

## EUROPA NOSTRA Award

Josef Ostermayer, Austrian Federal Minister for Arts, Culture, Constitution and Public Service

- Commissioner Vassiliou,  
President Domingo,  
Ladies and gentlemen:
- I am very pleased and honoured that the **EUROPA NOSTRA Congress** and **Award Ceremony** are being held in Austria this year, especially as it affords me this opportunity to share a few thoughts on the significance of cultural heritage in the Austrian and European context.
- To begin with, I would like to highlight the Austrian Federal Government's political commitment to the **public funding of art and culture**, and to the **sustainable protection of our cultural heritage**. Both of these priorities are firmly established in Austria's Federal Finance Act – because art and culture are clearly among the responsibilities of the public sector and must not be measured on the basis of private-sector criteria alone.
- **Nonetheless, a modern cultural heritage policy** also has to take legal, financial and tax-related issues into account.
- The promotion of cultural heritage should be understood as part of a long-term development strategy which applies equally to both urban and rural regions. This includes updating our national **regulations to protect and preserve our cultural heritage** as well as improving the tax treatment of **donations and sponsoring for the protection of historical monuments**.

- The European counterpart to this initiative is the **EU's "Creative Europe" programme for the years 2014 to 2020**, which explicitly includes the objective of promoting cultural heritage.
- An especially new interesting initiative is the **European Heritage Label**, which is awarded to sites of **symbolic value for European integration and history**. The initiative aims to make our cultural heritage more accessible and to generate enthusiasm for this topic – especially among young Europeans – by promoting cultural heritage through contemporary and multilingual channels.
- The first sites were awarded the Heritage Label in Brussels in early April, and we are very proud that Austria's Carnuntum archaeological site was among them. The award bears witness to the fact that we recognise the value and importance of Austria's relics and monuments from the past.
- In light of the upcoming **elections to the European Parliament** and the unfortunate yet lingering scepticism towards the EU, initiatives such as EUROPA NOSTRA, the European Heritage Label and the European Capitals of Culture are an especially important way **to make the "European project" more tangible and comprehensible to people**. Nowhere else in the world can you experience such a wide variety of artistic and cultural monuments within a relatively small geographical area as in Europe. This diversity unites us.
- For this reason, as **ambassadors of culture**, we must work to spread this positive European idea and to celebrate Europe's cultural diversity in due form.

- I would like to congratulate all of the award winners, and I am looking forward to the award ceremony!