

MINUTES

EUROPEAN HISTORIC HOUSES ASSOCIATION GOVERNORS' GENERAL ASSEMBLY

October 1st, 2015, Brussels

1. Opening and welcome

Executive president Rodolphe de Looz-Corswarem (RdL) introduces Michael Hinterdobler, the Director of the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the European Union.

Mr. Hinterdobler takes the floor and welcomes the group and particularly RdL, his long-time friend, whose close links to the Representation of Bavaria he stresses. He notes that he is pleased to host the European Historic Houses Association and has great respect for what the association stands for. He underscores the importance of the public-private partnership and hopes that the association considers the government as an ally, not an enemy.

RdL takes the floor and echoes the point on public-private partnership, while stressing that an equilibrium needs to be maintained in this relation.

Before starting the discussions, RdL pays special tribute to Nick Way, who will leave the HHA after more than 10 years. He thanks him for his good advice and the example he set for everyone. He describes him as the CEO of a great and professional association.

Nick Way thanks RdL for his kind words and reminisces on his 25-year involvement in Brussels (first at ELO). He notes that the HHA is in very good hands with Richard Compton at the head of the organisation.

2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual General Assembly of the 3rd of October 2015

(Annex 1 – Minutes)

RdL notes that there is a mistake in the minutes: José-Luis Vives Conde is not resigning from the Board of Governors.

There are no other comments and the governors accept the minutes unanimously.

3. Changes in the Board of Governors

RdL comments that a governor has sadly left the Board of Governors:

- Christine Adrien (France; VMF)

A new governor joins the Board:

- Per Insinger (The Netherlands)

Young governors:

- Irene d'Abadal (Spain; Barcelona)
- Mercedes Ozores Wais (Spain)
- Léon Lock (Belgium)

- Christian Stoffel (Switzerland)
- William Cartwright-Hignett (United Kingdom) (Next Gen Coordinator)
- Anthony Ardee (Ireland)
- Lancelot Guyot (France; DH)

Guest:

- Caroline d'Assay (Romania; PRO PATRIMONIO)
- Jeanette Wagenborg (The Netherlands)
- Undine Pabriks-Bollow (Latvia)
- Teige O'Donovan (Ireland)
- Catherine Scheidecker (France; DH)

Excused:

- Jean de Lambertye (France; DH) – represented by Catherine Scheidecker
- Louis de Luxembourg (Luxembourg; Young)
- Carlo Rossi Chauvenet (Italy; Young)
- Robert McCabe
- Martina Scheper Gil (Spain; Barcelona)
- Susan Kellett (Ireland) – represented by Teige O'Donovan
- Teresa Gonzalez Camino (Spain; Madrid)
- Jana Germenis Hildprandt (Czech Republic)
- Comte Gaddo della Gherardesca (Italy)
- Per Insinger (The Netherlands) – represented by Jeanette Wagenborg
- Maurice de Kervenoaël (France; VMF)
- Philippe Toussaint (France; VMF)

RdL notes the presence of a delegation from the Dutch association after a few years of absence. He reminds the assembly that the European Historic Houses Association was originally founded following a Dutch initiative.

4. Discussion on the 2015 Conference

(Annex 2 – Agenda conference)

RdL notes that the European Historic Houses Conference will take place the day after the General Assembly (Friday the 2nd of October). Participants will include the MEP, Andrew Lewer from England, the Deputy Director of the DG Culture and Education of the European Commission, several castle owners, Brian Smith, who will speak about the study Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe and a *conseiller* of the Wallonian minister for heritage. Furthermore, he notes the participation of Michael Hoare from Future for Religious Heritage, Françoise Bortolotti from INTERPOL and Alexandre Moretus from AXA Art.

5. Main issues 2014/2015

(Annex 3 – Activity report 2014/2015)

RdL invites Delphine Dupeux (DD) to present the 2014-2015 Activity Report. She notes that she does not want to repeat the report completely, but that in general the association continued working on many of the same issues. She gives the examples of energy efficiency and the illicit trafficking of goods.

➤ **Report of the European Parliament on the EC Communication “towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe”**

(Annex 4 – Report of the European Parliament on the EC Communication “towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe)

(NEW Annex 9 – Comments HHA on EP report)

DD highlights the report Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage in Europe, which recommends several measures the association and its members should support:

- It invites the Member States to look into possible fiscal incentives in relation to restoration, preservation and conservation work, such as reductions in VAT or other taxes, given that European cultural heritage is also managed by private bodies;
- It calls for a single EU portal dedicated to tangible and intangible cultural heritage, bringing together information from all the EU programmes;
- It draws attention to the need to improve the methodological framework in order to have better statistics related to the field of cultural heritage;
- It calls on the Commission to better coordinate and support Member States’ efforts to fight the stealing, smuggling and illegal trafficking of cultural heritage assets inside and outside the EU;

Richard Compton also wants to comment on this report (*annex 9*). He believes it is a very notable report, wide-ranging and designed to meet the concerns of a very wide constituency.

He identifies four major points for the European Association

1. Points on the economic and social impact of cultural heritage
2. The request for a policy framework. He doubts this is necessary, but need to remain vigilant.
3. More systematic data collection – like the report Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe
4. The fact that the report acknowledges that certain skills are promoted by cultural heritage.

Niccolo Roselli del Turco notes that he is disappointed that the General Assembly does not spend more time discussing the European Parliament report. He wants to delve deeper and asks for a digest of what the representatives of the HHA said on this matter. Furthermore, he would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the report “Tax Reforms in EU Member States 2015” of the European Commission. He notes that this report is largely contradictory to point 12 of the European Parliament report (calling for lower VAT for the renovation of cultural heritage).

RdL replies by reminding members that taxation remains a national issue.

Action: The Brussels secretariat will prepare a digest on the report of the European Parliament.

➤ **Heritage counts for Europe study**

DD furthermore draws attention to the Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe report, which has valuable data that can be used by the members. She notes that it is the first time such a comprehensive report has been published on the topic. DD encourages members to use this report as it has strong political recognition.

➤ **Energy efficiency issues – Consultation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)**

(Annex 5 – Consultation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive)

DD notes that the association is still very much involved on the issue of energy efficiency. Currently, the European Commission is working on **the revision of the Energy Performance Building Directive**. One of the annexes is **the consultation** by the European Commission and DD asks the members to answer the questions in there. She notes that it is not necessary to answer all questions; members can answer those that are relevant to their own situation. In the week to come the association will send draft answers, which can be cut and pasted. It is important to know that in such a consultation the number of replies counts. Furthermore, DD notes that answers can be both on an individual bases and by association.

RdL notes that it is a prerogative of the European institutions to decide on this issue, it is not a competence of the member states.

Action: Reply to the consultation of the European Commission on the revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive before the 31st of October 2015. Answers can be based on the draft answers that will be provided by the Brussels office.

- **Illicit trafficking of cultural goods**

DD notes that the issue of illicit trafficking of goods remains on the agenda and will be one of the themes discussed during the annual conference. Right now, it is a very hot topic due to the situation in Syria and it is heartening to see the increased political attention after the association has worked on the topic for several years.

As for the cooperation with Interpol, she notes that there is still a very close contact. The original project of publishing a guide for castle owners did, however, not work out for now.

DD notes that the European Historic Houses Association remains involved in the various working groups of the European Commission on this topic.

- **Next Gen group**

(NEW Annex 10 – PowerPoint Next Gen)

RdL notes the importance of the Next Generation group for lobby purposes as it gives more weight to the association's discourse. He invites William Cartwright-Hignett (WCH) to give an update on the activities of the Next Generation.

WCH first presents the background of the group; the longstanding desire to develop the participation of younger members with three main goals:

- The smoother succession of heritage assets
- Support for the future of national associations
- Creating a new body of members able to undertake research and support lobbying activities.

WCH notes that the 2013 General Assembly encouraged all members to appoint a young governor and that he was appointed as the coordinator of this project.

The NextGen Framework offers free advice and support for national associations with setting up Next Gen groups and increasing the participation of young members.

Successes in the past year include the organisation of a successful conference, an increase in the number of young governors and a steady increase in the number of Next Gen groups on the national level.

WCH lists the activities of the Next Generation programme in the period since the last General Assembly:

- October: Participation to the General Assembly in Lisbon, Portugal
- January: Launch of a group in Barcelona
- March: Inaugural Next Gen conference
- April: Presentation of the project to the Danish Young Landowners' organisation
- July: The pre-launch of a Next Gen group in France
- September: Speech at the Geneva Branch of Domus Antiqua Helvetica
- October: Participation to the General Assembly in Brussels/Ghent, Belgium

He presents the March inaugural conference and notes the participation of 65 young members from 12 countries. Furthermore, he notes that the programme included visits to three different houses as well as the conference itself, which was supported by professional advisory firms and covered the topics of family privacy/reputation, succession planning and 'making it pay'. He notes that it was the first ever conference on the topic of succession planning that looked at it from the point of view of the heirs.

He notes the main lessons from the past year:

- Talk early and often
- Select your advisors carefully
- Be open – people/family are usually more understanding than you expect
- Learn from others
- Set expectations fairly
- Don't leave it too late

Furthermore, WCH notes that 5-7 new groups are in the pipeline to start in the coming year and that cooperation with existing associations will be increased

For the next conference, that will take place on 15-17 April, 2016, he hopes to welcome over 100 participants.

WCH calls on members to help him by connecting him to national Next Gen groups, its young members and other successful young castle owners between 20 and 40 years old.

He recalls that Next Gen groups are useful for:

- Increasing membership and participation for the member associations (as well as providing an additional source of revenue and safeguarding the future of the association)
- Supporting the members' families
- Supporting heritage

WCH offers his advice and notes that he does not charge anything for this service.

RdL comments that WCH has done an impressive job of finding sponsorships, keeping the cost for the European Historic Houses Association low.

Action: Governors will support the Next Gen programme by forging links between national groups in their countries and WCH.

6. Priorities for 2016

- EU projects (little Loire, research)

DD notes that the association will try its best to obtain EU funding. For now, however, there has not been any success on this side due to the limited resources of the association.

She notes that the alternative is to participate as a partner to projects, which the European Historic Houses Association has done with a project on gardens for Horizon 2020. For now, no answer has been received on this project.

Another project is the Little Loire. This is not an EU project, but an interesting example of cross-border heritage cooperation that may in the future involve regional governments as well the European Union. The goal of this project is to position the touristic sites and castles along the Scheldt river as a single touristic brand, as to promote regional tourism.

George Gossip notes that tourism is not about quantity, but rather about receiving something from it. Cooperation between projects on national level and the work of EHHA would be good on this.

Ghislain d'Ursel (GdU) stresses the importance of communication. It is not only about 'visiting', you need to provide an experience. By targeting the right audience GdU has managed to have his estate considered to be an open monument, even though it is only open 5 days a year.

He shares an anecdote about the Château de Versailles, were the head architect would like to raise the number of visitors, requiring more infrastructure. This raises the question if there are not alternative methods like electronic visits. Venice is a good example of a place where the large number of tourists is harmful for the cultural heritage.

George Gossip notes that Ireland does not have a tradition of visiting. That is why it is important to develop different ways for visitors to experience castles.

Léon Lock notes, with reference to the Little Loire project, that this may seem far away for many members, but that the point is that participating in projects gives credibility to the association.

- Education/transmission (Linked Next Gen)

RdL brings up the subject of education/culture, a sector that is indeed very important, even if it is mostly a national topic.

Imre Sooäär makes a proposal on the issue of education/culture. He argues that it is important to convince the population of the importance of historic houses, rather than the politicians (who follow the population). **That is why he proposes a private historic houses day on which all members would open their historic houses. He argues that on such a day, there would be media attention, etc. leading to public awareness.**

An extensive debate on this issue ensues:

RdL notes that such a day already exists in many countries, but not specifically for private houses. He also notes that it has been more or less decided that 2018 might be a European Heritage Year, something the German Association has pushed for.

Nick Way comments that the British heritage days are a big success, but that politicians and the media take them for granted. Something would be needed to make such a day special for the news.

Imre Sooäär argues that linking the heritage days across Europe would create this exposure.

George Gossip agrees, arguing that it is important that it is separate from the current heritage days, which have been taken over by the public sector.

Catherine Scheidecker talks about the French experience, mostly with the *Journées Européennes du Patrimoine*, to which many DH members participate. She notes that cooperation with the authorities is not always good and that the government often does not consult them on how to organize these days.

Kottulinsky thinks such a day would be a great idea, but warns for the insurance implications of opening a private historic house.

Lancelot Guyot argues that in the eyes of the public, there is no real difference between private and public owners. As a result, the public does not understand entrance fees for private houses. He supports the idea of a separate day for private owners, showing the public that there is a difference between private and public ownership.

Imre Sooäär notes that it is important not to dilute this project into the national heritage days. Private owners should be central.

Knut Benjamin Aall notes that he would not like to ask his members to open their houses. It would have to be optional. Currently, in Norway it is more important to protect the privacy of owners.

Olivier de Trazegnies recalls that he was forced to sign an agreement to open his house for a minimum number of days in return for a grant. He notes that this also costs him money and time, even though not every house receives visitors on all days it is open (depending on the ease of access to the building).

Dana Beldiman Karlsons notes that the message of such a day should be that maintaining private historic houses is a great personal effort.

GdU warns that conflict with the national authorities, who organize these own days, should be prevented. Furthermore, he notes that many owners in Flanders are reluctant to open their houses.

Carlos Romero-Duplá echoes GdU's remark on reluctant castle owners and argues that the success stories of other countries could convince them of the added value of welcoming the public into their houses one day a year.

Monika Alund appreciates Imre's proposal. However, she notes that owners should be careful with showing everything they have to the public. Alternatively, she proposes organising this day for school children and calling it an educational project.

Richard Compton notes that politician's do not like negative messages. That is why it would be important to focus this day on the positive business impact of historic houses.

Niccolo Roselli del Turco notes that Italy has a lot of experience in this field and that politician interest is a real issue. However, he also notes that such a heritage day would greatly motivate the association.

Léon Lock gives the example of the Art Nouveau biennale, which asks a general participation fee, giving access to all participating buildings.

Hugo O'Neill argues that the public for these days should be very specifically targeted, to prevent damage to the cultural heritage sites.

WCH proposes that the young generation can play a leading role in this project and gives the example of the open courtyard project in Italy. He also argues that the 'old generation' does not have to be there while the house is open.

Nina Giorgia von Albertini notes alternatives for visits to historic houses. For example, visits to construction sites. Furthermore, she talks of the need to convince owners who are not aware of the need to protect heritage.

Teige O'Donovan stresses that visitors to historic houses should not remain anonymous. They should provide their name and contact details. He also raises the issue that the density of historic houses is not equal in all different countries, more days might be needed to visit more than one house due to the travel distance between them.

RdL concludes that it would be interesting to have a test case in 2018, with some of the members' estates. Not necessarily the whole estate, it can for example be limited to the house or to the gardens. The General Assembly agrees with this.

Action: The association will work towards preparing a test case private heritage day.

- Private property / common goods

RdL brings up the **issue of private life/private property**. He notes that historic houses contribute to the common good, even though they remain privately owned. He gives GdU the floor on this topic.

GdU talks about the arrest of the Belgian constitutional court, which was released yesterday, (30th of September) concerning a recent Flemish decree. Overall the arrest is not bad.

He wants to make the point that there is confusion **between common good and common property**. Something that is of common interest is not necessarily common property.

He notes that in the Flemish decree property rights are totally neglected and that it would be a good idea to organize a European congress on this topics (together with associations like ELO) as he identifies a bigger trend on this topic.

He also notes that the Grananda convention notes that fixtures and fittings should be classified with the property. He argues that the Flemish interpretation of this convention, applying it to movable property as well, is mistaken. He argues that this introduces limits that are as strong as the rules on national treasures (for which governments have the right of first refusal before they can be sold abroad). However, these limits would be at the walls of the house, instead of the border of the country.

He notes that this practice goes against the *code napoléon* which divides the inheritance between all children. If movable property cannot leave the house younger siblings will often have to pay inheritance taxes on items they will not be able to take from a house they do not inherit themselves.

Another point he highlights is that in Flanders civil servants will get access to a historic house without a special warrant and without permission from the inhabitant. GdU encourages members to be aware of this and reminds them that private property is protected by the European Courts.

Hubertus von Dallwitz wants to talk on the same theme, as there is a new, very strict, law in Germany, the Act to Prevent the exodus of German Cultural Property". He notes that there are currently, very limited lists of national treasures (both public and private). In the new law any piece of art with a certain value or age would need permission to leave the country. This would have almost every cultural good registered.

George Gossip talks about how, in Ireland, it was for many years easy for the government to disown land from property owners. Often based on an anti-English or socialist ideology. Even today, many heritage professionals are not recognizing private property.

Nick Way recalls that during his time at ELO it was important to choose which battles to fight, and he believes that GdU's case could be very strong as it addresses fundamental questions. He therefore, urges the European Association to support GdU with any potential action at the level of the European courts.

Carlos Romero Duplá echoes this point, saying that as a lawyer he believes there is a clear case.

Knut Benjamin Aall notes that, in Norway, the government has been taking at least 4 pictures in every room of historic houses (against the decision of Norway's highest court). They have done this in approximately 950 properties, 1800 buildings.

Action: The General Assembly agrees that the European Association should focus on the issue of private property.

7. Annual reports from Member Associations

(Annex 6 – reports)

(NEW Annex 11 – report from Romania)

RdL notes that these reports are very useful resource for both the member associations and the European body.

Olivier de Trazegnies requests a kind of table where it is very clear to say the changes from one year to the other.

RdL notes this already exists for taxes. He says that the association will try to expand this to other issues.

Richard Compton notes that from the HHA's report it is missing that they are doing a major research project on the economic impact of historic houses. They estimate 1.5 billion euros.

Action: Next year the secretariat will try to make tables similar to the tax table for other issues.

RdL notes that for many years there was an observer **from Lithuania**. However, he unfortunately had to pull out as he did not manage to establish a meaningful private association.

Caroline d'Assay notes that her association (Pro Patrimonio) has existed **in Romania** for like 15 years. She notes that the situation in Romania is currently disastrous and that they are trying to create a network to have a better position in the face of policy makers. She recalls that in 1949 almost all manors were expropriated and that in the decades after that many fell to ruins. The government is currently blocking people from regaining them. Furthermore, she notes that many

owners only got part of their land (mostly forests) back. Even if they regained the building, they often did not get the whole estate back. This makes many houses unsustainable. There are many NGO's in the field, but she argues only Pro Patrimonio is currently trying to find solutions to this. However, they are hampered by 50% of people leaving the countryside. As an association, they are concerned with a wide range of topics (e.g. education and civil society involvement).

Nina Giorgia von Albertini wonders what the financial revenue of Pro Patrimonio is.

Caroline d'Assay explains that most money comes from private members and sponsors. Furthermore, there is some international support, but no government support.

Building on this topic, RdL notes that the European Association has been involved with an association **in Croatia** in the organization of a conference.

8. Budget 2014 – updated version

(Annex 7)

An RdL note that is has been approved by the external auditor.

He notes a small profit in 2014 (around 2,000€)

For 2015 he expects a budget in equilibrium. This is, of course, depending on the expenses at the end of the year.

The 2016 budget is very similar to the 2015 one. Membership fee and sponsorship expectations remain the same.

9. Estimated budget and contributions for 2015

(Annex 7)

He notes a small profit in 2014 (around 2,000€)

For 2015 he expects an equilibrium, depending on the expenses at the end of the year.

10. Estimated budget for 2016

(Annex 7)

The 2016 budget is very similar to the 2015 one. Membership fee and sponsorship expectations remain the same.

11. European Historic Houses Award

(Annex 8)

GdU takes the floor explaining that this year there were four candidates from the area of Ghent. Three of them privately owned, the last one belonging to a social club.

He notes that during the ExCom all houses in the annex 8 have been discussed.

Huysse: a nice example of a family house. Current owners have been there since the 1980s. They tried to make the house economically sustainable by starting a B&B and a small delicatesses shop. Only downside is that they used PVC in the renovation of the outbuildings.

Leeuwerghem: Also a family house. During the visit the house itself will not be visit able, but they propose a nice walk through the gardens and a lunch in one of the outbuildings. They did a major renovation of the park, the ponds, the statues, etc. The authentic value has been preserved very well.

Ooidonk: Very expensive house to run. Good example of a young couple (took it over a few years ago). The new owner just got married with a young lady with a good taste. They did a major renovation. A really good job on utilities, adding modern comfort to the castle. All without subsidies. The jury did, however, consider it to be overdone. Nevertheless, it is a good example of a transition to the young generation, from dusty to modern. This castle already received the award several years ago.

Falligan: Beautiful *maison de maître*, which underwent a big renovation with good architects. It won the last Belgian award for this.

Using all the four criteria the jury would like to propose to vote for the castle of Leeuwerghem. The jury really liked Huysse, but decided against it because of the use of PVC. Ooidonk was too much overdone, while the Falligan is no longer a family house. The owners of Leeuwerghem did a very good job with great potential for further development, especially with regards to the garden.

RdL notes that there is a mistake in the annex and that the owner of the castle of Ooidonk is Comte Henry t'Kint de Roodenbeke.

GdU presents a proposal from the ExCom to have visits in a different country every year. The award would then go to a house that is visited in the spring. After the visits the jury would have time until the annual meeting in Brussels later that year to make a decision.

The General Assembly supports this change.

Action: Next year the award will, once again, be awarded to one of the visited houses. The timeline will be that the houses are visited in spring. The jury then makes a decision before the October meeting and the price is awarded in Brussels in October.

12. Next annual meeting

RdL makes a proposal to **increase the efficiency of the General Assembly**. The Executive Committee has already approved this proposal. He notes that organising the meetings (AG and Excom) during the same event stretches the resources of the association too much. He also notes that Belgium is rather small for a visit every second year, even though the number of private historic houses is actually quite large.

He proposes to split the programme into two parts:

1/ ExCom, General Assembly and conference in Brussels in early October. Ideally on a day and a half on which the members of the European Parliament are in Brussels. This could provide a better link between the members and the European politicians. Furthermore, it would allow the Brussels team to do a better job of preparing the political side of these events.

2/ A social event in spring (early May) . RdL notes that is important that members have time to talk and exchange practices. This would be for one or two nights and in a different country every time. This could start from next year if one of the members volunteers.

Alexander Kottulinsky proposes to host this 'social' programme consisting of visits and potentially a small conference involving local politicians.

RdL proposes late April, early May. He also notes that this would mean the European Historic Houses Award would go to an Austrian house.

DD confirms that the social networking event will take place in Austria around May and will probably include a (debate) dinner. Furthermore, she notes that the political meetings will stay in Brussels in October.

Alexander Kairis raises the point that any date conflict with Europa Nostra (DD adds Friends of the Countryside) should be avoided.

Action: Next year, there will be two different events. A more 'social' event in spring, which includes visits to houses in Austria and potentially a dinner debate/conference. Details for this are to be discussed.

The October meeting will revolve around the ExCom meeting, the General Assembly and the conference.

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