



Evaluation of the European Heritage Label Action – Public Consultation

EuCheMS welcomes the European Commission's consultation on the Evaluation of the European Heritage Label Action as an opportunity to provide feedback from our unique perspective.

Cultural Heritage plays a manifold role in Europe – both as a source of cultural identity and historical belonging, but also on an economic level, providing jobs through tourism and through restoration efforts. But among the shared values and elements of European history and cultural heritage that require greater emphasis is the science that has contributed to shaping and linking European nations over the centuries.

Science has played – and continues to play – a multifaceted role in our cultural heritage, both as a force in shaping everyday life, an integral part of the European construction project, but also in preserving and protecting cultural heritage sites. It is high time the European Union acknowledges the cultural role science and engineering have had – all the more so in a period where interest in STEM is decreasing, and where the disconnect between citizens and science grows ever more apparent. It is worth recalling that the early years of the European project were centred on shared efforts in coal, mining and the steel industry, and in later years, agriculture, health, toxicology, (atomic) energy... subjects that are all based on science and engineering – and chemistry in particular.

There is a definite lack of sites showcasing how the European Union (and its prototypes) have aimed at and encouraged the establishment of a shared scientific and technical landscape. Moreover, the work that lies behind conservation efforts and the science that it requires, often remains overlooked and misunderstood. EuCheMS therefore calls for greater recognition of the role of scientific discovery, research and cooperation in decisions concerning the application of the Heritage Label.

We in turn also call for placing much greater emphasis on research in chemistry for conservation, and conservation science more generally. The protection of cultural heritage is becoming a major source of interest and concern for citizens, stakeholders and decision-makers. Conservation efforts require interdisciplinary approaches as cultural heritage faces more than just destructive natural ageing processes. One of the key challenges that EuCheMS wishes to underline, is the need to avoid compartmentalised research. This can be achieved through joint programming exercises aimed at identifying research priorities, as well as through increasing the efficiency and impact of research funding in strategic conservation of cultural heritage areas.

As the voice of Chemistry in Europe, representing some 40 members from over 30 European countries, and by extension some 160,000 chemists, scientists and researchers, as well as supported by a Working Party on Chemistry for Cultural Heritage and a Working Party on the History of Chemistry, EuCheMS is highly active and invested in this field. We therefore developed our own initiative in this area. The *EuCheMS Historical Landmarks*, which will have



specific sites recognised as central to European chemistry, is an award which was discussed over the course of two years, with the first call for nominations published in 2017. The results will be unveiled later this year. The Award aims to reinforce a sense of belonging of European chemists and to bring to the public some sense of how chemistry is part of the general cultural heritage and history of every European citizen. Moreover, the impact of the event or site on the development of chemistry has to have a European dimension to it – such as recognising the fact a particular chemist worked in a number of European countries. Whilst our programme is specific to the chemical sciences, EuCheMS wishes to extend an invitation to interested parties and the European Institutions on ways to cooperate and move forward with bringing heritage and history to citizens.

We perceive the European Heritage Label Action as a very positive initiative, and its evaluation an invaluable opportunity to better assess the ways in which the Action can be improved. By recognising the role science has played in shaping the European project as well as its ever-present role in Europe's cultural makeup and crucial importance in conservation efforts, the Label can help bring science back to citizens in a concrete, informative and unique way.

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