



‘Europe: Our Past, our Future’
photo exhibition on the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards
Committee of the Regions, **Foyer 5**
26 February 2015, Brussels, Belgium

Welcome remarks by
Ms Yoomi RENSTROM
(Chair of SEDEC and Member of Ovanåker Municipal Council)

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

Dear Secretary General of Europa Nostra,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) to the closing ceremony of this prestigious exhibition celebrating **Cultural Heritage in Europe**.

I want to start by thanking **Europa Nostra** for the efforts invested in organising this event at the CoR, for their cooperation and also for their initiative to share with us the **EU Prize for Cultural Heritage**. It was a truly enriching experience to find out more about the awards, to see what they stand for and more over to witness the transformations they bring about all over Europe.

We often say "*A picture is worth a thousand words*" and this exhibition is the living expression of this saying. I believe it speaks even more to our colleagues in the **SEDEC Commission** as we are working at the local and regional level, sometimes having direct responsibilities in the field of protection and development of cultural heritage.

As it has been rightly said, our Committee has been "deeply involved in **regional development through cultural heritage**"¹. Because culture and cultural heritage matter to

1

<http://www.europanostra.org/news/561/>

regions and cities and vice-versa. On average, subnational authorities are responsible for 65% of public expenditure for cultural activities and for over 30% of support to enterprises.

Dear participants,

The **European Committee of Regions** celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. **Europa Nostra** has passed the mark of a half of a century in December 2013. In the field of cultural policies, we share the same passion and drive for the preservation and development of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity.

Now looking into the future, I would say that 2015 brings about a new beginning in the institutional framework of the European Union, with a new Parliament and a new Commission. Less than 2 weeks ago, we started a 5-year mandate in the newly established **SEDEC Commission**, with our remits enlarged to include social policy and employment.

But I am convinced that **culture and cultural heritage** will remain high on our agenda and we will continue to promote these important policy fields also at the European level.

At the Plenary session in April we will discuss and adopt the CoR Opinion on the Commission Communication "**Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe**"². Our position is that cultural heritage is a **cornerstone of local, regional, national and European identity**.

At the CoR we consider Cultural Heritage represents a **common value and shared asset** which may also help develop a **vision for the future**. Conservation of this heritage, its development and steps to guarantee its long-term future are a **vocation, responsibility and shared goal**³ for all of us.

It is with this in mind that our commission will organise a conference in Santander, hosted by our colleague, Ms Cristina Mazas Pérez-Oleaga. At the conference, we will look into "**Cultural heritage and sustainable tourism as key contributors to local and regional development**".

Moreover, in the context of the **mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy**, we will continue to promote integration of the cultural heritage sector, culture and creativity into the related flagship initiatives.

² COM(2014) 477 final.

³ COR-2014-05515-00-02-PAC-TRA

As this exhibition is showing, our **Past** is very rich in its diversity and the prospects for our **Future** are promising. But let's not forget that this should not be taken for granted as we need to work hard to preserve and develop this legacy. Another feature of the exhibition – dedicated to ‘**The 7 Most Endangered**’ programme is a strong reminder, but also an incentive to continue the "rescue missions" and make the most of our cultural sources and resources.

Thank you!

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