



Grußwort von Ministerin Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr. Sabine Kunst

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Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts with you on a topic, I have grown increasingly excited about: The European Cultural Heritage Year – which we hope will become a reality in 2018.

Europe is blessed with a **unique cultural heritage**. Its long, rich and diverse history that shaped the continent over millennia, and it forms the foundation of our present-day identity. The evidence of European history surrounding us, is what ultimately makes us feel home. Cultural heritage makes us feel attached to the city or the region we live in, but – as I would like to argue – it also makes us feel home to Europe.

The preservation and promotion of this heritage represents a permanent task. And it does not stop at regional or national borders. Also this task does not fall under the responsibility of one single party; it demands a broad and continuous commitment. In short: **The preservation and promotion of our cultural heritage is a big challenge for all of us, everywhere, all the time!**

The German Cultural Heritage Committee, the DNK, has initiated the European Cultural Heritage Year in 2014 with the 1975 European Monument Protection Year in mind. A year that was the starting point for many still existing institutions, awards etc.; a year that was incredibly successful in raising the public awareness as well as the political responsibility concerning monument protection issues. The way we consider cultural heritage as well as Europe itself may have significantly changed since 1975. **However, a new European Year would have the potential to once again to make cultural heritage a priority.**

The reunification of Europe and the recent re-evaluation of cultural heritage as a significant contributor to economic growth and social cohesion offer new perspectives on the subject. **In my personal believe the European Cultural Heritage Year seems**

almost like a necessity in a time of dramatic political and economic change in Europe!

Promoting the idea of a European Cultural Heritage Year, the DNK and its national and international partners have already achieved **important milestones**: The decision of the November 2014 Council meeting on Education, Youth, Culture and Sport to call on the European Commission to propose a European Year of Cultural Heritage was absolutely crucial. But I was also very pleased to learn about the Namur Declaration (*as a result of the Conference of the Ministers responsible for Culture in the Council of Europe*) welcoming the initiative, and asking the Council of Europe to be invited to participate.

So what will a European Cultural Heritage Year be all about? This question is yet to be answered but we believe it should be about sharing. **Sharing heritage**.

Heritage is often perceived in its local dimension, but most of the time our heritage is **both local and European** – making it commonly **shared heritage**. The World Heritage Committee has already adapted this perspective with its trans-boundary world heritage sites, such as the prehistoric pile dwellings around the Alps. The Great Spas of Europe, currently on the tentative list, may serve as another example. The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe like the Via Regia or the recently declared Via Habsburg contribute to the same line of thought. The European Cultural Heritage Year at its core aims at strengthening this transnational perspective.

Our built and archaeological heritage will hereby play a highlighted role since it arguably presents the most visible, most accessible expression of Europe's history. **Moreover, this heritage also plays a key role for our cultural identification** – the impressive medieval town halls or the many religious sites in Europe come to mind.

It is important to emphasise that this is to include further tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Remarkable historical city documents are for examples often kept within those town halls. Many historic pieces of music were composed for specific religious spaces. We are very much looking forward to make use of such synergies during the Year.

During the European Cultural Heritage Year we would like to **set a priority on young people**. **Sharing heritage** should really be about sharing with the *heirs of our heritage*. At present, cultural heritage tends to play a subordinate role in the area of cultural education. However, given the diversity and unique physical proximity, architectural and archaeological heritage sites are ideal for gaining a first-hand, genuine experience of culture and history. There are a number of mostly local initiatives making use of this potential, for instance the Pegasus project in the German Free State of Saxony, in which schools adopt a monument and transform it into a place of learning. The initiative "Lernort Kulturlandschaften" in the German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein, in which pupils discover traces of historical trade and transportation in their home region, also constitutes a compelling approach. With the European Cultural Heritage Year it is our goal to strengthen similarly innovative formats as well as initiate new ones.

Sharing heritage also implies **sharing experiences on preservation and promotion of heritage**. The Association of European Royal Residences is a good example for this. The network not only improves upon the accessibility for Europeans to their shared heritage, but also promotes the exchange of information through "good practices". The European Cultural Heritage Year intends to provide further opportunities for a comprehensive exchange between European stakeholders and partners at all levels. Involving all political, professional, and social institutions as well as civil society in the

decision-making processes is key. We invite everyone to be become actively involved in the European Cultural Heritage Year.

Sharing heritage should also be about **sharing knowledge and experience in the digital age**. Digital media today can hardly ever be a substitute for first-hand experiences, but we see some very interesting recent developments. Digitalisation surely creates new opportunities in the area of cooperation between the public, the heritage owners, the scientific community and industry and culture, and we want to continue to unlock this untapped potential within the Year.

Finally, the one aspect which should take centre stage within the European Cultural Heritage Year is **sharing enthusiasm**. Enthusiasm for cultural heritage is, after all, the best means for our common cause. Our hope is that the European Cultural Heritage Year will help making heritage a better experience for everyone – especially for those who have had only limited access to cultural heritage up to now.

And just like the shared enthusiasm for heritage, I very much hope I was able to share some of our enthusiasm for a European Cultural Heritage Year and that you will also share this enthusiasm with your colleagues back home – in order to make the European Cultural Heritage Year a great success in 2018 – and beyond.

I am now very much looking forward to hearing Professor Parzinger's thoughts on this subject.

Thank you very much for your kind attention. Enjoy the evening!