

Brussels, 05/11/2010
C/2010/7521

Dear President,

The European Commission would like to thank the EU Committee of the Austrian Bundesrat for its letter of 5 July 2010 issuing a statement on the proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label {COM(2010) 76}.

This proposal is one of the Commission's priorities in the field of culture for the years to come. As mentioned in your Committee's statement, the aim of the European Heritage Label is to bring citizens, especially young people, closer to the European Union by giving them new opportunities to learn about our common yet diverse cultural heritage, about the history and the building of the European Union, and about the democratic values and human rights that underpin European integration. The Label is also expected to help increase cultural tourism and to bring possible economic benefits to the areas concerned. The Commission believes indeed that this Label has the potential to become a highly visible and valuable initiative for the European Union and to acquire the same renown and "brand" value, as the European Capitals for Culture, which are celebrating this year their 25th anniversary.

The Commission shares the Committee's opinion that the didactic component, especially for young people, should be at the heart of the European Heritage Label. The Commission would also like to stress that special attention has been paid in the proposal to ensure the added value and complementarity compared to other existing initiatives in the field of cultural heritage, notably the UNESCO World Heritage List and the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes. The Label has thus four distinct features which make it clearly a unique European initiative: firstly, the Label is only intended to designate sites which have played a key role in the history and the building of the European Union; secondly, it is not about a site's beauty or architectural quality but rather its symbolic value for European integration; thirdly, this initiative is not about the conservation of sites but rather the activities they offer and their educational dimension; and finally, the Label will help sites to be more effectively managed by encouraging networking and peer learning. The Commission believes that these elements are reflected in its proposal, in particular in the criteria for awarding the Label (article 7).

The Commission looks forward to discussions with the European Parliament and the Council in view of the swift implementation of the new European Heritage Label.

Yours sincerely,

/-/ Maroš Šefčovič

*Mr Martin Preiner
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of the Republic of Austria
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