

Opening remarks
EU prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards
Ceremony
Berlin, 22 June 2018
- Check against delivery -

Thank you, President Steinmeier,

Excellencies,

dear laureates,

distinguished guests,

ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here for the EU prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra awards in this most special year – the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Culture and cultural heritage are at the top of the European agenda – where they deserve to be. This is something all of us here should take pride in. And I would like to thank Europa Nostra for their considerable efforts in organising this event and choosing the winners. Thanks also to the German Cultural Heritage Committee and Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, the co-organisers of the Summit, who made it possible for this event to take place in this magnificent setting.

I have the honour of hosting this ceremony, for the fourth year in a row, together with Maestro Plácido Domingo. Maestro, thank you for putting your enthusiasm, commitment at the service of European cultural heritage!

The winners whose work we will recognise here tonight fully deserve to be celebrated. Through their outstanding creativity and quality, their projects embody the key aims of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. They show us new and innovative ways to preserve and protect cultural heritage. They highlight how cultural heritage can drive economic and social development. And they enable people to feel part of a common European experience, a community of communities that makes up this fascinating, complex continent.

These efforts represent the best and the most inspiring examples of working with European cultural heritage today. I congratulate all the winners and wish them best of luck for all of their future projects.

This year is a truly remarkable moment for cultural heritage and for those receiving the prizes. We are halfway through the European Year of Cultural Heritage. It is clear to see that this Year has really captured people's imagination, across Europe and beyond. There is a broad consensus that cultural heritage is one of our most precious assets. It is about much more than the past – cultural heritage has a vital role to play in building the future. That is why we need to place it at the centre of our daily

lives. This is the key aim of the European Year, and one which the winners we are celebrating tonight have taken to heart.

The Year is very much a shared endeavour. Our achievements are only possible because of the resounding commitment of Member States and the national coordinators of the Year, regional, local authorities and EU institutions. I am delighted to see representatives of the European Parliament here tonight, as well as members of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. Additionally, 37 partner organisations are working with the Commission to make the Year a success, including UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Council on Monuments and Sites.

The European Year of Cultural Heritage is an excellent moment to celebrate, but it also gives us a unique opportunity to create something for the long term. This includes quality standards for restoring heritage and sustainable cultural tourism, as well as new inputs for research, innovation and skills for cultural heritage. This is what the ten European initiatives of the European Year are about, focusing on four key aspects: engagement, sustainability, protection and innovation.

We are looking to guarantee the legacy of the Year through the new European Agenda for Culture which I presented a month ago. One initiative at its heart is a European Action Plan for Cultural Heritage which I will table towards the end of this year.

I welcome the Berlin Call presented this afternoon. It is a major step in the direction of a new forward looking policy for Europe's future, building on the greatest asset that we have: our cultural heritage.

Europe is going through challenging times. Our societies and economies are grappling with deep structural changes. Culture and cultural heritage can be the glue that keeps our communities together – by helping us get to know and accept each other, in all our diversity, and with all that we have in common. Let us make sure, together, that we make the most of this wonderful potential.

And now onto the stars of the show – the winners!