

ENGLISH VERSION

**Dear Minister of Culture and Media,
Dear Ambassador Sattler,
Dear Mr Mayor,
Dear Dr Ivetić, dear Dušica,
Dear Mrs Nada, and all the guardians of Dobrota lace,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,**

It is a great pleasure to be with you today, here in the **World Heritage City of Kotor**, to celebrate together the **European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award 2026** for the exceptional project with the beautiful name **“Pacijenca”**, dedicated to safeguarding the tradition of Dobrota lace.

For today's special celebration, higher powers have sent us rain as a gift from the sky and as an invitation to gather not outside the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, but inside the Cathedral itself, so that once again we can breathe in the timeless beauty and spirituality of this jewel of European Romanesque architecture.

And as we celebrate the richly deserved Award for the Pacijenca Project, we can also remember that, in **2002**, a complex project dedicated to the research, restoration and protection of this very Cathedral was among the laureates of our Award.

On that occasion, a large delegation of Europa Nostra visited Kotor, led by our then President, **His Royal Highness Prince Henrik**, husband of Queen Margrethe of Denmark. Together, we congratulated everyone who had worked on the successful and highly professional implementation of this project, led by the then-existing Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, headed by **Professor Ilija Lalošević**, whose presence among us today I am particularly pleased to welcome.

Twenty-four years later, another European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award has come to Kotor.

This time, for an exceptional project dedicated to the revitalisation and promotion of intangible heritage – **Dobrota lace** – conceived and implemented by the Museums of Kotor, under the leadership of **Dr Dušica Ivetić**, with the invaluable inspiration and collaboration of **Mrs Nada Radović**.

Dear and beloved Dušica,

For centuries, Dobrota lace was part of everyday, religious and maritime life in the Bay of Kotor. It reflected the creativity, patience and skill of generations of women.

But at the beginning of the 21st century, this tradition was at risk of disappearing. You did not want to accept this and decided to take action!

And so, from the bottom of our hearts, we congratulate you and the Museums of Kotor on this exceptional project.

The word “**patience**” refers both to the slow and precise process of making lace and to the perseverance associated with the maritime culture of this region.

Your Award-winning project has transformed **patience** and the careful work of our ancestors into a human and cultural value at a time when a large part of our lives is defined by speed, haste and the race with artificial intelligence.

In a world that is moving ever faster, **Pacijenca invites us to be patient. To slow down. And, perhaps most importantly, to devote attention and care to our roots and traditions.**

But the Pacijenca Project has done much more than preserve a technique. It has brought together around this knowledge a **wonderful family, led by** Mrs Nada Radović, officially recognised as a guardian of the skill of making Dobrota lace.

Dear Nada,

You moved me to tears when you spoke with so much heart and soul at the press conference.

Thank you for preserving the skill of Dobrota lace for decades. Thank you for being patient. And thank you for keeping alive the hope that one day a good fairy, in the form of your and our Dušica, would launch the Pacijenca Project and, together with you, breathe new life into the centuries-old tradition of making Dobrota lace.

Thank you, on behalf of all of Europe, for this extraordinary gift. To you and to the ever-growing family of your followers.

Thank you for sending an important message to Europe and to the world: about the importance of traditional crafts; about the importance of poetry and beauty for the quality of life; and about the precious dialogue between generations that is essential for preserving our humanity.

THE IDEA OF THE THREAD

With every stitch, one thread connects one moment to another. One generation to another. The past to the present. The present to the future.

You have restored that thread of Dobrota lace. You have brought it back to life.

As the Jury of the European Heritage Awards said:

“The Pacijenca Project has transformed a domestic craft into a shared cultural event that strengthens community life, while also contributing to the economic empowerment of women. Through lace-making, the project promotes patience as a social and cultural value, safeguards a fragile element of intangible heritage and connects a small local tradition with a wider audience.”

Dear Mr Mayor,

Europa Nostra warmly congratulates you on the fact that the City of Kotor has, for the second time, received one of our **European Oscars for cultural heritage** – one Award for the restoration of tangible heritage and the other for the revitalisation of intangible heritage.

This confirms the special status of this city, with such a rich culture and history. It also confirms that this city has exceptional human potential: people with knowledge, people with imagination and creativity, people with soul.

Our Awards are a great recognition. At the same time, they are an encouragement to achieve new successes.

Europa Nostra and I are very conscious that it is not easy to be the Mayor of a city whose beauty and richness of cultural and natural heritage – among the first in the region to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List – attract and captivate visitors from all over the world.

In addition, you have **two elements inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**: Dobrota lace and the Boka Navy.

And finally, you have the fortifications, which in **2017** were inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, together with other Venetian fortifications in Italy and Croatia.

You and the citizens of this city therefore carry the very difficult responsibility of ensuring that this heritage is adequately protected.

It must not be sacrificed on the altar of mass tourism and property development. Rather, we must find the balance that is essential for any sustainable development – a balance that gives priority to preserving and improving the quality of life of the citizens of Kotor and the Bay of Kotor, and consequently to improving the quality of tourism, which is such an important economic sector for Montenegro.

Kotor and the Bay of Kotor must not be reduced to a destination for cruise ships, which are becoming larger every day.

Above all, they must remain precious oases of beauty and poetry, of nature and culture, in the interest of the local population and for the benefit of Europe as a whole and of humanity.

Europa Nostra stands ready to support you in these efforts, through our extensive civil society network dedicated to safeguarding cultural heritage across **our Europe**.

For all these reasons, we are interested in discussing with you the desirability and possibility of establishing one of the **Europa Nostra Heritage Hubs here in Kotor**.

Dear Ambassador Sattler,

Thank you so much for your presence today for the celebration of our joint Award: the **European Heritage Awards**, run by Europa Nostra with the invaluable support of the European Union.

This is an exemplary initiative which demonstrates how the EU Institutions can collaborate fruitfully with a civil society organisation like Europa Nostra.

Next year, we shall celebrate the **25th anniversary of this flagship programme**.

We sincerely hope that in the future we shall present many more Awards to outstanding heritage projects and champions from Montenegro.

We are convinced that cultural heritage ought to receive a much more central role in the framework of the **EU Enlargement agenda**.

We are therefore confident that this strategic direction will be implemented with imagination and audacity here in Montenegro.

The EU could and should play an even greater role in enhancing the skills and institutions, including civil society organisations, which are indispensable to ensuring the future of the cultural and natural heritage of Montenegro.

A rich and diverse heritage which demonstrates the strong interconnection between Montenegro and the rest of Europe as a result of centuries of shared history and culture.

We count on your support, on the support of Commissioner Kos and of President von der Leyen, working hand in hand with the authorities of Montenegro to achieve this vital goal, in the spirit of the historic declaration signed on **18 June** by the Presidents of the three EU Institutions – the Commission, the Parliament and the Council – under the motto:

“Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe!”

Dear Minister of Culture and Media,

Thank you very much for honouring this celebration with your presence.

This celebration is taking place precisely on the day when **European Heritage Days are being marked in Montenegro**, under the theme **“Heritage at Risk”**.

Yesterday, we had an exceptionally fruitful conversation. We are very much on the same wavelength.

We count on you and on the entire Government of Montenegro, led by Prime Minister Spajić, to support our efforts.

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I grew up in Belgrade, on Njegoševa Street.

Yesterday, together with Dušica, I visited with great emotion the birthplace of the great **Njegoš in Njeguši**, wishing to breathe in the air and the spirit of the place from which one of the greatest poets and thinkers of **your Montenegro and our Europe** emerged.

Today, we all need Njegoš's wisdom and poetry.

Just as we need **Pacijenca**, and the respect for our culture and traditions that it represents.

Therefore, once again, from the bottom of my heart, I congratulate the guardians of the Dobrota lace tradition on this richly deserved European Award.

It is up to all of us to follow their shining example.

Thank you to them, and thank you all.