

02.02.2018 - UNESCO Office in Brussels

The European Year of Cultural Heritage has officially opened in Belgium at UNESCO World Heritage site, La Grand-Place, Brussels



The 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage was inaugurated in Belgium during a launch event at the City Hall of Brussels, followed by a spectacular performance at the UNESCO World Heritage site, La Grand-Place in Brussels on the 31st January.

On Wednesday the 31st January, 2018, UNESCO Liaison Office Brussels participated in the Belgian opening of the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), (EYCH), which took place at the City hall and [Grand-Place, Brussels, UNESCO World Heritage site](#). The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker and numerous members of the College of Commissioners joined the celebration, at the invitation of Phillippe Close, Mayor of the City of Brussels, and in the presence of the Belgian authorities organising the event.

The event opened with a Citizens' Dialogue panel discussion entitled "Our heritage: where the past meets the future", to which citizens were invited to exchange views on the topics of culture and cultural heritage and learn more about the European Year of the same theme. Taking part in the discussion were: Paolo Fontani, Director of UNESCO Liaison Office Brussels and UNESCO Representative to the European Institutions, Michel Magnier, Director-General of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture at the European Commission; Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary General for Europa Nostra; Jean-Louis Delaet, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Bois du Cazier and Guy Tilkin and Director of the Grand Commandery Alden Biesen.

Speaking about the important role culture and cultural heritage have in promoting cultural diversity, as laid down in [UNESCO's 2005 Convention](#), Director of UNESCO Liaison Office Brussels Mr Fontani underlined how culture is a source of innovation and creativity, and that EU investment in culture can revitalise the economies of Europe's cities and regions, as well as strengthening international cooperation and EU external relations. Confirming UNESCO's support for initiative, he welcomed EYCH as a great occasion to educate young people about the value of cultural heritage and highlighted the significance of 2018 in celebrating culture and peace in Europe, in what is also the centenary of the end of the First World War.

Closing the Citizen's Dialogue, Tibor Navracsics, European commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, set out the objectives and the opportunities of the thematic year in allowing European citizens, especially youth, to celebrate and connect with each other. "By enabling us to discover our past, our traditions and their evolutions through constant contact via neighbours, cultural heritage in all its forms can help us understand each other better, overcome divisions and build a community of communities", said Mr Navracsics, adding that

“like peace, cultural heritage is not a passive inheritance. Cultural heritage must never be taken for granted”.

The Citizen’s Dialogue was followed by performance, “A Thousand Reflections of Europe”, organised by Tour des Sites. Over the course of the evening, the show combined artistic performances and a three-dimensional video projection of images showcasing Europe’s history and cultural heritage onto the façade of the City Hall of Brussels.

UNESCO Liaison Office Brussels is member of the Stakeholders’ Committee of the European Year of Cultural Heritage and UNESCO will be key partner of the European Union during the rest of 2018, aiding in the implementation of the initiative. Thousands of activities organised in the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage will highlight the richness and diversity of cultural heritage, highlighting its role in developing shared values and building the future of Europe.

Photo and video highlights of the launch event can be found [here](#).

http://www.unesco.org/new/en/brussels/about-this-office/single-view/news/the_european_year_of_cultural_heritage_has_officially_opened/