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## European Heritage Label (EHL) in Lights of Internal Historical Policy in Poland

**Abstract:** In the framework of the EU European Heritage Label (EHL) programme, six EHLs were granted to Polish institutions from 2014 to 2019.<sup>1</sup> The EHL programme regulations oblige EHL operators to promote through their work with the label a European historical narrative, however in Poland EHL operators often have to work on bringing back, or refreshing, memory about the sites. In some cases, they are focused on reviewing regional perspectives (Polish-German and Polish-Lithuanian) which were ignored during communism. Deriving from the assumption that the concept of cultural heritage is used at the national, subnational and pan-national levels (Haftsein, 2012, p. 501) and that heritage is a “process of negotiating values” (Smith, 2016, p. 30), it is important to ask the following questions: 1) Do Polish EHLs initiate a discussion about the Europeanisation of heritage? 2) To what extent EHLs in Poland are subject to the process of Europeanisation and to what extent are they a subject of the state’s historical policy and national discourse?

**Key words:** European Heritage Label, European Union’s cultural policy, Europeanisation, memory, history

### Introduction and Methodology

The European Heritage Label (EHL) was established by Decision no. 1194/2011/UE of the European Parliament and Council on November 16<sup>th</sup> 2011.<sup>2</sup> It is regarded as one of the European Union’s flagship programmes. It contributes to the strengthening of EU cultural policy in regards to European heritage protection and promotion, which in fact is an implementation of Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).<sup>3</sup> By 2022 the EU has awarded 48 EHLs to historical sites. At the time of the writing of this text (2023) there have been no

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Poland, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/polskie-obiekty-uhonorowane-znakiem-dziedzictwa-europejskiego>, 23.04.2022.

<sup>2</sup> Decision No 1194/2011/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 November 2011 *establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label*, Official Journal of the EU, L 303/1, 22.11.2011.

<sup>3</sup> Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, O.J. C 326/47, 26.10.2012.

EHLs granted in any of the Scandinavian states.<sup>4</sup> The characteristic feature of all of the awarded sites is their significance for the process of European integration and mainstreaming European values to the public (Decision 1194/2011/EU, Article 3 point 2). These sites evidently play a symbolic role, they are an important element of the history of European nations and thereby also the history of Europe. They serve either as witnesses to dramatic events and evidence of barbaric treatment of people or human rights' violations, or as testimonies of reconciliation acts and examples of the long-term European-oriented thinking and political visions (Lähdesmäki et al., 2020.)

The aim of this article is to analyse the process of the Europeanisation of the EHLs in Poland. A special focus is put on the transfer of the narrative – from the pan-European level to the national (state) level and how this “change” influences the reinterpretation of the EHLs and the shaping of the European meta-narrative. The basis for political-historical analyses used in this article is Laurajane Smith's definition of heritage (Smith, 2016), which states that heritage is a “process of negotiating historical and cultural meanings and values,” as well as “a discourse legitimising and governing historical and cultural narratives.” To explain this, two main research questions have been formulated: 1) To what extent EHLs in Poland are subject to the process of Europeanisation and to what extent are they a subject of the state's historical policy and national discourse? 2) Does the promotion of EHLs in Poland contribute to a better understanding of the European past and deepening of European memory? The data used in the text include EU documents, the content of Application Forms to the EHL programme, the content of interviews conducted with EHL's organisers (qualitative research)<sup>5</sup> and review of subject literature. The historical and comparative methods of discourse analysis were applied in both the descriptive and analytical sections of the text.

The subject of the analysis are six Polish sites which have been awarded the EHL in 2015, 2016, and 2019. The first of the analysed EHLs include: the Union of Lublin (1569), the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution (1791), and the Historical Shipyard in Gdańsk. These objects have played a fundamental role in Poland's history. The other two objects are: the World War I Eastern Front Cemetery No. 123 in Łużna–Pustki and the Military Cemetery in Łambinowice. These two remembrance sites commemorate the memory of the victims of the First and Second World Wars, thereby pointing to the universality of Europe's military history. The last EHL assigned to a Polish object in 2019 was granted to the Werkbund housing estate in Wrocław. This modernist housing project is an example of the visionary architecture of the Weimar period and points to the influence this style had on family housing in Central Europe. The author analyses the role played by the listed EHLs in relation to national heritage, political narrative and education for the future. The proposed article does not apply comparative analysis to EHLs, underlying rather individual examples of EHL in Poland and to connect them through historical background and concept of important Polish historical values.

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<sup>4</sup> For the lists of the EHL monuments see: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/initiatives-and-success-stories/european-heritage-label>, 21.04.2022.

<sup>5</sup> Operators of the EHLs in Poland interviewed agreed to have their view made public.

## **1. Historical perspectives of the Polish political consolidation and “Solidarity”. Construction of a modern state in Central Europe**

### **1.1. From the Union of Lublin (1569) to the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution (1791)**

The Union of Lublin was signed in 1569 between the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania. As a result of this agreement, a new shared state was created. It became known as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This state was to become a symbol of a free-willed regional union whose goal was to strengthen both states in the face of Moscow's threat (Frost, 2015; Davies, 2001, 2005). The Commonwealth became a federation which had one foreign policy and one shared representation on the international arena (Davis, 2001; Grzybowski, 2000). As it was inhabited by many ethnic groups, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a state became known for its tolerance and respect to diversity of cultures and religions in this part of Europe (Butterwick, 2021; Davies, 1996; Jasienica, 2018). The crowning moment of the democratisation processes which were taking place in the shared Polish-Lithuanian state was the proclamation of its Constitution on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1791 in Warsaw (Szczygielski, 2015). This legal act became known as the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution and has been awarded the EHL. “The May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution beautifully matches the tradition of the Enlightenment which serves as the basis for the functioning of the European Union and which assigns an important role to reason, law and freedom” (Application Form, 2013, p. 4). The proclamation of the Polish Constitution played an important role in the building of modern state structures in Central Europe, which is a lesser known fact explained by Poland's years' long isolation on the international arena (Hillar, 1992; Szczygielski, 2015; Davies, 2005). The May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution, second in the world after the Constitution of the United States of America (Mussig, 2015), was proclaimed four months before the French Constitution (September 13<sup>th</sup> 1791). Contrary to the French Constitution, the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution was proclaimed in a peaceful manner (Davies, 2001; Malec, 2012; Kupisz, 2019). Its text included the Mutual Engagement of Both Nations: Polish and Lithuanian, which guaranteed that the Lithuanians would enjoy independent statehood within the Commonwealth.

The archival document with the text of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution that was awarded the EHL is kept at the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw.<sup>6</sup> It is regarded as a priceless monument of Polish culture<sup>7</sup> while May 3<sup>rd</sup> has been established as an official state holiday. The European Heritage Label granted to “The Union of Lublin” was in fact assigned to three historical monuments. They include: 1) the Saint Trinity Chapel at Lublin Castle, 2) Basilica of Saint Stanislaus and the Dominican Monastery as well as 3) the Monument of the Union of Lublin at Plac Litewski (Lithuanian Square) in Lublin. The two institutions that have been awarded this EHL, namely the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw and the City of Lublin, aim at promoting the memory of

<sup>6</sup> Description of the EHL object: Government Act, original, language: Polish, manuscript 40 x 25 cm in size, placed in the book with Sejm's resolutions adopted between 16/12/1790 and 29/05/1792, preserved in Lithuanian Metrica fond, section VII, 4, f. 75–82.

<sup>7</sup> English language version of the Constitution: [http://agad.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Konstytucja-3-maja\\_Eng-v4.pdf](http://agad.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Konstytucja-3-maja_Eng-v4.pdf), 28.04.2022.

these historical events in the framework of one integrated historical narrative. For example, in 2021, the text of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution was exhibited both in Warsaw and Vilnius as part of the celebrations of the European Heritage Label.<sup>8</sup> In the same way the celebrations of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union of Lublin, which were held in 2019, together with the celebrations of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Poland's joining the European Union, were used by the city of Lublin to promote the EHL (Szczygieł, 2020).<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2. Historic Gdańsk Shipyard: building European citizenship

Similarly to "The Union of Lublin" EHL, the EHL awarded to the Historic Shipyard in Gdańsk has been granted to a few sites. These include: 1) the European Solidarity Centre (ESC), 2) Solidarity Square together with the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers of 1970 with commemorative plaques on the wall, 3) the BHP<sup>10</sup> Hall, a place where the August Accords were negotiated, and 4) historic Gate number 2. The Gdańsk shipyard is one of the most recognisable memory sites of industrial heritage in Europe. Thanks to the Solidarity workers' movement and its legendary leader, Lech Wałęsa, the shipyard became a symbol of the political changes that took place at the turn of the 1990s in Eastern and Central Europe (Pears, 2009; Kubow, 2013; Friszke, 2003, 2014; Roszkowski, 2017). It was the place where the workers' strike gave an impetus to an outbreak of the Polish massive resistance to communism (Grabner Majchrzak, 2017; Trepanier, Domaradzki, Stanke, 2010). In fact, the Solidarity movement was one of the largest freedom movements in post-war European history (Friszke, 2014; Dudek, 2007; Paczkowski, 2003; Sowa, 2001) and thus the word "Solidarity" became a symbol of a search for peaceful solutions based on ideals. That is why, all of the sites that have been assigned the EHL at the Gdańsk Shipyard are of a significant importance to the memory of violence-free resistance. For instance, at historic Gate number 2 the famous 21 demands of the Solidarity movement addressed to the communist authorities were hung up in 1980 (Friszke, 2014; Senser, 1989). They were accepted by the Polish United Worker's Party and became known as the August Accords. Regarded as a monument of Polish culture they have also been placed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. To commemorate the 1970 and 1980 events, the square near the shipyard was named Solidarity Square. Today it is the location of the building of the European Solidarity Centre (ESC), an institution which is aimed at promoting knowledge about anti-communist resistance. On its premises ESC hosts a permanent exhibition about the history and meaning of Solidarity as well as the office of the movement's legendary leader – Lech Wałęsa.

The permanent exhibition at the ESC also explores such European values as freedom of thought, freedom of gathering and employment as well as respect for human rights.

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<sup>8</sup> Information collected as part of the Desk Research POB Research Grant. Interview dr Hubert Wajs, director of the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (2022).

<sup>9</sup> A conference and series of debates organised with a "From the Union of Lublin to the European Union" motto. This sentence was uttered by John Pope the Second in Rome on June 19<sup>th</sup> 2002, before the EU accession referendum was held in Poland.

<sup>10</sup> The Hall, in which the Health and Safety workshops used to be conducted (BHP means Health and Safety Regulations).

As part of its mission, the ESC has taken up a task of strengthening the civil society. Its cultural division organises activities called “Solidarity everyday,” while the ideals of Solidarity are promoted through a project called “Understanding August.”<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Understanding European history through war cycles

### 2.1. Bringing World War I victims out of European oblivion (The World War I Cemetery No. 123 in Łużna-Pustki)

In Poland, the EHL 20<sup>th</sup> century historical narratives have been created in Poland through such places as the World War I Eastern Front Cemetery No. 123 in Łużna-Pustki and the National Remembrance Site in Łambinowice. These two sites first and foremost commemorate the memory of the soldiers who were killed in Europe in the last two world wars but also tackle the important problem of the forced erasure of memory traces, which were the direct work of the communist authorities.

The World War I Eastern Front Cemetery No. 123 in Łużna-Pustki is the largest military burial site for the victims of the First World War. It is located near Gorlice in the Małopolskie Region. This site was a witness of one of the bloodiest battles of this war, the so-called Small Verdun, which took place here from May 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> 1915 (Korzeniewski, Patridge, 2005; Chwalba, 2014). This cemetery is the burial site of 1,200 soldiers who served in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Among them were Austrians, Bosnians, Poles, Romanians from Transylvania, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Hungarians and Jews but also members of divisions of German allies and Russian soldiers. This is a multi-denominational cemetery whose characteristic architecture was the work of two artists: A Pole – Jan Szczepkowski; and a Slovak – Dušan Jurkovič. The cemetery is also highly valued for its spatial arrangement, tomb décor as well as the old Slavic stone chapel situated at the hill (Schubert, 1992). The mission of the builders and architects of this cemetery was to show “respect to each of the fallen soldiers through ‘democratization’ of their burial sites and tomb plaques and to pay tribute to them through small architecture (including monuments), cemetery symbols with religious elements and by avoiding triumphalism and limiting military, state or national motifs” (Application Form, 2015, p. 11). Evidently the multi-denominational nature of this burial site can be regarded as an embodiment of such European values as tolerance, respect for multiculturalism, dignity and human rights (Mazur, 2019). This monument also shows the respect that the Austro-Hungarian monarch paid to the fallen soldiers, regardless of their nationality (Chwalba, 2014).

During communism the cemetery was reduced to the function of a local burial site. The communist authorities with their manipulative memory policies which glorified the victims of the Second World War were also pursuing a policy of non-memory towards the previous world war (Zelizer, 2000; Ziółkowski, 2002; Roszkowski, 2017). The results of this “erasing of traces” included an almost complete denial of historical facts and years of neglect

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<sup>11</sup> Information collected as part of the Desk Research POB Research Grant. Interview with Magdalena Staręga, senior specialist for cultural heritage, expert on shipyard’s history and Agnieszka Piórkowska, head of the Educational Projects department, expert on education (2022).

in the area of cultural heritage (Paczkowski, 2003; Ziółkowski, 2002). Therefore, people who inhabited areas such as Łużna-Pustki did not know the history of the fallen soldiers nor had they heard of the artists who built the burial site (Mazur, 2019). It was only after the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the processes of the revision of historical memory in this region that the memory of the fallen soldiers buried here became publically known (Sadowska, 2008; Dudek, 2016; Zenderowski, 2009).

## 2.2. Prisoner of war stories. Tales of expulsion and resettlement (The National Remembrance Site in Łambinowice)

The National Remembrance Site in Łambinowice (which is under supervision of the Central Museum of the Prisoners of War in Opole, Upper Silesia Region) is a complex made of three military cemeteries and remnants of two forced labour camps which were used for migrating civil population: German and Polish. Matter-of-fact, the German population moved out from Upper Silesia after the First World War after it had partially lost in a referendum in 1921 that was mandated by the Versailles Treaty and held to determine the ownership of this region after the war (Hunt Today, 1997). The Polish population, in turn arrived here after the Second World War, coming from the lands of today's Ukraine. (Davies, 1996; Roszkowski, 2017; Kochanowski, 2016). The Museum is located near the grounds of the Cemetery of Soviet Prisoners of War and the Monument Commemorating the Prisoners of War. The headquarters of the museum is in the former building of the Wehrmacht commandership which is also the location of the permanent exhibition. "This object offers a multi-layer historical interpretation which can be drawn from the preserved artifacts, and is especially noticeable in the surroundings" (*Application Form*, 2019, p. 10). The activities of the Łambinowice museum include documenting, researching and popularising knowledge about the history of the prisoners-of-war, displaced persons and war refugees in Central and Eastern Europe as well as keeping record of the acts of violence and violations of human rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Old Cemetery of the Prisoners of War (1870–1871) and the First World War Cemetery have characteristic individual and marked burial sites and monuments commemorating European prisoners of war of different nationalities. Overall, Łambinowice is one of the best preserved burial site of prisoners of war in Europe. The cemetery is located near the premises of the German Army prisoner-of-war camp Stalag VIII B (344) Lamsdorf camp, where the captured soldiers of the anti-Hitler coalition were sent. Also, the former Labour Camp in Łambinowice (1945–1946) is located nearby. Further, there are remnants of the Stalag 318/VIII F (344) Lamsdorf complex, which was created for soldiers of the Red Army. However, soldiers of other nationalities were also incarcerated in Stalag, including Greeks, French, Romanians, Slovaks, Italians and, in 1944, also Polish soldiers.

## 2.3. Europeanist narratives of war (Łużna-Pustki, Łambinowice)

In Łużna-Pustki, where the operator of the European Heritage Label is the local commune, the reconstruction of the World War I Military Cemetery number 123 was fi-



nanced by Małopolskie Voievodship and based on the documents archived at the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava. Since the commune has become the EHL operator, it has started to focus on the national and regional promotion of the heritage site, which resulted in increased tourism and visits of state officials, especially from Hungary, to the area (Mazur, 2017). One of the occasions for such visits is the anniversary of the Gorlice Battle, which is frequently attended by representatives of state authorities, artists, scout groups and school pupils who attend the multi-denominational services held at the cemetery. The commune has also started gathering documentation about First World War burial sites, organizes cleaning of the cemeteries, and maintains guards at the tomb of the fallen soldiers. Local schools organize history knowledge competitions and regular classes on history of the battles which took place in this region.<sup>12</sup>

The activities of the museum in Łambinowice include popularization of the history of the prisoners of war and those who had been expelled as a result of the war in Central and Eastern Europe. The museum also carries out research into the prisoners of war system adopted by the totalitarian states in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (especially the Third Reich and the Soviet Union) as well as the documentation of the acts of violence and breaching of human rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Under communism this knowledge was pushed to the background of the narratives about the war. In Poland it was also additionally overshadowed by the research into the situation of Poles in Soviet camps and the Katyń massacre as well as the disputes as to who was responsible for the genocide of Polish military officers and intelligentsia. For over four decades the Soviets blamed the Germans for the crime, however in the 1990s they finally admitted their role in the mass murder of the Poles. The second main area of the museum's work involves telling the story of those who had been expelled and became refugees (Wylęgała, 2014; Kochanowski, 2016; Eberhardt, 2011). It is a story about their migrations, which were a result of arbitrary political decisions made at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences (Davies, 1996, 2001; Harbutt, 2010; Plokhly, 2011; Howard, 2003). Thus, the museum focuses on the military and social history of Central Europe, the history of soldiers of different nationalities and people who were brutally forced, in large numbers, to leave behind their homes and relocate elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Werkbund Estates: modernist housing in Central Europe

The last EHL in Poland fits the discussion on the "imposed" and "unwanted" heritage. The monument in question is the estate/"inheritance" of German modernism in Wrocław, a city which is also associated with migration. The EHL awarded to Werkbund Estate includes housing estates in Stuttgart, Zurich, Vienna, Prague, Brno, and Wrocław. They are all examples of modern family housing built from 1927 to 1932.<sup>14</sup> The main

<sup>12</sup> Information collected as part of the Desk Research POB Research Grant. Interview with Wiesław Dusza, the Secretary of Łużna commune (2021).

<sup>13</sup> Information collected as part of the Desk Research POB Research Grant. Interview with Violetta Rezler-Wasielewska, director of the Central Museum of Prisoners-of-War in Łambinowice and Dr Anna Czerner, academic division of the Central Museum of Prisoners-of-War in Opole (2021).

<sup>14</sup> Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart, created in 1927 in the context of the Werkbund exhibition The Dwelling; Nový Dům Werkbund Estate, created in Brno in 1928; Wrocław Werkbund Estate, created

purpose of these estates was to provide people with functional places to live, which was possible thanks to modern technologies. The philosophy of this housing design was based on the concept of social justice. The Werkbund housing estates were also to serve as an alternative to the overcrowded centers of large cities and an inspiration to other similar social housing projects in Europe (Arns et al., 2015). Today Werkbund is seen as an example of "classical" modernism of the interwar period (Hahmand, Nielsen, 2000). Unfortunately, after the Second World War these housing estates became partially destroyed. This was especially true for those located in the socialist bloc. In these states the pre-war estates underwent a complete degradation and were treated as an unpleasant remnant of the Third Reich.

In Poland the EHL was granted to the WuWa (German *Wohnungs und Werkraum Ausstellung*) estate, established in 1929. Now it is seen as an example of a successful revitalization of an estate inhabited by a Wrocław elite that seeks comfortable living conditions. Thanks to the revitalization of the estate, the original look was brought back to the majority of the buildings And gradually WuWa has turned into a trendy neighborhood, known for its pre-war avant-garde history.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. Between Europeanisation and re-Polonisation of the past

In Poland, the above described EHLs, thematically diverse and of different cultural values, are subject to two lines of interpretation. The labels' operators aim at the Europeanisation of historical narratives. However, since 2015, when the nationalistic conservative party – Law and Justice (PiS) – came to power, it has become clear that heritage objects are becoming subject to the so-called re-Polonisation policy. This policy was based on an intentional rejection of a European perspective and an enforcement of the image of Poland as a historical victim of its expansive neighbors (Zenderowski, 2009; Nizinkiewicz, 2017; Władyka, 2019).

The historical narrative of the Union of Lublin has long been exploited by Polish nationalist and conservative forces. As a result, the Polish side proudly speaks about the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, while the Lithuanians are often omitted in this regard (Eidintas et al., 2015; Davis, 2011; Butterwick, 2021; Jasienica, 2022; Nowak, 2021). However, the EHL operators have attempted to eliminate this overly Polish historical narrative, treating the Label as an opportunity to review Polish-Lithuanian relations (Czerlunczakiewicz et al., 2020) and confirming<sup>16</sup> that the Polish-Lithuanian

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in 1929 in the context of the Werkbund exhibition WuWa, Living and Working Spaces; Vienna-Lainz Werkbund Estate, created in 1932; Baba Werkbund Estate in Prague, created in 1932. The network also includes the Neubühl Werkbund Estate that was created in Zurich between 1930 and 1932, which as a Swiss ensemble was not eligible for the award. See more: <https://weissenhofmuseum.de/en/weissenhof-siedlung-stuttgart-erhaelt-das-europaeische-kulturerbe-siegel>, 1.05.2022.

<sup>15</sup> Information collected as part of the Desk Research POB Research Grant. Interview with Piotr Fokczyński, director of the Architecture and Construction Division of the City of Wrocław (2021).

<sup>16</sup> Information collected as part of the Desk Research POB Research Grant. Interview with dr Hubert Wajs, director of the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (2022) and Hubert Mącik, former Main Monument Restorer in Lublin, director of the National Institute of Heritage, Lublin division (2021).



Commonwealth should be presented as a multi-national, multi-lingual and multi-denominational federal state, one that built a new identity and survived in this form for over 200 years (Szczygieł, 2020; Czerlunczakiewicz et al., 2010). It was also a state that regulated the “duality” of its political system with a modern constitution (Missig, 2015). Thus, the European Heritage Label can be used to strengthen the European perspective in the interpretation of the significance of the Union of Lublin. It states that a “union” of states does not need to be seen, also today, as a threat to nation-states, but rather perceived as their enforcement (Davis, 2005, 2011). The Union of Lublin could even be regarded as an historic “prefiguration of the UE” (Kłoczowski, 2013; Wroński, 1998). Consequently, the EHL awarded to the Union of Lublin and the May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1791 Constitution were meant to promote modern political developments in Central Europe and thereby change its stereotypical image of a territory inhabited by backward and culturally obsolete societies (Lukowski, 1994; Davies, 1996, 2001; Kłoczowski, 2013). This viewpoint – of cultural and mental changes in Central Europe that took place as a result of the Union – is in line with Timothy Snyder’s historical analysis presented in his monography *The Reconstructions of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus: 1569–1999* (2003). In 2024 the city Lublin won the competition of the European Capital of Culture for 2029 by promoting the slogan “Re-Union” as the driving force for future cultural activities.

The EHL awarded to the Historical Gdańsk Shipyard was meant to enrich the European narrative about the transformation system in Central and Eastern Europe. However, these sites and the historical narratives built around them have become subject to re-Polonisation (Wójcik, 2016; Nizinkiewicz, 2017; Władyka, 2019). Rafał Chwedorczuk named it a “post-totalitarian discourse of Eastern and Central Europe” (Chwedorczuk, 2018, p. 65). This narrative has been created in parallel to the already existing interpretation, which so far has not been generating objections among Polish historians and sociologists (Paczkowski, 2003; Friszke, 2003; Dudek, 2007; Bernhard, Kubik, 2014; Nowak, 2022; Roszkowski, 2017). Yet, due to the highly ideological activities of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), which is the main Polish state institution responsible for oversight of historical policy, the Gdańsk Shipyard has become an area of ideological dispute over the heritage of the Solidarity movement (Socha, 2020). The new narrative promoted by the Institute (Cenckiewicz, 2013; Cenckiewicz, Chmielewski, 2019) is aimed to enforce Polish national pride (also alternative interpretations of the origins of the Solidarity movement) and fit the official historical policy of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (2015–2023) (Sobczyk, 2016; Pawlicka, 2019). The implementation of this policy could be seen in the activities of the Institute of Solidarity’s Heritage (IDS) which was established by a political decision in 2019<sup>17</sup> as a “competitor” to the European Solidarity Centre. The object in question is the BHP Hall, which is now a subject of disagreement between the IDS and the nearby ESC. The Historical Gdańsk Shipyard has thus become a victim of political controversy over the interpretation of the past (national identity) and the populist interpretation of the role of Gdańsk in the Polish “road” to freedom<sup>18</sup> (Gałązka, 2019; Trzmiel, 2019; Olejarczyk, 2019; Socha, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> IDS was established 31 of August 2019. <https://ids1980.pl/o-nas/misja/>, 5.03.2023.

<sup>18</sup> A similar situation was experienced by the World War Two Museum in Gdańsk. It involved a change of a director who was criticised for the Europeisation of the permanent exhibition and too

The activities undertaken in the framework of the EHL assigned to Łużna-Pustki Cemetery, according to the label operators,<sup>19</sup> enforce local ties as well as help build a community of memory about Europe's dramatic past and war victims of different ethnic nationalities. In this case, as well as in the case of Łambinowice, there is no excessive intervention of politics into the activities of the cultural institutions. This allows them to pursue a historical narrative that is coherent and European. In other words, it remains consistent with such historical/social narratives concerning Poland as those put forward by Norman Davies, Andrzej Paczkowski, Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, Andrzej Chwalba, Andrzej Nowak and Antoni Dudek. The EHL assigned to WuWa in Wrocław is also interesting. It points to the process of incorporating the cultural heritage of the pre-war Breslau into contemporary Wrocław, thereby complementing the city's complex cultural identity (Urbanik, 2016). The so-called post-German heritage, which was intentionally erased from the knowledge of the Polish society, due to the negative connotations it was generating with the Second World War, has now become an integral part of the city of Wrocław's narrative which shows it as a multi-cultural city and it is clearly presented in Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse's *Microsom. A Portrait of Central European City* (2002).

Partial re-Polonisation of the interpretation of the EHLs can also be explained as being the result of historical trauma. The source of the complexity of this phenomenon lies in local political tensions, especially the one-dimensional interpretation of history by Polish conservative politicians (Wójcik, 2016; Kačka, 2015; Dudek, 2016; Nizinkiewicz, 2017) who used to demonstrate an intentional desire to diminish the role of the European narrative in historical interpretations (Bendyk, 2020; Łozińska, Porycka, 2019). This is one of the reasons behind the internal Polish conflict over memory (Wolff-Powęska, 2017), which leads to a re-emergence of some old sentiments and disputes in which emotional arguments take over factual ones and causes Poles to look at their history through the prism of victims of political regimes and injustices (Davis, 2001, 2011; Paczkowski, 2003; Zaborski, 2008; Zenderowski, Cebul, 2010). Radosław Zenderowski even coined the phrase "victimist race" in Central and Eastern Europe's historical discourse, which is often used today (Zenderowski, 2009). This antagonization of memory in the framework of the historical policy (Korzeniowski, 2008) can also be seen in the activities that accompany commemorations of the EHL assigned to the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution. Instead of being a demonstration of a nation's solidarity, these commemorations have become an opportunity to expose the Pole's divided worldview and their contradictory understanding of history and memory. Thus, while sometimes the official narrative states that the 1791 Constitution is an example of brave political and legal visions, the media have held a great discussion over Poland's "betrayal" to Russia by parts of the Polish aristocracy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Adamkiewicz, 2022; Cheda, 2022; Starowieyski, 2021), which led to the country's third partition and today's search for the "heirs" of that tragedy. As the result, serious and multidimensional debate of historical memory became impossible and instead the Polish society is exposed to a series of monologues by separate, ideological (radical) groups.

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weak explosion of the role that Polish population played during the war in northern Poland, especially during the battle of Westerplatte in September 1939 (For more see: Wnuk, 2018, pp. 335–350).

<sup>19</sup> Information collected as part of the Desk Research POB Research Grant. Interview with Wiesław Dusza, Secretary of Łużna commune (2021).

Since 2016 Poland has been affected by yet another dispute. This revolves around the 1997 Constitution, which was being systematically breached by the Law and Justice government and which clearly caused a damage to the tradition of Enlightened constitutionalism in Poland. The breaching of the 1997 Constitution by the conservative Polish authorities (2015–2023) (Jaskiernia, Spryszak, 2017) evidently put the country's political elite in a negative light, showing that it is possible not to draw conclusions from the past. In addition, it put the Polish society at risk of a confrontation with the European Union regarding the rule of law (Barcz et al., 2020).

### 5. The Complexity of Polish historical policy (2015–2023)

As mentioned above, there has been a debate in Poland for more than seven years regarding the national historical narrative, which was dominated by a conservative perspective and has been used to counteract Europeanising influences. The Gdańsk Shipyard is a proper example of the internal “conflict” of memories. The May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution is also a subject of heated political disputes. Although there are historians and academics calling for the need for critical historiography in Poland, among them is Norman Davies who warns against a “fall into nationalism” (Lorenz, 2007, cit follows: Wójcik, 2016, p. 447) when implementing a nationalist historical policy, it seems that the leading motif for conservatives in the process of shaping cultural heritage is a departure from self-criticism (characteristic of the German debate in the 1980s) (Saryiusz-Wolska, 2010) and an attempt to block academic pluralism. As Krzysztof Kowalski and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa stated (Kowalski, Törnquist-Plewa, 2017, p. 554), an emphasis has been placed on politics of dignity conducted in the spirit of portraying Poles as “victims” at the hands of their dominant neighbors. This strategy called by Jarosław Kaczyński the policy of “national pride” was meant to replace Donald Tusk's alleged strategy of the so-called “pedagogy of shame.” The difference between the two derives from the fact that the “national pride” approach is based on a heroic vision of a nation that has no guilt over the past and it is seen as a flawless collective, whereas the alleged “pedagogy of shame” perceives the nation's past in terms of its members co-responsibility for evil, failures, partitions or even extermination of other ethnic groups (Lepsius, 2013). The bipolar division of the political discourse over historical facts has had an effect of exacerbating disputes over historical policy and lack of one established national narrative. Consequently, the process of Europeanisation of Polish cultural heritage, for example through the EHLs, appears enigmatic, marginalized, and irrelevant. It plays a greater role only at the level of local communities or certain city districts (Łambinowice, Łużna-Pustki, Werkbund).

The processes of *top-down* and *bottom-up* Europeanisation refers to many contexts. According to subject literature (Featherstone, Radaelli, 2003; Graziano, Vink, 2007) and Tanja Börzel (Börzel, Risse, 2000, 2007) they mark opening up of a country's institutions to supranational influences and incentives, thus allowing for the transfer of European regulations and standards to the national level. Europeanisation processes are implemented in all EU member states by means of public policies. In culture, these processes involve axiological transfers which shape a sense of community. At the same time the process of de-Europeanisation cannot be disregarded, also in the area of (re)

interpretation of cultural heritage. This means, we are faced with a debate over the competitiveness of national narratives in Poland where the European narrative remains in the shadows. One could say that there is a rejection of the Europeanist narrative in the Polish memory discourse, as it strips the national history of its nimbus of uniqueness, while national history is in a constant process of construction/reconstruction (Dudek, 2016; Nizinkiewicz, 2017; Tokarz, 2012). Nevertheless, the Europeanisation of cultural heritage has clearly slowed down in Poland. This has been caused by the reconstructing mechanism of heritage, which has created a distance from ethnocentric or monolithic state narratives and provoked a multi-cultural dialogue. Representatives of conservative wing in Poland pretend to hold such a dialogue only when it is essentially politically profitable, for example, to keep returning to the guilt of the Germans during the Second World War and presenting them as torturers rather than as creators of modern Werkbund architecture (EHL). Thus, the voices of Polish scholars see a need for a methodological correction in the Polish historical discussion. An example of this is provided below:

“...a revision of the tasks of historical policy is necessary – it must be attractive and open to different communities of memory and national sins. Its task should be to shape the historical consciousness of Poles in a spirit of self-criticism, but at the same time to develop the ability to defend one’s position within the framework of possible disputes or open debate with representatives of other nations. Only such a historical policy enhances the public good and focuses national action around a common goal.” (Wójcik, 2016, p. 447)

### Discussions and Conclusions

The term “synchronicity of memory”, used by Mathias Webber (Webber, 2012) in his description of the “European Network Remembrance and Solidarity” programme, adequately expresses the two layers of de-memorisation of the past which can be seen at the EU level: 1) national and pan-national, 2) regional and local. According to some researchers (Pomian, 2009; François, 2006; Baumann, 2004; Calligaro, 2013) a synchrony of memory of European nations (as well as the implementation of concept of a European grand narrative) is impossible to achieve as it has always been a “secondary memory” when compared to national memory. In other words, it is impossible to create one historical narrative in Europe (Baumann, 2005; Zaborski, 2008; Calligaro, 2013) or one shared European memory. Those statements appear to be very true in the context of the role of EHLs in Poland. Educational programs and history syllabi of Polish primary and secondary schools interpret<sup>20</sup> the Union of Lublin as an element of Polish history. They do not recognize its European traces in the 16<sup>th</sup> century nor any similarities with today’s European Union. The official educational policy of the state (2015–2023) returned to the sacralization of history, and its main goal was to “extract from the past (and propagate) a set of images and symbols that unites Poles” (Tokarz, 2012, p. 23). This is probably the primary reason why there is no significant thematic connectivity between EHLs and new methods of teaching history.

<sup>20</sup> Opinions of the Cultural Operators of EHLs in Poland.

The “synchronization” of different levels of memory seems to be an intentional action of EU cultural policy aimed at building a sustainable community of Europeans (Lähdesmäki et al., 2020; Gierat-Bieroń, 2017). Thus, the European narrative assumes a process of remembering events and, at the same time, making the past more contemporary, thereby credible for building historical continuity, including the construction of European collective memory (Larat, 2005; Delanty, 2017). Mathias Webber suggests heading towards a “synchronicity of memory” and creating a community of memory which allows for diversity, various interpretations, existence of parallel historical realities, with a simultaneous existence of a European spirit. This is why Jerzy Kłoczowski could comment: “Never a history of one nation, but always international history; never a history of one country, but always the history of many countries; never one confession, but [inter-confessional] history. Comparative history is extremely important for understanding any phenomenon” (Muzeum Historii Polski, 2009). This pluralistic approach to the interpretation of history does not exclude the important role of the nation-state, as well as of national memory as such.

The EHLs in Poland serve as a tool for the negotiation of the past. Overall, they have created an atmosphere for a new narrative about the past, one that is not monopolized by one entity and gives a voice to other narrators (Luźna-Pustki, Łambinowice, Werkbund). However, the dominant phenomenon in Polish populist public discourse is the departure from the process of (re)negotiating memory in a liberal spirit, which disregards the fact that as modern-day Europeans we are constantly subjected to transmissions of memory, historical relations, processes of reconfiguring knowledge or creating and reproducing socio-cultural values and meanings. Therefore, while answering the first research question of this text, it should be stated that some of the Polish EHLs are still strongly connected to the national *imaginarium* and Polish mythology which results in a weakness of the Europeanisation process. Negotiating alternative perspectives does not come easily when the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) has been aggravating Polish relations with its Eastern neighbors for years; the Polish government (2015–2023) did not respect the provisions of the Polish Constitution (Barcz et al., 2020).

The answer to the second research question put forward in this article might be partly positive. The promotion of EHLs in Poland does contribute to a better understanding of the European past, although mostly on the local level. Additionally, it has been presented in a fragmentary manner. Thus, the Polish public opinion is not ready to confront Poland’s difficult and complex past (Dudek, 2016; Nizinkiewicz, 2017). Instead, it prefers to stay in a ‘narcissistic illusion’ (Choay, 2001), harking back to processes of perpetuating and legitimising pro-Polish narratives of ‘harm’ and, on the other hand, of the nation’s ‘glory’. Therefore, Laurajane Smith is correct in stating that heritage is deeply linked to nation-building and that is why it is endangered by the populist demagoguery and nationalistic political history (Smith, 2016, p. 17). Polish historical policy does not “negotiate” (using Smith’s concept) Europeanisation, because it does not trust it. Rather it regards Europeanisation as a negative impact of the integration process on the activities of the nation state, its structures, functions and tasks (Wach, 2011, p. 53; Sobczak, 2008), as well as its national management system. Therefore, Polish historical policy has reached the so-called ‘dead point’. On the one hand, it emphasizes the subjectivity of the nation state in a public discourse. On the other hand, it wants to pursue the axiological goals of the European community, which is why Poland as a member state of

the EU participates in the EHL program. Polish historical policy aims to make historical judgment regardless of contextual pressures, as it perceives them as being destabilizing to the sense of national identity and causing an erosion of collective memory (of which the liberals are accused) (Tokarz, 2012). The analyses presented above indicate that the creation of a national narrative does not necessarily need to contradict the mission of the European Heritage Label.

In 2015, Oriane Calligaro noted, citing results of Hartog research (Hartog, 2005), that in the process of transnational commonality in the recent traumatic European past, “European institutions have largely privileged memory over history.” (Calligaro, 2015, p. 339). The analyses presented in this article demonstrate that Polish discussions of the past are embroiled in a revision of Polish history, rather than its memory.

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### Application Forms:

Office of the City of Lublin, 2012, Application form to the European Commission to assign the European Heritage Label to three most valuable monuments in the city of Lublin which are historically related with the conclusion of the 1569 Polish-Lithuanian Union, also known as the Union of Lublin. The title of the nomination: City of Lublin – symbol of European integration ideas, pan-national heritage of democracy and tolerance and cultural dialogue between West and East, Lublin.

Application form of the European Heritage Label, 2013, Gdańsk Historic Shipyard, Gdańsk.

The May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1791 Constitution – “Government Act” – Application form for the candidate objects (in accordance with article 2, point 1, decision no. 1194/2011/UE) and objects participating in the international object or national thematic object (in accordance with article 2, points 2 and 3, decision no. 1194/2011/UE), which should be filled up.

European Heritage Label, Application Form, 2015. Name of the object: Remembrance site of the Eastern Front of the First World War – “Łużna – Pustki” Cementary.

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## Znak Dziedzictwa Europejskiego (ZDE) w świetle wewnętrznej polityki historycznej w Polsce

### Streszczenie

**Streszczenie:** W ramach unijnego programu Znak Dziedzictwa Europejskiego (ZDE) w latach 2014–2019 polskim instytucjom przyznano sześć Znaków Dziedzictwa Europejskiego. Postanowienia programu ZDE zobowiązują operatorów ZDE do promowania europejskiej narracji historycznej poprzez pracę ze Znakami, jednak w Polsce operatorzy ZDE często muszą działać na rzecz przywracania lub ożywiania pamięci o miejscach, zgodnie z aktualnym programem polityki kulturalnej państwa, np. polityki historycznej, co często nosi znamiona narracji *stricte* narodowej. Opierając się na założeniu, że pojęcie dziedzictwa kulturowego implikuje ochronę miejsc i obszarów chronionych na poziomie krajowym, subnarodowym i ogólnokrajowym (Haftsein, 2012, s. 501) oraz że dziedzictwo jest „procesem negocjowania wartości” (Smith, 2016, s. 30), artykuł stawia następujące pytania badawcze: 1) Czy polskie ZDE inicjują dyskusję na temat europeizacji dziedzictwa? 2) W jakim stopniu dziedzictwo europejskie w Polsce podlega procesowi europeizacji, a w jakim jest przedmiotem polityki historycznej państwa i dyskursu narodowego?

**Słowa kluczowe:** Znak Dziedzictwa Europejskiego, polityka kulturalna Unii Europejskiej, europeizacja, pamięć, historia