



Creative  
Europe



**Local Award Ceremony for Heritage Skills Initiative  
Winner of an EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award 2015  
Newcastle upon Tyne, the UK  
3 February 2016**

***Speech by Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović,  
Secretary General of Europa Nostra***

*Lord Lieutenant  
Mr President of North of England Civic Trust  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,*

It is a great honour for me to be back in Newcastle, after 6 years, as Secretary General of Europa Nostra, the pan-European Federation for Heritage. We are the *Voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe*, representing the collective, strong voice of our 230 member organisations (both large & small), 140 associated organisations (including local authorities) and 1300 individual members from 40 different countries. If you are not yet a member, please join us NOW. Today better than tomorrow! I invite you **all** to join our growing European movement if you can! The more members we have, the better we can work towards a Europe that embraces and unlocks the full potential of our shared European heritage.

For over 50 years, the mission of Europa Nostra has been, on the one hand, to save Europe's endangered heritage, and, on the other hand, to celebrate and promote excellence in heritage preservation. Our member-organisation and today's proud host, the North of England Civic Trust – which has been running the award-winning Heritage Skills Initiative – also celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, last year. So one could say that together, we stand for over a century of commitment and passion for cultural heritage.

We are also both indebted to the pioneering champion of the Civil Society Movement in the UK and Europe, our former president **Lord Duncan Sandys**. Your Trust has also contributed to the creation of our country representation, Europa Nostra UK. Special thanks to my colleague and friend **Graham Bell**, Director of your Trust, who acted as its secretary and also serves as a most active member of the Council of Europa Nostra. So, we not only celebrate an exemplary educational project today, but also many years of working together on so many levels. Thank you all for your support and friendship! Europa Nostra is not just a network and a federation, it is also a family!

It is indeed wonderful to be back here in Newcastle Upon Tyne. You will certainly recall that the large-scale Grainger Town Project, which won our award in 2003, and that the High Level Bridge, that jewel of industrial engineering, which won our award in 2008. In that same year, we held Europa Nostra's

Annual Congress here, co-hosted by the North of England Civic Trust. That congress was also the birthplace of Europa Nostra's Industrial and Engineering Heritage Committee which is a direct result of the Europa Nostra Forum on Industrial and Engineering Heritage, held here in Newcastle. So I have many fond memories of my previous visits to your city and I feel that I am among friends here in Trinity House, in the heart of Newcastle's historic Quayside district, another prime example of Newcastle's cultural heritage and a proud witness of the rich maritime history of your city. Thank you, Captain **Stephen Healy**, for welcoming us here today.

Now to the core business of this celebration! The Heritage Skills Initiative is a prime example of the importance of heritage for the community and I am delighted to celebrate your award with all of you today. The European Heritage Awards, which Europa Nostra has organised together with the European Commission since 2002, – and I wish to extend my special words of greetings to the representative of the European Commission in Scotland – are the highest European recognition of excellence in the heritage field. You could even call them Europe's Nobel Prize for Heritage, especially as our European awards ceremony for the 30 winning projects – the Heritage Skills Initiative among them – was held in the Oslo City Hall last June, the home of the Nobel Peace Prize.

That was a very memorable evening, but this afternoon is just as important, as today we celebrate your success with your community, with all the people who were instrumental in making your project so exceptional.

The Heritage Skills Initiative celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Over the years you have engaged tens of thousands of people and encouraged many young women and men to learn heritage skills and make them part of their lives and their future. Your work has inspired others across Europe and contributed to the establishment of *la Fédération européenne des métiers du patrimoine*, which provides a European platform on which you can share your best practices and your best ideas.

Europa Nostra advocates cultural heritage as one of Europe's largest and mostly untapped reserves. We strongly believe that our heritage sites could be the drivers and the carriers of a true creative Regeneration – I dare say Renaissance – that Europe so urgently needs. A future and better Europe in which the United Kingdom has a vital and leading role to play, especially in the field of heritage. I was glad to pass this same message last week at Middleport Pottery in the presence of HRH the Prince of Wales.

Teaching others the skills needed and sharing your knowledge and passion with a wider community is the right investment in the future. In this part of England – like in the rest of Europe – there are many heritage sites which are under threat and we need the commitment and the skills of the local community to rally public and private support for saving these heritage sites where and whenever we can. Because investing in heritage always pays off. We all can prove this!

Only recently, Europa Nostra has produced together with 5 other partners – including The Heritage Alliance & Heritage Europe – the European Report 'Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe'. This Report provides convincing evidence – both quantitative and qualitative – that heritage counts not only for Europe's economy, but also for Europe's society, for our culture and identity and also for our environment. Indeed, our heritage holds up a mirror which not only reflects the past but also indicates a road to the future.

For this reason, in 2013, on the occasion of our own Golden Jubilee, Europa Nostra – together with the European Investment Bank Institute – started the 7 Most Endangered Programme. This programme helps heritage sites in danger across Europe to find a new future through creative partnerships, ideas and initiatives. Shining a spotlight on these threatened monuments and sites helps to rally support – both public and private – to save them. It is encouraging that we can already see some tangible results,

from Portugal to Romania; from Cyprus to France. I hope you will check out the programme on the Europa Nostra website. And once again, many thanks to Graham Bell, who has made a key contribution to our action towards the saving of the Synagogue in Subotica in Serbia, with the vital support of the Hungarian government.

But we cannot care for and save our endangered heritage if we do not invest in the transmission and training of heritage skills, some of which are themselves a “heritage at risk”. This is the reason why the European Commission and Europa Nostra thought that the Heritage Skills Initiative deserves a European recognition and also deserves to be expanded across the Channel in the rest of Europe.

The achievements of the Heritage Skills Initiative lie truly at the heart of our civic movement for heritage. You have enhanced so many different heritage skills, from the traditional landscaping skills of dry stone walling to – for instance – stained glass techniques and the important skills of heritage engineering which are so characteristic of this region. Therefore, Europe as a whole applauds you for setting such a strong example.

Isn't this a most appropriate way to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year of the Heritage Skills Initiative, and to raise a toast to the next 50 years of fruitful cooperation between the North of England Civic Trust and the EU. And I very much hope that the important partner organisations of the Heritage Skills Initiative (Historic England, Heritage Lottery Fund, the North East Historic Environment Forum and the Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums) will continue to support this exemplary initiative, with an even stronger sense of pride and dedication.