

EUROPA NOSTRA BELGIUM

The Voice of Civil Society Committed
to Cultural Heritage in Belgium



SUMMER NEWSLETTER



***Dear members, partners and supporters of Europa Nostra
Belgium, dear colleagues and friends,***

We hope you had an enjoyable summer break and are now back
with full energy.

In the first six months, EUROPA NOSTRA BELGIUM was already very busy. We celebrated the International Women's Day in Brussels in March with an event organized jointly by EUROPA NOSTRA (EUROPE) and ALIPH. Then on 9 May – which is also Europa Day - we welcomed a lot of you in Spa where we hold the General Assembly of Europa Nostra Belgium and took the opportunity to discuss with numerous distinguished guests what is at stake for cultural heritage in Belgium having a closer look at the situation of Spa, this iconic site of Wallonia's heritage. And finally at the end of May, heritage enthusiasts from all over Europe gathered for the European Heritage Summit in Cyprus, EUROPA NOSTRA's prestigious annual event.

Please keep in touch and continue to share your commitment for cultural heritage with us.

Cordially yours,

Paul Dujardin, President

Marie-Sophie de Clippele, Secretary



HIGHLIGHTS



Women at the forefront of protecting heritage and democratic values

On 3 March 2026 at the European Parliament in Brussels, Europa Nostra and [ALIPH – the International alliance for the protection of heritage](#), hosted a panel discussion, entitled “Women Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Contexts of Conflict and Crisis”, and inaugurated the outdoor exhibition, “Portraits of Women – Beyond the Stones”, honouring eight women whose mission is to safeguard cultural heritage. Four of the women included in “Portraits of Women — Beyond the Stones” are laureates of the [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](#), while four are partners of the ALIPH Foundation. The exhibition was also shown again in May at the European Heritage Summit.

During the panel debate moderated by Sandra Bialystok, Director of Communications and Partnerships at ALIPH Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary General of Europa Nostra, stressed the essential role women play in reconnecting

communities, fostering solidarity and celebrating diversity. According to her the growing number of women-led heritage organisations across Europe and neighbouring regions reflects this transformative power. *“Investing in culture, education and heritage is an investment in Europe’s security and defence in the broadest sense, as a vector to strengthen the EU’s enlargement and global agendas. A stronger cultural dimension across EU budgets is urgently needed”*, she emphasised.

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European Heritage Summit

From 26 to 30 May 2026, Nicosia became the meeting place for Europe’s cultural heritage community. Organised by Europa Nostra and the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Nicosia, the [European Cultural Heritage Summit 2026](#), held under the motto

“Heritage as the Soul of Mare Nostrum”, brought together policymakers, heritage professionals, civil society leaders, and engaged citizens from across Europe and the wider Mediterranean region. Against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions, armed conflicts and climate risks, a series of high-profile events demonstrated how cultural heritage can serve as a powerful force for sustainability, peace, cooperation and resilience in Europe and beyond. A major highlight of the week was the celebration of the laureates of the 2026 European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, Europe’s highest heritage honor. Unlike previous years, there were no Belgian heritage project or personality among the award winners 2026.

During the summit under the motto “Heritage as the Soul of Mare Nostrum”, which brought together policymakers, heritage professionals, civil society leaders, and engaged citizens from across Europe and the wider Mediterranean region, the comprehensive [Nicosia Manifesto](#) was adopted. The comprehensive document underlines among others that “At a time of accelerating climate pressures, geopolitical instability, and social fragmentation across Mare Nostrum, investing in heritage means investing in communities, dialogue, and cooperation aiming at long-term stability.”

President Paul Dujardin who represented Europa Nostra Belgium at the entire European Heritage Summit made some [poignant reflections](#) on the European Heritage Summit in Nicosia. He explained that “Over several intensive days, policymakers, representatives of Civil Society, heritage professionals, academics, young leaders and international organisations reflected on a simple yet fundamental question: Can Heritage contribute to Peace? My answer is unequivocal: yes. “ According to him “The discussions in Nicosia also demonstrated that heritage can help bridge divides between Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa and the wider Middle East. It can create spaces where dialogue remains possible when political dialogue becomes difficult.”

During the [In Varietate Concordia Talk#2](#) session entitled “*Heritage as the Soul of Mare Nostrum*”, official part of the programme of the European Heritage Summit, Jimmy Jamar (Belgium) stressed that culture and cultural heritage are the windows of our European values reflected by “unity in diversity”. Koen Van Balen (Belgium) made a substantial contribution by his at first sight provocative statement that in case of a regime change culture and cultural heritage become dangerous. Therefore, new governments often “kill” culture and cultural heritage to strengthen their power because it is something shared by the people. That applies also to the economic dimension of a society if the wealth is not shared. However, on a more positive note, he reminded the audience that although Europe started as an economic project there is now a growing interest for culture as unifying power because people need something to share.

Next year, the European Cultural Heritage Summit will take place on 6-8 June (*dates to be confirmed shortly*) in Kraków, Poland.

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2026 General Assembly of EUROPA NOSTRA BELGIUM

During the General Assembly, new board members were elected: Hendrik Nelde, Stephanie Ngongo, Juliane Ott, Charles Tulkens and Maarten Vermeir. The energy brought with this new group of board members will surely dynamise our board even more. Charles Tulkens will take over from Philippe de Lathuy as treasurer.



SPA – developing a heritage city

This year, the town of Spa is celebrating the fifth anniversary of its inclusion, alongside ten other '[Great Spa Towns of Europe](#)' located

in six other European countries, on the UNESCO World Heritage List. All these towns, which have developed around natural mineral springs, bear witness to the international European spa culture that flourished from the early 18th century to the 1930s and continues to this day.

EUROPA NOSTRA BELGIUM (as part of its 'Heritage to Save the City' programme – see the ENB activity report 2025-2026) and the City of Spa have jointly organized a symposium on Saturday 9 May 2026, from 11.00 am to 6.30 pm in the heart of the spa town, on the theme of 'developing a heritage city' whilst respecting its history.

Following a splendid tour of four iconic sites in Spa (the Leopold II Gallery, the Marie-Henriette Pavilion, the Waux Hall and the Hôtel Britannique) and a tasty lunch offered by the City of Spa, the Symposium was opened by Ms Valérie Lescrenier, Minister for Heritage of the Walloon Region and a UNESCO representative. The further discussion was introduced by Professor Dr. Marie-Sophie de Clippele (UCLouvain Saint-Louis) who presented the work of her UNESCO HAND Chair (Heritage, Art & Nature in a Digital World), which focuses, amongst other things, on the interactions between heritage, law and governance (*see also below*).

This was followed by a presentation of the strategic vision of the Spa municipal authorities, explained by Ms Alda Greoli, Deputy Mayor in charge of Culture and Heritage, former Minister for Culture of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and co-organizer of the event. These presentations and the reactions they provoked set the stage for the symposium's highlight: the discussion and interactions amongst regional, national and European authorities, experts from UNESCO, ICOMOS, AWAP, Herita and from Europa Nostra, and

citizens passionate about the heritage of their amazing city. The Symposium was perfectly concluded by magnificent music performance.

Finally, an expertly guided visit of the Hôtel des Bains de Spa, seamlessly followed by a 'Verre de l'Amitié' at the inner courtyard of this Hotel concluded a magnificent day and a magnificent joint visit by Europa Nostra Belgium to the City of Spa.



UNESCO Chair for Heritage, Art, Nature and Digital

In December 2025, UCLouvain was awarded one of the prestigious [UNESCO Chairs](#) for the Heritage, Art, Nature and Digital (HAND) project. Co-chaired by Professors Olivier Servais, a historian and anthropologist, and Marie-Sophie de Clippele, a specialist in nature

and culture law, who is also the Secretary of EUROPA NOSTRA BELGIUM.

On Monday 22 June 2026, a scientific symposium and an inaugural session was held at the Royal Library of Belgium to mark the establishment of the chair.

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Highlights from Member Organizations of EUROPA NOSTRA BELGIUM

Bart Van Loo, Herald of the Ommegang

On 1 & 3 July 2026 the Ommegang of Brussels, inscribed by UNESCO on Its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, had the honor of welcoming the internationally celebrated writer and historian [Bart Van Loo as this year's Herald](#) giving live comment and historical explanations during the Brussels Renaissance Spectacle at the Grand Place of Brussels in his own and widely appreciated public-intellectual style. [Bart Van Loo](#) described this particular participation as the apotheosis for him of ten intense years in which he published two international bestsellers on the History of the Dukes of Burgundy and of the Burgundian Low Countries and presented animated conferences on these subjects for the general public and for historians and specialists alike, in all the respective parts of the Kingdom of Belgium.

And in the framework of the 800th anniversary of the Cathedral of Brussels, [Bart Van Loo](#) gave on 2 July 2026 also a public and freely accessible speech in a for this occasion fully packed Cathedral of Brussels: a speech that was specifically directed to Emperor Charles V, his son and his court as reenacted in situ by major actors of the Ommegang of Brussels who co-organized this special event together with the Cathedral of Brussels and with the City of

Brussels. During this event, art history specialists gave further public explanations, again lively directed to the actors playing Charles V and his son, on the stained glasses of the Cathedral of Brussels depicting Charles V and his Habsburg family alongside clear references to the Brabantine political culture of the Joyous Entries of Brabant.

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Civil engagement saves heritage ‘Royal Rinking’ in Ixelles

A neighborhood committee, with the joined forces of its affiliated networks, achieved a major success in saving from complete destruction the emblematic, historical building of the Royal Rinking in Ixelles showcasing a stunning Art Deco façade and holding a major legacy of significant economic history, cultural history and leisure history inside both Brussels and Belgium.

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BRUSK

You are all warmly invited to visit and explore BRUSK, the brand new ‘Artistic Hotspot’ of the City of Bruges: <https://bruskbrugge.be/>

Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Belgium

For celebrating [160 years of Diplomatic Relations](#) between Japan and Belgium, the Emperor and Empress of Japan came recently on a state visit to the Kingdom of Belgium. Upon arrival at the Air Base of Melsbroek on 20 June 2026, the Emperor and Empress of Japan were gracefully welcomed by Crown Princess Elisabeth. A friendly stay with the Royal Family of Belgium at the Castle of

Ciergnon followed as the Royal House of Belgium and the Imperial House of Japan enjoy and maintain a close relation and friendship going back generations with also great implications by King Baudouin/Boudewijn and King Philippe/Filip. Another highlight of the state visit by the Emperor and Empress of Japan was their reception in Leuven on 24 June 2026 by the Rector of KU Leuven, Professor Dr. Séverine Vermeire, and their joint visit to the University Library of Leuven where astonishing and moving heritage collections of KU Leuven and UCLouvain were presented and explained by staff and scholars of the two Universities.

As well in the framework of celebrating 160 years of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Belgium, traditional Japanese dances and music opened the two editions of the Ommegang of Brussels on 1 & 3 July 2026 at the Grand Place of Brussels in presence of the Ambassador of Japan to the Kingdom of Belgium as Japan was the Country of Honor at the Ommegang of Brussels 2026. And around 15 August 2026 the famous Japanese Painting '[The Great Wave off Kanagawa](#)' by Hokusai stood model for the design of the biannual Flower Carpet at the same magnificent Grand Place of Brussels embodying and depicting the close bond between our two Nations.

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Apply for 7 Most Endangered Programme

The Call for Nominations for the 2027 edition of the [7 Most Endangered Programme](#) is now open with a submission deadline for [nominations of 23 October 2026](#).

Each year, the Programme selects seven heritage sites at risk and brings together heritage and financial expertise, public authorities, owners and custodians, civil society organisations and local

communities to help develop viable pathways for their long-term safeguarding.

The [Récollets Convent in Nivelles](#) was for instances selected in 2022 under that Programme. EUROPA NOSTRA BELGIUM has always followed and will continue to follow that file closely (see *ENB activity report 2025-2026*).

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