



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Spotlight on Europe's Industrial Heritage for European Heritage Days 2015

Canals, mines, breweries, potteries, forges, railways, cotton mills tell us as much about our heritage as celebrated archaeological sites, cathedrals and castles. This year Europe has come together to examine our shared past through the unique lens of our Industrial Heritage, with more than 30 countries joining this common theme.

Throughout Europe we can see the remains of our industrial past: bridges, canals and railways, still in use today, making invaluable contributions to our economy. However, in most countries there are signs of long-gone industry – a derelict mill, a rusting machine, a brick chimney - all marking the sites of a once-thriving workplace and community. Our industrial past tells the story of change, development and creativity. It tells the stories of how and where we worked, the kinds of jobs we did and how we lived.

*“European Heritage Days exemplifies much of what is central to the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society – mainly the sense of cultural belonging and connection to heritage at a local level, whilst also understanding it as part of the wider European story. The focus this year on industrial heritage provides a timely opportunity to consider the economic links of Europe's history as experienced by communities. From exploring the historic shipyard of Belfast's Titanic quarter to participating in an archaeological dig in Dublin's Swords Castle; from climbing the lighthouses of Normandy to descending an iron ore mine in Portugal's Torre de Moncorvo; from sending a telegram in Slovenia to touring a traditional olive oil mill in Spain's Senia territory, or a textiles factory in Switzerland, or an ironworks furnace in Finland. It is the perfect time to find out more about this fascinating, but often neglected, aspect of our past” said Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe.*

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Visiting heritage sites is the number one cultural activity enjoyed by Europeans outside their home according to the 2013 Eurobarometer on *Cultural Access and Participation*<sup>1</sup>: 52% of people polled visited a heritage site in the previous year, followed by 37% visiting a museum.

*"Europe's vast industrial heritage has untapped potential to contribute to our economic development, while being a great resource for education, enjoyment and social inclusion. The European Heritage Days combine these elements, encouraging millions of people across Europe to visit and learn about our industrial past. I am pleased to see that so many countries have joined the common theme of industrial heritage for this year's European Heritage Days, as the industrial past and present is a strong unifying element in Europe. This event, the largest in Europe in the cultural field, is a great way of helping to ensure that our common heritage is understood, treasured and protected for future generations, while at the same time bringing economic benefits to local communities through tourism,"* said Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

From the end of August to the end of September, people across Europe will visit thousands of sites for free, most of them only open to the public during European Heritage Days. With over 20 million people participating in over 50 000 heritage events, European Heritage Days is a fantastic opportunity to shine a light on the historic economic links Europeans share through the vast legacy of industrial heritage sites.

It is also a time to recognise the huge contribution which thousands of volunteers make to ensuring Europe's cultural heritage is conserved, accessible and enjoyed. Without their input many of the sites could not open, nor events for the public take place.

## **Editors Notes**

Every year in September, the 50 signatory States to the European Cultural Convention take part in the European Heritage Days – a joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, putting new cultural assets on view and opening up historical buildings normally closed to the public. The cultural events highlight local skills and traditions, architecture and works of art, but the broader aim is to bring citizens together in harmony even though there are differences in cultures and languages. This year for the first time over 30 countries are participating in a programme of events celebrating Europe's industrial and design heritage.

Launched in 1985, the European Heritage Days have been organised since 1999 as a joint initiative of the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The 50 signatory states to the [European Cultural Convention](#) take part. Events organised during the month-long celebration showcase architecture and art, local skills and traditions seeking to promote mutual understanding among European citizens.

Cultural heritage is a priority under Creative Europe, the EU's programme for the cultural and creative sectors. The European Heritage Days receive €200 000 in support from Creative Europe and €200 000 from the Council of Europe; most events are funded with national or regional backing.

## **To find out more**

European Heritage Days Portal: [www.europeanheritagedays.com](http://www.europeanheritagedays.com)

Council of Europe: [European Heritage Days](#)

European Commission: [European Heritage Days](#)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/EHDDays](https://www.facebook.com/EHDDays)

Twitter: [@JEP\\_EHD](https://twitter.com/JEP_EHD)

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_399\\_380\\_en.htm#399](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_399_380_en.htm#399)