

Speaking points Mr Vladimir Sucha,
Director for Culture, Multilingualism and Communication,
Directorate General for Education and Culture,
European Commission,
European Heritage Awards Ceremony,
Durham Cathedral, 12 June 2008

Your Royal Highness,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

- **This years' prizes highlight intercultural dialogue, creativity and innovation through projects in the field of cultural heritage:** just six months before the European Year of Creativity and Innovation starts, the European Prize for Cultural Heritage has put projects and the people behind them on stage showing the role people play in these very important fields.
- **People are the driving force behind the projects awarded here this evening.** The cultural heritage sector relies on people's drive, their passion and the time they are often willing to invest voluntary.
- **People are also the driving force behind the European project.** One of Europe's greatest challenges is involving people from all layers of European society in European developments. One of the advantages of the single market has been that many companies and the people in them are now working in Europe-wide markets. They are aware that the single market has contributed to our economic growth, that it has delivered jobs, that it has led to a greater solidarity among people and that it has brought peace amongst countries

where rivalry once led to wars. Many non-profit cultural organisations - such as Europa Nostra - are also working on a trans-European level. Through trans-European links a European society is emerging. However, for this to be truly successful horizontal links between companies and organisations and the people working in them alone is not enough.

- **There is a great gap between those who participate in Europe and those who do not.** The less educated, the elderly, the less well off and the less skilled are focussed on local and national developments and they tend to see Europe as an abstract thing. These are the people we should be trying to reach with cultural projects. These are the people whose voice we should be listening to when they talk about their cultural heritage. The 'Power of Example' cannot be confined to the experts, to those who already know: it must also reach out to the greater part of Europeans who have their own vision on heritage. Reaching them is essential: involving them can help bridge the now existing gap in provision between those with access to culture and those with less access.
- **Segregation fosters frictions:** In Durham we're just stone's throw away from Hadrian's wall, a construction built under Emperor Hadrian's rule with the aim to keep intruders out of what was then Roman territory. The wall was – in its time – a powerful strategic stone construction covering an enormous stretch of land in a country where constructions were still mainly made of wood. Avoiding intercultural dialogue and keeping the 'haves' on one side of the wall and the 'have-nots' on the other was very much the aim of this wall. It caused aggravation and provoked revolt.
- **Our aim must be to involve people:** People and civil society organisations are the driving force behind conservation efforts: there would be much left of Hadrian's wall if it had not been for John Clayton - one of England's first

cultural conservationists – and organisations like the National Trust. I'm looking forward to what Dame Liz Fogan will be telling us about the work of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the way it involves ordinary people.

- **Europe reaches people in various ways:** the protection of cultural heritage is primarily a responsibility of the Union's Member States. However, the European Union funds cultural projects and networks through the Culture Programme. The prizes given this evening are an example of how the Commission aims at building awareness. Besides this the Commission funds culture through projects aimed at regional development. Throughout Europe many industrial buildings have been and still are being redeveloped into cultural spaces offering room for dialogue, creation and innovation with support from these funds. In the North East of England many projects have been funded through these funds¹.
- **Culture is at the heart of Europe's actions:** As many of you know, since last year, culture has progressively taken a higher profile at European level. It started with the European Agenda for Culture presented in May 2007 by the Commission. The decisive support of the cultural sector at the Lisbon Forum in September 2007 greatly helped the endorsement of it by the Council in November and then by the European Council in December.

¹ Examples: the Boho project aimed at boosting the creative industries through a programme aimed at giving business guidance and support to new creative companies is such an example (received a grant of 2.450.000 Euro). The Great North Museum in Durham is another example in the field of heritage. (Received a grant of 4.000.000 Euro for the rebuilding of a 19th Century Masonic Temple, the only one of its kind to be permanently open to the public. It was funded for the development of tourism)].

- For the first time – the first time ever in Europe! – the Commission has succeeded in identifying common objectives shared by Member States, the Commission and culture stakeholders. In the framework of this Agenda, the Commission will work together to achieve the following objectives:
 1. promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
 2. promoting culture as a catalyst for creativity;
 3. developing culture as an essential element of the EU external relations.

To deliver concrete results on those objectives by 2010, new tools and ways of working together have been developed since the beginning of 2008:

- there is a greater cooperation between Member States [the open method of coordination];
- there is a structured dialogue with the cultural sector;
- there is a stronger focus on culture in all EC policies and programmes.

Last week civil society organisations met in Brussels in a civil society platform. The platform is a complementary forum to existing processes (such as online consultations, public hearings etc.) or specific exchanges of experiences between sectors which.

The participating organisations represent the interests of their sectors at trans-national and European level and have an "advocacy" role in this respect.

The platforms work as a forum for debating issues of interest within the cultural sector and these debates should lead up to concrete ideas of improvement. They should lead to the drafting of recommendations contributing to the development of the political Agenda for Culture in Europe. In the process of constituting these platforms, the Commission is a facilitator of a dialogue that participants nourish with their work and reflection.

The success of this working method will greatly depend on the input from organisations and their ability to really fill in the advocacy role they have by bringing in the views from society in general on cross-sector issues.

- Here again this process can make a difference if it succeeds at reaching Europeans. If it is able to gather their views and include them. Looking at the heritage sector I think one of the great challenges for the future is involving society by listening to what people have to say and by opening up funds - not only for restoration and conservation of buildings and works of art (however important that may be) that clearly need support from a pure cultural heritage point of view - but also for those projects which have a direct impact in people's daily life. That's were the power of example counts and I am pleased to see fine examples of such projects among the prize winners this year.

Thank you.