

SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 6th EUROPEAN SUMMIT OF REGIONS AND CITIES GATHERED IN ATHENS ON 7-8 MARCH 2014

We, representatives of civil society organisations active in the field of cultural heritage and the wider field of culture, gathered in Athens as participants in the conference organised by the Greek Presidency of the EU, entitled "Heritage First! Towards a common approach for a sustainable Europe", urge you to fully recognise the pivotal role of cultural heritage and culture for the sustainable development strategies of Europe's regions and cities. Culture and cultural heritage generate multiple benefits for the smart, sustainable and inclusive development, such as the creation of a large number of jobs rooted in local communities, the accumulation of social capital and the strengthening of social cohesion. They also have an unmatched capacity to inspire and foster citizens participation in public life, to enhance the well-being of individuals and their communities and to enrich the quality of their urban and rural environment. Last but not least, our shared cultural heritage, with its regional, national and European dimensions, contributes to a stronger sense of belonging to a wider European community and a better mutual understanding and respect between Europeans.

We firmly believe that regions and cities are key players in ensuring that Europe's citizens regain hope and confidence in a better future. This can only happen if we fully deploy the potential of cultural heritage and culture as a strategic resource for developing a society based on ethical, aesthetic and ecological values. This has been emphasised in the text of the New Narrative for Europe prepared by artists, intellectuals and scientists from all over Europe, which was made public on 1 March in Berlin, in the presence and with the support of President Barroso and Chancellor Merkel.

We invite you to disseminate this crucial message and the outcome of the Conference "Heritage First!" to all representatives of EU's regions and cities.

We are eager to join forces with you to make this vision a reality.

EUROPA NOSTRA, The Voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe

CULTURE ACTION EUROPE, The Voice of Europe's Culture Organisations and Artists

HERITAGE EUROPE, European Association of Historic Cities and Regions

NEMO, Network of European Museum Organisations

FRH, European Network for Historic Places of Worship

ICOMOS, International Council on Monuments and Sites

ICOM, International Council of Museums

and other members of the
EUROPEAN HERITAGE ALLIANCE 3.3,
an informal platform of European and international networks active in the wider heritage field