

## **Acceptance speech for the Medal of Honour by Europa Nostra**

Mr President, ladies & gentlemen,

It is with humility and gratitude that I accept this medal of honour from my beloved adopted family, Europa Nostra.

I still remember the first time I attended and spoke as Commissioner at the Award Ceremony in Istanbul back in 2010. I was impressed by the dedication and bonding of its members and, in the years that followed, my relations with EN and its members grew stronger and stronger.

I was happy to have culture as one of my responsibilities as Commissioner at a time when the Lisbon Treaty made a special reference to it and stressed its importance. However, it was by working with Europa Nostra and amazing people like Alexander, Costas, Federico, Piet, Simone, Araceli, Paolo, Rossana, our beloved Herman and Sneska and not only, that I got my inspiration and strengthened my belief in the power of Cultural Heritage.

I came to realize that Cultural Heritage gives meaning to our lives and brings people together in unity, such an important element in our today's world dominated by wars and conflict that draw people apart and breed hatred.

This medal carries with it the responsibility to live in a way that honours the principles I served and to carry forward the values

that brought me here. And to never forget that the true measure of service is not recognition but the impact we have on others and the principles that we serve.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I accept this medal as an honour to the numerous volunteers from around Europe that dedicate their time and expertise serving our common values and principles. I thank them all for leading by example.

Thank you!