

# PRESS RELEASE

## SAY NO TO A TRAM LINE THROUGH THE HEART OF FLORENCE!

The Hague, 11 February 2008 - Europa Nostra has come together with its founding member organisation Italia Nostra to express their firm opposition to the construction of a tram line through the very heart of the historic centre of Florence, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1982. They call on the Florence and Italian authorities, as well as those of the EU institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to save the historic centre of Florence from this intrusive tram line.

During their simultaneous Press Conference in Rome and The Hague on 5 February, **Mr Giovanni Losavio**, President of Italia Nostra, **Mr Antonello Alici**, Secretary General of Italia Nostra, **Mrs Rossana Bettinelli**, Vice-President of Italia Nostra and Europa Nostra Council Member, and **Mrs Snenska Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic**, Europa Nostra's Secretary General, insisted that the Italian legislation governing the protection of artistic, historic and environmental heritage be respected, and that the special obligations inherent to the management of a World Heritage Site such as Florence be met. They urged that:

- the tram line not penetrate through the historic heart of Florence, which deserves to be rendered wholly pedestrian, while
- the network of electric and environmentally friendly minibuses already in use in the historic centre be maintained, with connections to external tram lines which will circumnavigate the historic centre of the city.

Europa Nostra and Italia Nostra also believe that the case of Florence has an emblematic importance and calls for a Europe-wide discussion on the best practices concerning mobility schemes for Europe's historic cities.

The Municipality of Florence is planning for a major tram line to run through the narrow streets and delicate historic fabric of the heart of the city, including passing through the **Piazza del Duomo** alongside the **Baptistery**, the **Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore** (the Duomo) and the **Palazzo Medici-Riccardi**. While recognising the need for the authorities to invest in an environmentally friendly public transportation system which would include the construction of one or more tram lines, Europa Nostra and Italia Nostra are of the opinion that any mode of transportation provided must be sensitive to the fabric of the historical environment. The proposed tram, 32m long and passing every couple of minutes, will be a source of dangerous impact towards the surrounding buildings and, at the very least, of annoyance to the pedestrians in the tight historic public spaces. The right balance must be found between keeping historic cities viable, adapting them to better answer to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while ensuring the best possible safeguard of their invaluable historic and artistic heritage.

**The protest campaign**, started by **citizens of Florence**, is now gaining a new momentum with the nation-wide campaign launched by **Italia Nostra** and supported by **FAI** (*Fondo per l'ambiente italiano*), other Italian heritage organisations active on both local and national levels, and **more than 200 Italian personalities** in the world of heritage, culture, tourism and business. The protest is open for signature by citizens from beyond the frontiers of Italy by sending an email to [info@italianostra.org](mailto:info@italianostra.org) with your name, address and the name of the campaign.

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**Europa Nostra**, the pan-European Federation for Heritage, is the representative platform of over 250 heritage NGOs active throughout Europe. It is the voice of this vast movement of European civil society active in the field of heritage towards international bodies concerned, in particular the European Union Institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Europa Nostra is dedicated to putting heritage and its benefits in the mainstream of public consciousness and to making heritage a priority for public policies both at European and national levels. Its specific objectives are to promote, at a European level, high standards of quality in the fields of heritage conservation, architecture, urban and rural planning and to advocate a balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural, built and natural environment.

Europa Nostra supports national and international campaigns for the preservation and rescue of Europe's heritage at risk. It encourages exemplary initiatives in favour of the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage by recognising outstanding heritage achievements, in particular through the running of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. Through its various activities, Europa Nostra seeks to highlight the importance of cultural heritage as a building block of European identity and as a contribution to the strengthening of the sense of European citizenship.

[www.europanostra.org](http://www.europanostra.org)



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