



**Ceremony for 'Adopt a Monument' programme
Grand Prix winner of the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award 2016
Tampere, 9 September 2016**

***Speech by Graham Bell
Council Member of Europa Nostra***

*Deputy Mayor,
Distinguished Guests,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I don't need to ask you why you are here today, but understandably you might be wondering why someone from the UK is here to present your award.

It cannot have escaped your attention that the United Kingdom is having a little difficulty with the term 'United'. In fact it seems to be having difficulty with a lot of things at the moment, not least its relationship to Europe, which it still sees as being 'over there somewhere'. Fortunately, despite Brexit, I'm here today on behalf of Europa Nostra, so I am very much a European!

Europa Nostra is not about 'my' Europe, or 'their' Europe but 'our' Europe; the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards celebrate not just what you have achieved but how it enhances all of us. It recognises that cultural heritage is not about things but about relationships – between us and where we are, what we do and who we are, but also about how I and the rest of the world see you.

Imagine that for over 50 years Europa Nostra has been holding up a cultural mirror to society to reflect how we all see each other. Today we have 250 member organisations, 150 associate members (state organisations) and 1,500 individual supporters all over Europe reflecting what makes and matters to society. Alongside this local award ceremony are others, for example celebrating the heroic unpaid perseverance of the National Museum staff in Sarajevo or the restoration of earthquake-damaged churches in Murcia. People like you are showing how they too have done something really outstanding. Perhaps you didn't realise it but you are now part of a very special international community. Today is not the end of a project but a passport to that community.

You see, cultural heritage is a common language in which each of us 'speaks' in our own local dialect and accents; the words you use may be unfamiliar to the Croatians in Karlovac to whom I presented their award in July, but the things you value are very understandable and resonate with their values.

I've a longstanding connection with Hungary and though I've always been told of an historical root language connection between Hungarian and Finnish, to find that *Ei omena kauas puusta putoa* has a direct counterpart in Hungarian (*Az alma nem esik messze a fájától*) proves that lying beneath the vocabulary, common values run much deeper right across the continent.

This is the role of Europa Nostra: to champion the cultural heritage of Europe through all languages to share our values, for in sharing we understand, and if we understand, we enjoy and take better care of our heritage. Europa Nostra is the leading European non-governmental organisation giving voice to civil society organisations who work

to safeguard Europe's cultural heritage. We are a citizens' movement, and our activities reflect our activist nature:

1. we lobby to put cultural heritage high on the agenda of the European Union in Brussels and the European Council in Strasbourg;
2. we campaign to save endangered heritage, for instance in our 7 Most Endangered programme together with the European Investment Bank Institute, to help communities to restore and revitalize their heritage sites;
3. And today we promote excellence and the power of example through our European Heritage Awards together with the European Union. The European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards are our way of using the very best examples to show to the wider world how cultural heritage defines those characteristics that make up Europe.

Over 16 years the awards have built into a unique 'best of the best' resource to inspire people to act, that it is possible to do things well, to go beyond the ordinary, to be exceptional. *Adopt a Monument* now joins the ranks of Europe's 'best of the best'; what you have achieved does not stop here but will go on as more and more people refer to the awards for inspiration.

But there is an additional reason why you should celebrate today, and why I personally take great pleasure in joining you.

Across Europe in the last twenty years we have come to realise that cultural heritage is not just of value for what it is, but it is at risk when people don't understand it and how to care for it. There have always been threats from unsympathetic development, but we began to realise that the traditional skills to maintain our heritage were dying out. It is not unusual now to have fine old buildings for which we are losing the professional and practical skills needed to keep them in good repair. We realised that we must ensure succession of interests and skills. Therefore a special category was introduced in the awards entitled 'Education, Training and Awareness-Raising', which is the category of award you have received. Whereas the longest established category of Conservation is about what has been done, this award is about what we are doing. It celebrates how people across Europe are responding to the challenge to preserve traditions, not just buildings; to invest in the next generation, not just the next project.

True, holistic sustainability is not just about energy or recycling materials but the latent capacity of people. In the UK, the Heritage Lottery Fund has evolved over twenty years from supporting intrinsic merit – what something is – to emphasising what heritage does, for individuals through involvement, and wider public benefit for communities. Telling young people that cultural heritage is important to society isn't enough; it must be real and relevant for them. Last year the annual Europa Nostra Congress was held in Oslo, but for the first time a complementary programme brought together young people from all across Europe to work on traditional Norwegian timber construction.

Last year my own organisation was in your position of winning an award in this category, so we share much in common. In the UK we have worked with young people and a wide range of community, unemployed and marginalised groups to raise awareness of cultural heritage as something locally accessible to learn from, and as a career to earn a living from. For that reason, personally, I believe it to be the most important of all the categories, which makes your award and the Grand Prix even more special to me.

How appropriate *Maassa maan tavalla* is to this project, for it not only engenders respect for *Genius loci* (Spirit of Place) but also the local traditions and way of life which brought the monuments into being and upon which they now rely. What better way to learn about the essence of Finland than to work on the very fabric of the country. In Iceland, using the wrong turf building technique on an historic building will undo centuries of tradition by introducing an alien 'dialect' into a village. Authenticity and sustainability are the reward for guiding the hands that work on them.

How do we spread the benefits of *Adopt a Monument*, reaching all of society? One of Europa Nostra's programmes is 'ENTopia' – not an unattainable utopia but an inclusive programme of 'Our Place' where professionals mentor small community groups to record what is important to them about their place, whether landscape, landmark or urban neighbourhood, and to develop a simple plan to enhance it. It has much in common with the aims and activities of *Adopt a Monument* and Europa Nostra Finland, for we should work with the spirit and grain of local identity if we are to ensure lasting results. The awards are the Power of Example, but doing things together is the Power to Make a Difference. Benito will say more about Europa Nostra Finland in a moment but I must as an outsider say something about Malmi airport, which this year is one of Europa Nostra's 7 Most Endangered sites.

Last year I was a member of the expert mission to a synagogue in Serbia that was on this list. It was in many ways what we all associate with the term 'endangered': full of faded beauty but now derelict and at risk of ill-informed 'repair' techniques. Malmi airport is no less at risk in that its international and national significance lies in the purpose for which it was built and, unlike so many of its counterparts, that it has survived essentially as conceived, full of character and doing what it was designed to do. The threat of developing it with housing runs counter to the spirit of sustainable development, for imposing residential use into a commercial site will undoubtedly suffocate its life and meaning.

I can only hope that in addition to appreciating its genuine European architectural significance, its economic and amenity value can be shown to be of such long-term value that the housing is built somewhere less sensitive, so that there is a net gain for the country just as much as *Adopt a Monument*.

Such campaigns cannot rely on altruism; Europa Nostra was a leading member of a consortium of NGOs across Europe to produce *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe*, an evidence base to convince economists and unbelievers that heritage is not standing in the way of economic development but for most of us is the way of economic development for the historic towns and villages where most of us live and work. *Adopt a Monument* may include some structures that have no market value, but they do have social value, and the projects to revive them can be measured in terms of educational and training attainment, and helping employability – the real stuff of life. So you see, by any measure, including ways you may not have thought about, *Adopt a Monument* is an exemplary achievement.

As an indicator of just how prestigious your achievement is, there were 187 applications for the 2016 awards from 36 countries. Of those, only 28 (15%) were selected as being of the very highest standard, and of those, only seven (3.7%) receive a Grand Prix; of the eight awards in the category of Education, Training and Awareness-Raising, it was *Adopt a Monument* that won the Grand Prix. Perhaps you now fully appreciate how exceptional this award is within the context of intense European competition.

In Madrid, the community of Europa Nostra and all this year's laureates were able to share in your success. They heard the Jury citation that:

"'Adopt a Monument' is a creative way to actively involve local inhabitants in the care and preservation of their local heritage and helps to encourage the protection of smaller, unprotected buildings. The wide array of structures that are 'up for adoption' are from many different periods in history and shows the inclusive nature of this programme. The project is sustainable and its potential to be applied across Europe is evident."

"This Award commends the work of those involved with this project and the tremendous effort that they have put into promoting good, active citizenship and encouraging the commitment of the local communities to their local heritage."

What more can I say?

The deadline for entries for the 2017 awards is 1 October! For those of you not involved in *Adopt a Monument* but who have been encouraged by its success, you have three weeks to follow its lead and enter! If you don't have a project but you feel this award has revealed a new world of cultural heritage, then join Europa Nostra or follow us through social media. And please do support Europa Nostra Finland as they prepare for the congress in Turku in June 2017 as part of the nation's centenary; better still, put it in your diary and attend one of the most amazing cultural heritage events in Europe.

However, the final say surely belongs to the monuments themselves that are the true citation of this award. I and all at Europa Nostra heartily congratulate all of you who adopted them and set us all such an inspiring example.