

# Press Release

## Council of Europe Press Division

Ref: 505a06

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60

Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11

[pressunit@coe.int](mailto:pressunit@coe.int)

internet: [www.coe.int/press](http://www.coe.int/press)

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## 2006 European Heritage Days to be launched in St Petersburg

Strasbourg, 12.09.2006 – The European Heritage Days (EHD) will be officially launched from 21 to 23 September 2006 in St Petersburg (Russian Federation).

The event will begin **at 7 pm on Thursday 21 September** with a ceremony at the Hermitage Museum, which will be attended by Andrey Busygin, Russian Deputy Minister of Culture and Mass Communications, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Odile Quintin, Director General of Education and Culture of the European Commission, Valentina Matvienko, Governor of St. Petersburg and Denis de Kergorlay, Vice-President of [Europa Nostra](http://www.europa-nostra.org) (the co-ordination office responsible for organising the Days since April 2006), as well as many other high-level officials.

On **Friday 22 September**, a seminar on European cultural heritage will take place in the Tsarskoye Selo State Museum (Catherine the Great's Summer Palace). The objectives of the seminar are to highlight the value of European cultural heritage, illustrate the importance of Russian cultural heritage as part and parcel of European cultural heritage, encourage closer co-operation between public authorities and civil society, and promote suitable national and European policies and funding methods.

Places normally closed to the public (such as the Baron Sergey Pavlovich von Derviz's house, the Prince Paskevich-Erivansky's house, the Gilze van der Pals' house, the Abamalek-Lazarev's house, the Alexandre Dmitrievich Sheremetyev's mansion) will be opened on **Saturday 23 September** to mark the European Heritage Days, organised under the auspices of the Russian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (May-November 2006).

A **press conference** will be held **at 4 pm on Thursday 21 September** at the Hermitage Museum.

The European Heritage Days were set up by the Council of Europe in 1991, with the financial support of the European Commission, to make Europe's citizens more aware of the wealth of cultural diversity on the European continent. Since 1999 the European Heritage Days have been a joint Council of Europe/European Commission initiative. In 2005, there were nearly 22 million visits to some 37,000 monuments and sites. Today the 49 countries that have signed the 1954 Council of Europe Cultural Convention take part in the event.

For more information, see our special file [www.coe.int/events/ehd2006](http://www.coe.int/events/ehd2006).

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**A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.**

For the second year in a row, Thalys is taking part in the European Heritage Days to emphasise its European dimension, with a special offer on tickets to Germany, the Netherlands, Flanders, Wallonia, France and Brussels-Capital in September ([www.Thalys.com](http://www.Thalys.com)).

**Accreditation for journalists:**

- to the press conference: tel. +7 812 710 95 10, e-mail [press@hermitage.ru](mailto:press@hermitage.ru)
- to the seminar: tel. +7 812 465 22 81, e-mail [press@musey.sp.ru](mailto:press@musey.sp.ru)

**Press contact:**

Estelle Steiner, Press officer, Council of Europe

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 33 35, mobile +33 (0)6 08 46 01 57, [estelle.steiner@coe.int](mailto:estelle.steiner@coe.int)