the monitoring procedure, a template for the monitoring reports, along with indicators, will be established by the Commission in cooperation with the European panel in good time for the launching of the first monitoring procedure.

In the case of transnational sites, monitoring is the responsibility of the Member State of the coordinator. In cooperation with the coordinator, the Member State will collect the necessary information from all the sites participating in the transnational site, including those which are not located on its own territory. This information will then have to be synthesised in one section of the report as mentioned above.

The first monitoring procedure will take place in 2016 and the reports must be sent by the Member States to the Commission by 1 March at the latest.

The Commission will then submit all the national reports to the European panel.

After examining the national reports, the European panel will issue by the end of 2016 at the latest its own report on the state of the sites which have been awarded the Label. This report will include a short section on each site, including if necessary recommendations to be taken into account by the sites for the following reporting period (2016-2019).

10. Withdrawal of the Label

If the European panel establishes that a site no longer meets the criteria or that it no longer complies with the project and work plan submitted in its application, it can launch a procedure leading to the withdrawal of the Label from the said site (cf. Article 16 of Decision 1194/2011/EU).

This procedure will be carried out in two stages, which can last up to 18 months each:

- In the first stage, the European panel will initiate a dialogue with the Member State concerned with a view to facilitating the necessary adjustments to the site. Whenever the European panel judges that the adjustments have been made or sufficient guarantees have been given, it may decide to close the procedure.
- If, 18 months after the beginning of the dialogue, the European panel judges that the necessary adjustments have not been made, it may decide to launch a second stage of the procedure. In this second stage, the European panel will formally notify the Commission of the problems encountered with the site. The notification will be accompanied by a statement of reasons and a set of practical recommendations on how to improve the situation. If, 18 months after reception of the notification, the practical recommendations have not been implemented by the site, the European panel will issue a recommendation to the Commission for the withdrawal of the Label from the relevant site.

The Commission will then formalise the withdrawal of the Label in the course of the following designation procedure (cf. Article 14 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). The site in question will be obliged to return to the Commission the plaque bearing the logo of the European Heritage Label.

The same procedure will apply in the case of transnational sites and national thematic sites. The abovementioned dialogues will be held with the Member State of the coordinator. If the European panel recommends the withdrawal of the Label from a transnational site or a national thematic site, this withdrawal will apply to the transnational site or the national thematic site in its entirety. However, in exceptional cases where the coherence of the transnational site or national thematic site will not be undermined, the European panel may recommend limiting the withdrawal to the participating site concerned.

Throughout this procedure, all contacts between the European panel on the one hand and the site in question and the relevant national authority on the other must take place via the Commission and the national coordinator in order to ensure effective coordination.

11. Renunciation of the Label

A site that has been awarded the European Heritage Label can at any time decide to renounce the Label voluntarily (cf. Article 16 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). In this case, the said site must notify the Member State concerned of its decision by letter. The national coordinator will in turn inform the Commission of the renunciation by forwarding a copy of the letter. The Commission will then formalise the renunciation in the course of the following designation procedure. Such renunciation is final. The site will have to return to the European Commission the plaque bearing the logo of the European Heritage Label.

12. The European panel of independent experts

Selection and monitoring procedures at EU level will be carried out by a European panel of independent experts (cf. Article 8 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). The role of this panel will be to ensure that the sites apply the criteria properly across the Member States.

The European panel will consist of a total of 13 members appointed by the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions.

The members of the panel will be independent experts with substantial experience and expertise in the fields relevant to the objectives of the EHL. The appointing institutions and bodies should take care to ensure that the experts' competences are as complementary as possible, and that the experts are drawn from a balanced geographical spectrum.

All reports, recommendations and notifications of the European panel will be made public by the Commission.

For reasons of transparency and to avoid any risk of conflict of interest, it is not permitted for candidate sites, labelled sites or Member States to contact a member of the panel directly on any issue linked to the EHL without going through the Commission.

13. Communication

In accordance with Decision 1194/2011/EU, the European Commission and the labelled sites will share responsibility for communication activities surrounding the Label.

The Commission will be responsible for communicating all relevant information concerning the Label and ensuring its visibility at European level, in particular by setting up and maintaining a specific website (cf. Article 17 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). This website will contain general information on the labelled sites and will serve as a portal towards the individual websites of all the labelled sites. A new logo will be created for the EHL. This logo will be displayed on the plaque that will be put up at the entrance of sites awarded the Label, as well as on all communication material. Furthermore, the European Commission will prepare a communication strategy to promote the new Label and the labelled sites.

Any site that is awarded the Label will receive from the Commission a plaque bearing the EHL logo that must be put up at the entrance to the site.

A site in receipt of the Label will have increased visibility, since it will be integrated into the EU's communication and promotion strategy for the European Heritage Label. All labelled sites will be invited to attend the annual conference of site managers; they will also benefit from networking opportunities and peer learning.

The obligations of sites are clearly described in the criteria for the Label (cf. Article 7 of Decision 1194/2011/EU). A labelled site must raise its profile on a European scale by exploiting the opportunities provided by new technologies and digital and interactive means and by seeking synergies with other European initiatives; it must promote itself as a sustainable tourism destination and develop a coherent and comprehensive communication strategy highlighting its European significance. All these elements are part of the criteria for the EHL and will be evaluated by the European panel during the selection procedure, as well as during each monitoring procedure.

Once a site has been awarded the Label, it is of course obliged to use the EHL logo for all its communication and promotion activities.

14. Networking

One of the main benefits for sites in receipt of the Label will be the opportunities to participate in networking activities reserved for labelled sites. The Commission will invite all the site managers to participate in an annual conference to foster the sharing of experiences and peer learning, and to provide a favourable ground for initiating common projects.

The members of the European panel of independent experts will also participate in this annual conference, as will representatives from other organisations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

15. Financing by the EU budget

The EHL budget (under €1 million per year) will cover the costs of running the initiative at EU level, namely the costs incurred by the European panel of independent experts, the European communication strategy, networking activities and the human resources within the Commission needed to support the action. There will be no direct funding for sites in receipt of the Label.

Labelled sites may, however, apply for support from other Community programmes.

Annex : Calendar

Year	
2011	Entry into force of the Decision Preparatory work
2012	Preparatory work
2013	First selection of sites for those Member States which did <u>not</u> participate in the intergovernmental initiative (transitional year 1). The Member States concerned are Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden and United Kingdom (provided they confirm their wish to participate in the EHL). By way of an exception they may pre-select up to four sites. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2013 at the latest.
2014	First selection of sites for those Member States which did participate in the intergovernmental initiative (transitional year 2). The Member States concerned are Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus , Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia (provided they confirm their wish to participate in the EHL). By way of an exception they may pre-select up to four sites. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2014 at the latest.
2015	First ‘normal’ selection procedure open to all the Member States participating in the EHL. They may pre-select up to two sites. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2015 at the latest.
2016	First monitoring procedure. The Commission must receive the monitoring reports by 1 March 2016 at the latest.
2017	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2017 at the latest.
2018	Evaluation of the label
2019	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2019 at the latest.
2020	Monitoring procedure. The Commission must receive the monitoring reports by 1 March 2020 at the latest.
2021	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2021 at the latest.
2022	–

2023	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2023 at the latest.
2024	Monitoring procedure. The Commission must receive the monitoring reports by 1 March 2024 at the latest. Evaluation of the label
2025	Selection procedure. The Commission must receive the applications by 1 March 2025 at the latest.
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