



PHOTO EXHIBITION EUROPE: OUR PAST, OUR FUTURE

A SELECTION OF LAUREATES OF THE EU PRIZE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE/EUROPA NOSTRA AWARDS

Brussels, Berlaymont building, 5 December 2013

Vernissage

Speech by Plácido DOMINGO, President of Europa Nostra

*President Barroso,
Commissioner Vassiliou,
Distinguished guests,
Dear friends,*

What an **honour** for me to stand here at the very **heart** of the European decision-making. And what a **joy** to open, together with Commissioner Vassiliou, this **exhibition which celebrates a very fruitful partnership** between the European Commission and Europa Nostra through the **European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/ Europa Nostra Awards**. And what a **pride** for me - and the entire Europa Nostra family - to close in such a **prestigious** way the **50th Anniversary Year** of our organisation.

President Barroso, your presence honours us and confirms your **firm belief** that our culture is our strength. And that **culture** ought to take a **much more prominent place** within the “**New Narrative for Europe**”. We **support** this initiative and have been **actively involved** in the “New Narrative for Europe” initiative. In the future, Europa Nostra shall gladly continue to be both **one of the architects** and **one of the ambassadors** of this initiative. We agree with you that this New Narrative must be communicated to the widest possible audience across Europe.

Madam Commissioner, I first wish to **congratulate** you on the recent adoption of the “**Creative Europe**” programme. **Not only** you managed to get the support for an **ambitious** programme that highlights the importance of Europe’s **soft power** which is embedded in Europe’s culture and creative sectors and industries...You have **also** managed to achieve an **increase of your budget**, which in the current times is a real achievement!

Let me add that we **feel encouraged** by the **inclusion** of cultural heritage concerns in **other important programmes** of the European Union, in particular the **future structural funds** and also the programme for **research and innovation “Horizon 2020”**. As you know, Europa Nostra very **strongly supports the current momentum** for developing a **more ambitious EU strategy for cultural heritage** which is **fully integrated** in all relevant EU policies.

Dear Androulla, you have been a **true ally and friend** of Europa Nostra and of the cause advanced by our organisation. **You** have worked with **lots of conviction** to make cultural heritage **a real priority for the EU**.

We eagerly await the policy document on cultural heritage on which you and your team are currently working. Rest assured that Europa Nostra's team stay at the disposal of your own team to work together, first on the **finalization** of this document... and then also on its **implementation**.

Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe! This is the title of an **ambitious project** on which Europa Nostra - together with **other partners** from the **European Heritage Alliance 3.3**. - is currently working, with the much appreciated support of the European Commission.

Cultural heritage is indeed **a key resource for the future of Europe**. For Europe's **economy** and especially **tourism**...for the **sustainable development** of Europe's **cities** and **countryside**..., for the **education** of new generations of Europeans..., for the protection of our **environment**..., for Europe's **public diplomacy** and also for Europe's **cultural diplomacy**. Our cultural heritage therefore deserves to be placed at **a more central place** also within European strategies and policies.

All this is **perfectly illustrated by this exhibition** which shows just the **"tip of the iceberg"** of the large number of awarded achievements - by outstanding professionals and dedicated volunteers - which **have made a difference**, for their communities and for Europe as a whole.

Nobody has ever regretted saving a heritage site! I therefore hope that **with the help** of the EU institutions, and also **with the shining example** of persons and organisations who have received one of our awards in the past - or will hopefully receive it also in the future -, we **shall** manage to save many more heritage sites. And let us not forget that some of those sites are today **in danger**, as shown by our new programme **"The 7 Most Endangered"**, launched in partnership with the **European Investment Bank Institute**.

Please allow me to **make a toast to a wonderful decade of fruitful partnership** between Europa Nostra and the European Commission with the organisation of our Awards and to **express a hope that this partnership will continue to grow in strength and impact** also in the future!