



CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR EUROPE, EUROPE FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Brussels, Solvay Library, 5 December 2013

Closing session

Introductory speech by Plácido DOMINGO, President of Europa Nostra

*Distinguished representatives of the Institutions of the European Union,
Ladies & Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,*

It is a **great joy** for me to be with you **all** today in **Brussels** for the **closing events** marking the **Golden Jubilee** of Europa Nostra.

Europa Nostra was born **50 years ago**, upon the initiative of a small group of **dedicated Europeans**. The **vision** of our **“founding fathers”** lives on..., just as the **vision** and **ambition** of the **“founding fathers”** of the **European Union**. They form part of the **same DREAM**: the dream of bringing **Europeans together...in peace and prosperity...with respect not just** for **human rights** and fundamental **values** of democracy and the rule of law, **but also** with **respect** for Europe’s **tremendous legacy** of **cultural achievements**, in all their **diversity** and **inspiration** for **new** accomplishments.

50 years later, what has been done to make this dream come true? Both the EU Institutions and civil society organisations, such as Europa Nostra, have invested **huge efforts** in **“building an ever closer Union”** among Europe’s states, regions, cities, civil society organisations **and** individual citizens.

Europe **has** become **a continent of peace... yet** a peace which continues to be threatened. Europe **has** continued to be **a continent of prosperity... yet** a prosperity which is today facing difficult times. But both in good and bad times, Europe **has** remained **a continent with a formidable vitality and creativity of its culture**. It is therefore **time** for the EU Institutions to **fully recognize** that our culture and cultural heritage are the **prime resource for Europe**.

Our Culture is indeed **much more than “a sector”**. Culture is what makes us who we are...and what gives **meaning** and **beauty** to our lives. **And Culture is what makes Europe – Europe!** It is the dynamic, ever-changing product of centuries of **interaction** among various communities in Europe, **beyond physical and mental frontiers... and across time and generations**. Our culture is therefore a **true beating heart** of our Europe. For all these reasons, culture and cultural heritage indeed **COUNT for Europe and for US, the citizens of Europe**.

20 years ago, the MAASTRICHT TREATY finally introduced a much-needed competence for the Union in the field of Culture.

This competence, of course, did not replace the main competence which remains with Member States and their regions and cities. But the EU competence in the field of culture is nevertheless **an important one**, since its “raison d’être” is to give an **additional quality** to the action undertaken at national, regional or local level.

This European cooperation with regard to culture has been beneficial in many ways: whether measured by the numbers of historic buildings restored or **the thousands, no millions**, of individuals whose lives have been **enriched** by a performance, a landscape or a landmark; by the exposure to another culture than their own or especially **by the discovery of the European dimension of our shared culture.**

More recently, the LISBON TREATY went even further. This treaty now states that **“the protection of the cultural and linguistic diversity and the safeguard of our cultural heritage”** are **not only a mere competence;** they are above all, a **BASIC AIM** of the European Union.

In line with this **new ambition**, and in response to the **many challenges** which our economy and society are facing today, **Europe ought to make a true “quantum leap” by giving a new quality to its commitment to culture.**

Culture ought to become the main protagonist of the “New Narrative for Europe”. As pointed out by the initiative launched earlier this year by the European Parliament and led by President BARROSO, the **narrative for Europe cannot be reduced to economy only.**

We fully support the necessity of a “New Narrative for Europe” which would **speak to the new generations** and **revive their “desire” for Europe** while remaining faithful to the original spirit and idea that have inspired the building of Europe. And in this process, EU Institutions should indeed **listen more carefully to the voices and messages coming from the cultural world.**

“On ne tombe pas amoureux du marché unique” said Jacques DELORS, who was the President of the European Commission at the time when the Maastricht Treaty entered into force. **I could not agree more with him!** But I hope you will agree with **ME** that we **CAN all fall in love with the richness, diversity and beauty of Europe’s cultural heritage:** tangible heritage, such as our **monuments and landscapes** and also **intangible** heritage, such as **music or literature.**

Investing in our culture and our cultural heritage therefore means investing in our human capital and in our future.

I am **delighted** that we are all gathered today in the **Bibliothèque SOLVAY**. This is an important **“lieu de mémoire”** for Brussels, for Belgium and for Europe as a whole.

Only 15 years ago, this building faced a **risk of becoming a ruin**. Today, it **stands proudly** - in all its original splendor - in the very **heart** of the European quarter of Brussels where it continues to **radiate the power of “L’Europe de l’Esprit”**. How did this happen? Thanks to the **skills, perseverance and generosity** of people who **had a dream**. And who worked hard to make this dream come true. We could not have had a **more symbolic place** for our conference today...

I know that all of you who are gathered here in the Bibliothèque SOLVAY will **continue** working to **keep Europe’s cultural heritage alive**, either as **professionals** or as **volunteers**. Indeed, our cultural heritage is **not only about stones; it is about people** and their passion, their skills, their power of example...

And I know that our European heritage movement is **extremely wide**. It concerns **all** generations. And it is **deeply interconnected** with the world of art, Europe’s festivals, opera and concert halls, theaters, Europe’s museums...with the work of Europe’s architects and urban planners... and also with the work of Europe’s writers, historians and thinkers... **All together we stand for “L’Europe de la Culture”, “L’Europe de l’Esprit”**. And all together we **CAN** become a **formidable force for advancing** a sustainable development of our economies and our societies; **for engaging** our communities; **for promoting** a more harmonious interaction between men and nature and... **for enriching** our lives.

Europa Nostra - **in partnership with all members of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3** -, seeks to be **the Voice** of Cultural Heritage in Europe. **The Voice** of **thousands** and **thousands** of historic buildings and heritage sites in Europe. And **the Voice** of **millions** and **millions** of people from Europe and beyond who **care** for this heritage. People who are committed to protect it and pass it on to future generations.

It is **this Voice** which **urges** all EU Institutions to give a **new boost** to European Union’s action in favour of cultural heritage. **The EU needs an ambitious strategy for cultural heritage**. Even with the existing competence and with the existing policies and funding tools, **the EU can do much more for cultural heritage**...provided that all its Institutions agree to **integrate** cultural heritage in **all** relevant EU policies. Why? **Because, cultural heritage, indeed COUNTS for Europe!**

I shall gladly **convey this message** also to **President BARROSO** and **Commissioner VASSILIOU** when I meet them later this afternoon.

Let us grasp this historic opportunity!

Let us join forces, let us work together to give to the entire process of European integration a **“positive shock”**... through the **creative energy** and **inspirational power** of our culture and heritage.

We have a **shared responsibility** to make this happen: **YOU**, the **leaders** of the various EU Institutions and **WE**, the **protagonists** from the cultural scene.

Let us **revive** and **reclaim** the **European DREAM**... And let us **continue to make this DREAM COME TRUE**... in our time and for those that will follow us!