



Präsentation von Dr. Uwe Koch

**Meeting of the EP Intergroup on European tourism development, cultural heritage,
Ways of St. James and other European cultural routes, Brüssel 16. September 2015**

Dear chairs, dear Mrs. Costa, dear Members of the European Parliament, dear ladies and gentlemen!

At first I would like to thank EUROPA Nostra for the good cooperation to organise this meeting and for your support for the European initiative for the European Year of Cultural Heritage !

I am very grateful that we can participate in this event and that we have the chance to talk briefly about the question:

Why a European Cultural Heritage Year 2018?

Europe has a unique cultural heritage. This heritage is a distinctive character of Europe; it is the evidence of a long, rich and diverse history that has shaped the continent over millennia, and it is the source of our present-day identity – not only in the local perspective, but also in the European perspective; moreover, it may also serve as identity to those who have just moved within or to Europe, since the recognising of cultural heritage is one key aspect to make us feel home.

The preservation and promotion of this unique and for our identification so utterly important heritage are permanent tasks. As one of many efforts to do so, the initiative for a European Cultural Heritage Year was launched. The aim of my welcoming address is to introduce you to some key aspects of this initiative.

Speaking about the European Cultural Heritage Year has to happen in recognition of the 1975 European Monument Protection Year – a year that was the starting point for many still existing institutions, prizes etc.; a year that was incredibly successful in raising the public awareness; a year that was an epicentre of a decade on monument protection. Europe itself and the evaluation of cultural heritage may have distinctly changed since 1975, but a new European Year does offer the chance of a repeatable success; indeed:

The reunification of Europe and the recent re-evaluation of cultural heritage as a positive contributor to economic activity and social cohesion offer even new and ample possibilities. So, you may realise: The European Cultural Heritage Year seems almost like a necessity in a time of dramatic political and economic changes in Europe! And these changes are continuing permanently .

Our currently proposed slogan for the Year is “**Sharing heritage**”. “**Sharing heritage**” since this is an open slogan that allows for everyone to discover and to join on how to share heritage.

Sharing heritage may for example mean that we share our heritage as a common European experience. Heritage is often perceived in its local dimension, but our heritage is nearly always both: Local and European. So, **sharing heritage** means in this sense to establish awareness for the fact that heritage is often in cross-boarder regions, that it is often along axes and routes, or that it forms melting pots and intersections.

Another key aspect of **sharing heritage** is that we want to use the Year to share the heritage with its heirs – the younger generations. At present, cultural heritage tends to play a subordinate role in the area of cultural education. However, cultural heritage is ideal for giving the younger generations the opportunity to gain a first-hand experience of culture and history, especially if we look at architectural and archaeological heritage sites that are so diverse and unique and of regional proximity at the same time. Within the European Cultural Heritage Year, we want to strengthen alike formats and initiate new ones.

Sharing heritage may also mean to share the experience one has in the preservation and promotion of heritage with others. There are many established examples of networks who not only aim to improve the access of Europeans to their heritage, but also promote 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.

Another aspect of **sharing heritage** could be to use the new possibilities of digitisation to share knowledge and experience heritage. Digitisation does create a number of new and improved opportunities in the area of cooperation between the public, the heritage’s owners, the scientific community and industry and culture, and we want to continue to unlock this untapped potential within the Year.

Sharing heritage does also mean that we want to stress the participatory, the shared aspect of the protection and promotion of heritage. Preserving and developing cultural heritage in the best way possible means involving all political, professional, and social institutions as well as civil society in the decision-making processes.

Moreover, **sharing heritage** also means to share the enthusiasm one has for our European heritage with others. Enthusiasm is, after all, one of the best advocates for cultural heritage and for Europe. Our hope is that the European Cultural Heritage Year will help to share enthusiasm – especially with those who have had only a limited access up to now.

Let me conclude by stressing that **sharing heritage** is also about sharing its great potential. Commitment to cultural heritage is not only commitment to preserve and enhance a unique and irreplaceable European resource, but it also leads to lasting, integrative and economic growth, it can also act as a strong driver of regional

development and tourism, it can moreover encourage innovative and sustainable economic activity, it can promote research and development and lifelong learning and it can also improve social cohesion and integration. You are all very aware of this: The parliament adopted last week the “Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe” report, which states this potential very clearly; and equally, the results of the ‘Cultural Heritage Counts For Europe’ hint at this yet untapped potential. So, I’m very grateful by the resolution of the European Parliament.

The European Cultural Heritage Year is about to make this potential clear in a very bold way. Its intention is to make visible the many positive effects of cultural heritage activities – on the areas of life, society and the economy.

I think we need that initiative in the actual time of challenges more than ever!
We need that not only for our cultural heritage, we need that for Europe and its future! I would ask you all affectionately warmly, to support this initiative, not only, but to lead us to success this project together.

Thank you for your attention!