



EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL



ACTION PLAN FOR 2024-2028



Museovirasto / Finnish Heritage Agency

Cover pictures from left to right and top to bottom:

Seminaarinmäki Campus, Finland
Royal Theatre Toone, Brussels, Belgium
Archaeological Park Carnuntum, Austria
The Three Brothers, Riga, Latvia
The Kalevala – Living Epic Heritage, Finland

Layout: Lagarto

December 2024

Photos of the publication:

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/>

Except for the illustration and design of *Kalevala* by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, WSOY 1955 (photo Lagarto)



The web links of the publication have been verified on 12 December 2024.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The European Heritage Label is a cultural heritage action of the European Union. The European Heritage Label is part of the EU's Creative Europe program. The objective of the Label is to improve awareness of European history and the building of the Union, and of its shared, diverse cultural heritage. The European Commission has awarded the European Heritage Label since 2014. To date, 67 sites in 20 countries have been awarded with the Label.¹

Finland joined the European Heritage Label in 2018, in the context of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, which was a natural development to the theme year. Finland has been following the discussions and activities around the Label since 2006. In recent years, the EUROHERIT research project² (2015–2020) of the University of Jyväskylä has collected extensive data on the functionality of the Label and the implementation of its objectives in different countries. From Finland's perspective, it is essential to be involved in the debate on Europe and being European: by participating, we can make an impact and highlight values that are important to us.

The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the national coordination of the European Heritage Label. The initiative provides Finnish cultural heritage sites with an opportunity to think about their role from a European perspective and apply for the Label. There are two sites in Finland that have been awarded the Label: the Seminaarinmäki Campus and Equality of Education (2022) and the Kalevala - Living Epic Heritage (2024).

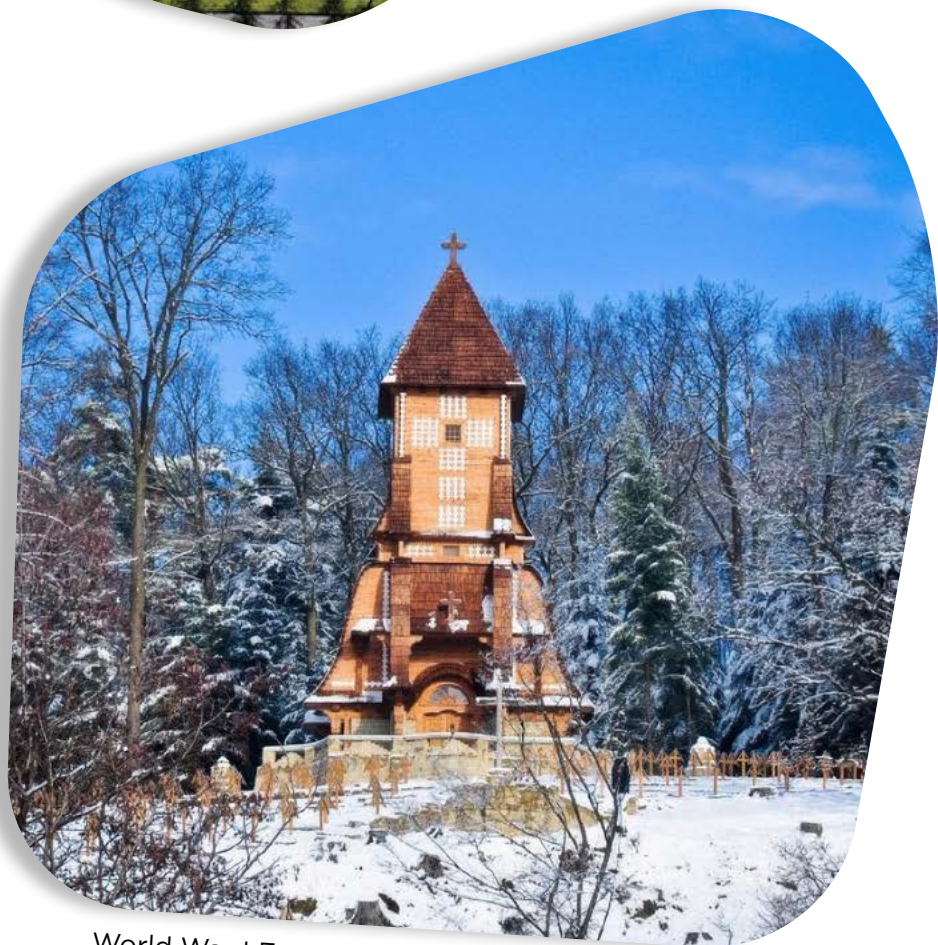
This action plan outlines Finland's activities concerning the European Heritage Label for the period 2024–2028, providing basic information on the European Commission's initiative at international level and specifying Finland's actions, communications, and process for applying for the Label. It also outlines the roles of the actors involved in the implementation of the Label. The action plan may be updated during its term.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/heritage-label/sites_en.

2 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/636177>.



Colonies of Benevolence,
Netherlands/Belgium



World War I Eastern Front Cemetery No. 123;
Łużna - Pustki, Poland

2 WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL?

The European Heritage Label was first launched in 2006 as an intergovernmental initiative of the European Union. In 2011, the European Commission took over the management of the initiative.

The initiative aims to increase people's understanding of the history of Europe and the building of the European Union, and of their common but diverse cultural heritage, in particular in relation to the democratic values and human rights that underpin the process of European integration. At the same time, it will strengthen European citizens' sense of belonging to the Union, especially young people, on the basis of shared values and elements of European history and cultural heritage. Valuing national and regional diversity and strengthening intercultural dialogue is particularly important in this work.

Cultural heritage is at the heart of several international conventions. These include the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage³ (so-called World Heritage Convention of 1972, Finland joined in 1987), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage⁴ (UNESCO 2003, Finland joined in 2013), the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society of the Council of Europe⁵ (Finland joined in 2018) and the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe⁶ (Finland joined in 2019).

The main focus of the European Heritage Label is on the European narrative and sites related to our common history and the unification of Europe. It also includes the objective of promoting the accessibility and educational value of sites, especially for young people. The aim is for the sites to form a coherent whole for the visitor, which tells the story of Europe and its achievements.

The European Commission awarded the first Labels in 2014. To date, 67 sites have been awarded and the list is growing every two years. The Label can be awarded to sites in the EU that are key to European history, culture and integration. The sites must also be developed through an educational project. The Label includes sites and documents relating to the built heritage, the cultural environment and intangible cultural heritage. The sites are mainly museums, archaeological exca-

3 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>.

4 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

5 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention>.

6 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/about-the-epa>.

vations, monuments, archives and active institutions. Receiving the Label does not entail permanent funding.

3 FOCUS AREAS IN FINLAND

The European Commission's principles guide the European Heritage Label process. In addition, in Finland we want to place particular emphasis on the principles of responsibility and sustainable development, including all dimensions of sustainability: ecological, economic, social and cultural. Cultural heritage is an indispensable resource for a good society, bringing meaning, depth and perspective to the world. It unites us, and helps us to understand diversity. In a changing world, cultural heritage plays an important role in strengthening individual resilience, social stability and a sustainable future. Cultural heritage sites can contribute to sustainable development, for example through heritage conservation, climate awareness, empowerment and community involvement. The sites applying for the Label must also operate in accordance with these principles.

In addition, we also highlight the following focus areas:

Dialogue: We encourage Finnish cultural heritage actors to take part in the discussion on cultural heritage in a transparent and inclusive way. We raise awareness and interest protecting and safeguarding cultural heritage. We recognize European significance in sites within Finland's borders and publicize all sites that have received the Label.

Cooperation: We encourage both applicants and recipients of the Label to collaborate with local, national, and international operators. Specifically, we promote cooperation between sites and various local and regional stakeholders.

New perspectives: The Label allows us to study cultural heritage from new and innovative perspectives, that have not necessarily been highlighted in national historical narratives. The implementation of the Label encourages the observation of new perspectives both in Finland and at a European level.

Future: Cultural heritage is not only about the past, but also about processing the present and creating the future. Therefore, sites that receive the Label should emphasize both the present and the future in their operations, act as communal arenas and take part in public discussions.

4 APPLYING FOR THE LABEL

The European Heritage Label may be awarded for e.g.

- monuments
- natural, underwater, archaeological, industrial or urban sites
- cultural landscapes
- places of remembrance
- cultural goods and objects (with artistic, historical or archaeological value to a particular country)
- the intangible heritage associated with a place (e.g. oral traditions, rituals and performing arts), modern cultural heritage included
- The Label can also be awarded to cross-border and national thematic sites.

Sites applying for the Label must meet some or several of the following criteria. Candidate sites must also provide sufficient resources for their operations and submit a work plan.

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:

- their cross-border or pan-European nature: how their past and present influence and attraction go beyond the national borders of a Member State;
- their place and role in European history and European integration, and their links with key European events, personalities or movements;
- their place and role in the development and promotion of the common-values that underpin European integration.

Candidate sites for the Label must also submit a project raising awareness of the European significance of the site, organizing educational activities, promoting multilingualism, taking part in the activities of networks of sites awarded the Label and raising the profile and attractiveness of the site on a European scale.

The sites are pre-selected by countries taking part in the initiative. Each participating country can suggest 1-2 sites to the Commission every other year. The list of pre-selected sites is forwarded to an independent European panel of experts that selects a maximum of one site from each country. Based on the panel's



Ventotene harbour, Italy



Medieval wall painting in the Gemer and Malohont regions, Slovakia

recommendations, the European Commission designates the sites which will receive the Label.

The sites are monitored regularly to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria and implement their project and work plans.

5 APPLICATION PROCESS IN FINLAND

Decisions on Finnish sites to apply the Label are made by the Ministry of Education and Culture on a proposal from the Finnish Heritage Agency. The pre-selection is carried out together with the European Heritage Label steering group, appointed by the Agency. In Finland, the previous national application rounds have taken place in 2020, 2022 and 2024.

The national application process in Finland is carried out in two stages. In the first, lighter stage of the application process, the candidates submit a letter of intent, in which they answer some of the questions of the actual application in Finnish or Swedish. This stage of the application process is supported by a self-assessment form that contains the criteria of the actual application form. This allows operators to assess whether it seems that they have a chance to succeed in the application process.

The Steering Group discusses the applications and feedback is given to the applicants in writing. Applicants may complete their application if they wish. On the basis of the second round of evaluation, the Steering Group makes a recommendation to the Finnish Heritage Agency, which in turn makes a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The final selection is made by the Ministry.

The approved sites will then complete the official application to the Commission. The Finnish Heritage Agency will provide expert assistance to the sites that have been selected for the actual application process. The operators taking part in the application must provide their own resources for the planning and implementation of the application.

The Finnish Heritage Agency forwards one or two applications to the European Commission. The applications are then evaluated by an international panel of experts, and finally, the European Commission designates the Label recipients.

6 COMMUNICATIONS

The European Heritage Label is a tool that prompts discussions about European cultural heritage and the history and values of Europe. Another aim is to spark discussions about cultural heritage in Finland from the European perspective.

The Finnish Heritage Agency draws up a communications plan for the Label. Communication materials will be produced in Finnish, Swedish, English, and in other languages, as necessary. Communications will utilize material produced by the Commission and produce national materials, as necessary. Communications will make use of multi-channeled communications and networks. Communication will be targeted separately to the general public and to interest groups in the field.

The Finnish Heritage Agency communicates about the Label on its website in Finnish, Swedish and English.⁷ The website contains application instructions, an application guide, useful links and a self-assessment form that allows interested sites to assess their own chances of applying for the Label. The Finnish Heritage Agency also maintains a Facebook page for the Heritage Label in Finnish.⁸

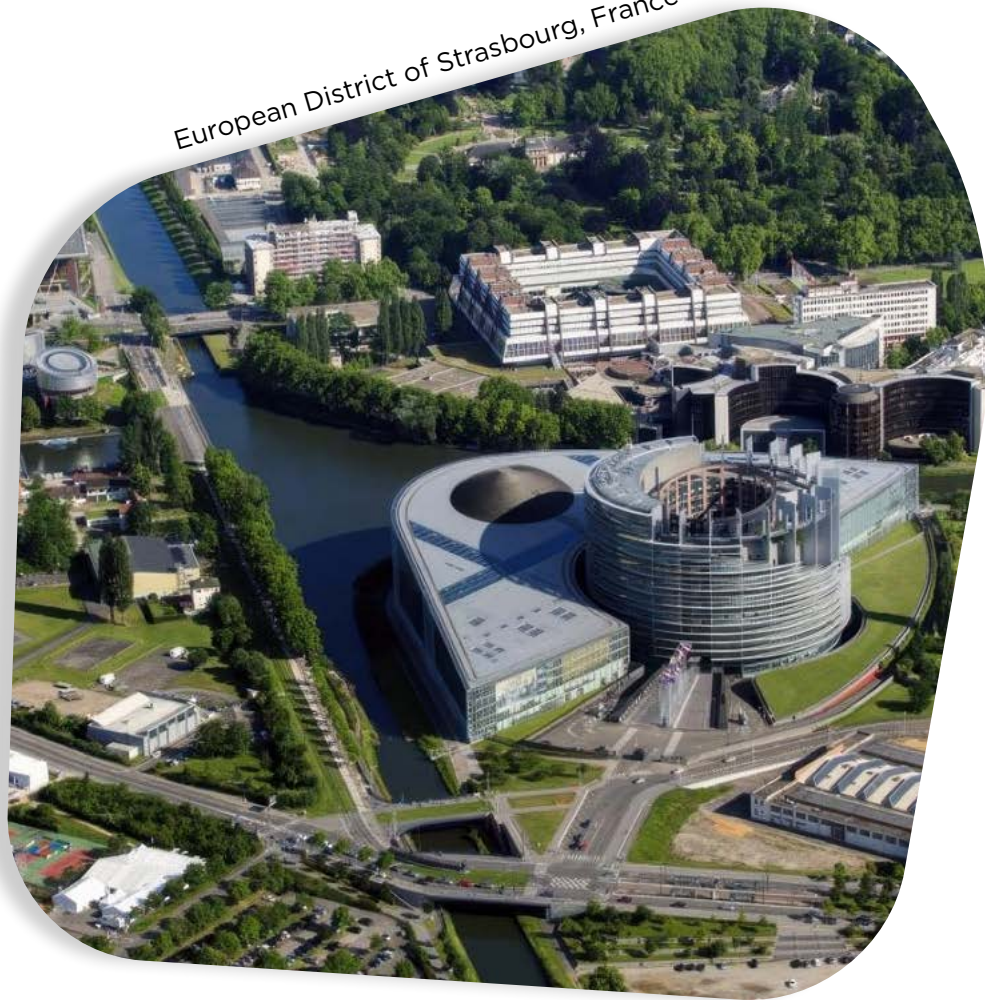
The core messages of communications:

- Europe starts here! Europe starts with you! (by the European Commission).
- The selected sites will be promoted as part of cultural heritage of Europe. At the same time, the audiences will be introduced to a wide range of tangible and intangible sites of multiple values.
- Cultural heritage helps us recognize our own European roots and consider where we are and where we are going.
- Diversity, influences from various directions, different historical layers, and the involvement of diverse social groups, minorities, sub-cultures, and people of different ages are emphasized in defining cultural heritage. Community involvement and participation are crucial in the operation of these sites. The importance of cultural heritage for different actors in society, is emphasized.
- The economic significance of cultural heritage for enhancing the appeal and sustainability of regions and municipalities, especially through cultural tourism, is emphasized.

7 <https://www.museovirasto.fi/fi/tietoa-meista/kansainvalinen-toiminta/euroopan-unioni-ja-kulttuuriperinto/euroopan-kulttuuriperintotunnus/>.

8 <https://www.facebook.com/kulttuuriperintotunnus/>.

European District of Strasbourg, France



Thracian Art in Eastern Rhodopes:
Aleksandrovo Tomb, Bulgaria



7 IMPLEMENTATION IN FINLAND

The Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for the national coordination of the Label, with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Ministry is also involved in the steering group. Furthermore, the Ministry decides on the Finnish candidates for the Label based on a proposal from the Finnish Heritage Agency.

The Finnish Heritage Agency coordinates the implementation process and has assigned a national coordinator for this task. The Finnish Heritage Agency:

- actively communicates about the Label and sparks discussions about cultural heritage from a European perspective
- encourages dialogue by organizing various events, seminars and workshops
- promotes European cooperation and information exchange between the Member states, towards the European Commission and with other cultural heritage programs and conventions
- provides information about the application process and monitoring of the Label and guides interested actors in preparing their applications
- draws up a proposal on Finnish sites for the Ministry and is responsible for drawing up applications together with communities representing these sites
- forwards the selected applications and site reports to the Commission within time limits
- supports networking of the sites and candidates
- supports the sites in increasing visibility, communications and information exchange
- provides information about potential financial instruments.

In January 2024, the Finnish Heritage Agency set up its second steering group to support the implementation process of the Label in Finland. The group includes representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish Heritage Agency, Finnish National Agency for Education, University of Jyväskylä, Europa Nostra Finland, Finnish Local Heritage Federation, Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland and JEF Finland.

The task of the steering group is to

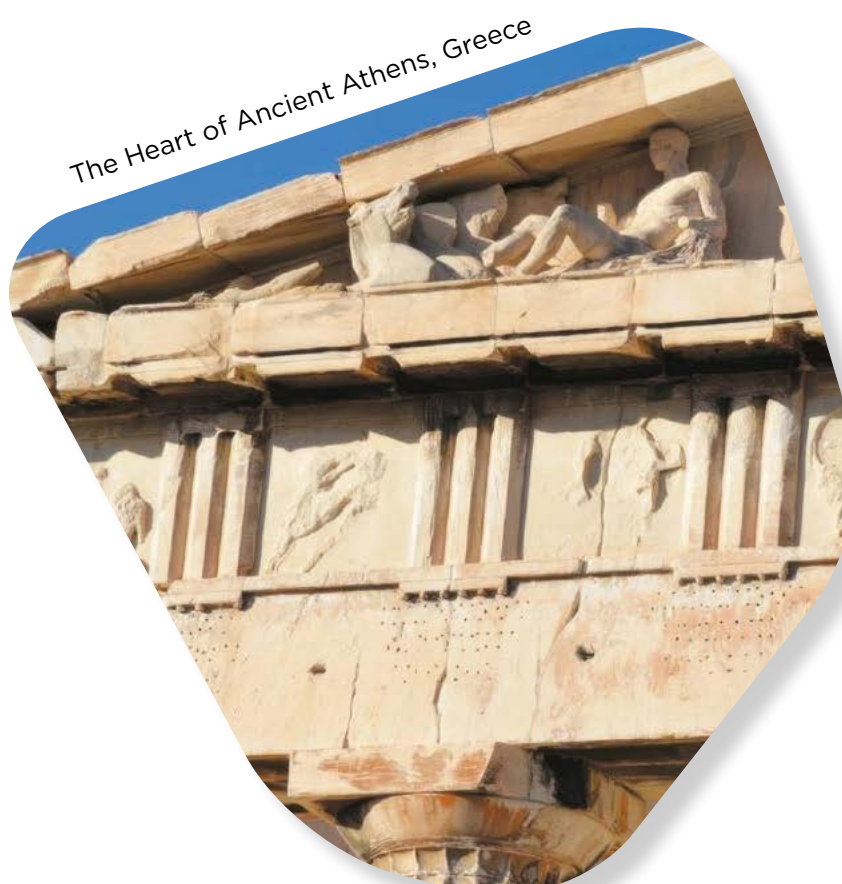
- support the European Heritage Label implementation process in Finland
- update the implementation model for the Finnish Heritage Label as necessary

- support the Finnish Heritage Agency in forming and executing communications objectives relating to the Label
- evaluate the sites applying for the Label and assist the Finnish Heritage Agency in this work
- draw up a proposal on the basis of which the Finnish Heritage Agency makes a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture on the candidates to be presented to the Commission
- take part in monitoring the selected national sites.

8 MORE INFORMATION

- The Finnish Heritage Agency's site for the Label https://www.museovirasto.fi/en/about-us/international-activities/euroopan-unioni-ja-kulttuuriperintoe/european_heritage_label.
- The European Commission's European Heritage Label website https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/heritage-Label_en.
- Application instructions https://www.museovirasto.fi/en/about-us/international-activities/euroopan-unioni-ja-kulttuuriperintoe/european_heritage_label/applying-for-the-european-heritage-label.
- Decision establishing the European Heritage Label <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011D1194&from=EN>.
- Selection Report of the European Panel 2023 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b88c851a-eb28-11ee-bf53-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.
- Selection Report of the European Panel 2021 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/23014a0c-bad5-11ec-b6f4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.
- Selection Report of the European Panel 2019 https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/content/european-heritage-Label-2019-selection-report_en.
- Selection Report of the European Panel 2017 <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/document/european-heritage-label-2017-panel-report-selection>.
- Evaluation of the European Heritage Label Action 2019 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6699e8c5-8d85-11e9-9369-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-99344284>.

- Website of the EUROHERIT project of the University of Jyväskylä
<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/636177>.





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Finnish Heritage Agency**