

Address by Prof. Paolo Vitti, Board Member of Europa Nostra, to the Informal meeting of the Ministers of Education of the Member States to the European Cultural Convention

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1. Introduction

As board member of Europa Nostra, the pan-European federation of civil society organisations committed to Cultural Heritage, I am honored to contribute to this informal meeting.

EN has been working closely with the Council of Europe ever since its foundation back in 1963. For Europa Nostra, **Our Europe** has always **been covering** the entire cultural space of “the Greater Europe”, encompassing the shared cultural heritage of all 47 Member States of the Council of Europe.

2. The educational dimension of our “7 Most Endangered Programme”

As some of you know, as part of Europa Nostra’s mission to save endangered heritage, we launched in 2013 the “7 Most Endangered programme”, with the support and in partnership of the European Investment Bank Institute and the European Commission.

Education indeed plays a key role in our joint mobilisation for saving heritage at risk. If we want to protect our heritage we need to work on people’s understanding of the wider significance of- and the multiple threats to our heritage. For this reason, **we need to widen the meaning of "education"**, and consider it not only as a tool that is directed to generate knowledge-expertise-knowhow, but also as a tool for **raising** the sense of **responsibility** and fostering **critical thinking**.

3. For a Heritage Education based Solidarity

Europa Nostra applauds the initiative launched last year by the Greek government for "Addressing **climate change impacts on cultural and natural heritage**" as a most incisive action aimed at reducing and mitigating risks to our cultural heritage caused by Climate Change. On 21 September 2019, during a side event organized by the Greek government on the eve of the **Climate Action Summit** held at the UN Headquarters in New York, both the Greek Minister of Education, Mrs. Kerameus and myself, speaking on behalf of Europa Nostra, underlined that we urgently **need to prepare all generations**, and especially the young ones, to the many challenges of Climate Change.

But if we want to succeed in this important endeavor, we also need to foster the values of **solidarity** and **altruism** among citizens, communities and countries.

In line with this approach we would like to highlight that we have to encourage and **enlarge** as much as possible **existing** and **new trans-frontier networks** between **young people** in **different** countries, in order to :

- **eliminate differences between various countries** in the level of capacity to address climate change by applying the principle of **equality** as the basis of any **democratic approach** to our **collective response** and adaptation to climate change all over Europe;
- **foster exchange** of experiences and, more specifically, of educational programmes with those **countries that** are still **lacking sufficient expertise, financial means and research capacity** connected to raising awareness about heritage at risk due to climate change; and
- **nurture and spread the vital sense of solidarity** among the citizens of all member states of the Council of Europe and also beyond, with the rest of the world.

4. Pairing education with expertise experience

Proper and effective investment in young generations must **pair education with experience and expertise**. For this reason, we need to guarantee **access** for **young generations to meaningful projects** related to Cultural Heritage with the aim to protect them from the effects of Climate Change. **Education without practice is insufficient**, and thus financial support for **traineeships or internships** would be necessary to ensure the **transmission of knowledge**.

5. Conclusion

As a final word, let us not forget that **Cultural Heritage** is not only at risk due to climate change, but it can be used as a **powerful tool for mitigation and adaptation to climate change**.

For this reason, Europa Nostra is preparing, in close collaboration with ICOMOS and with the support of the European Investment Bank Institute, a **European Heritage Green Paper**: a document which

indicates the multiple ways in which cultural heritage can contribute in achieving the fundamental goals of the European Green Deal launched by the European Union.

This document will be presented to the public on **19 November** as part of the “**Culture for Climate**” campaign led by our colleagues from the **Climate Heritage Network** of which Europa Nostra is a founding member. We strongly believe that this document will be relevant for all generations in all countries of the Council of Europe, irrespective whether they are members of the European Union or not. We shall therefore make sure that this document is widely disseminated among the Council of Europe wide network.

We are indeed not only “Stronger Together” but we are also “Better Together”.