



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 announced with particular reference to sustainable cultural tourism

The European Commission has published the awaited Communication (COM(2016) 543), regarding its proposal to the European Parliament and Council to designate **2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage** (EYCH). The proposal includes several references to tourism, particularly **sustainable cultural tourism**. ECTN is looking forward to actively participate in the EYCH 2018, by providing the **vital link between cultural heritage and cultural tourism**.

In particular, one of the three main objectives of EYCH2018 includes inter-alia *'to promote sustainable tourism'*, as well as *'to underpin the cultural and creative industries and inspire creation'* and *'enhance social cohesion and generate long-term employment'*.

Furthermore, one of the specific objectives is to: *'encourage local development strategies that tap into the potential of heritage including through the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism'*. Another specific objective calls for: *'stronger interaction between the cultural and creative sectors and communities and the heritage sector'* and *'promote heritage as a source of inspiration for contemporary creation and innovation'*. All of the above dovetail greatly with the aims and activities of ECTN.

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"Our cultural heritage is more than the memory of our past; it is the key to our future. A European Year of Cultural Heritage will be an opportunity to raise awareness of the social and economic importance of cultural heritage and to promote European excellence in the sector. I call on the European Parliament and Council to support our proposal and invite all stakeholders to help make this year a success."*

The proposal recognises that cultural heritage plays a strong economic role. Over 300,000 people are directly employed in the European cultural heritage sector and 7.8 million European jobs are indirectly linked to cultural heritage, for example in **tourism**.

According to the Commission, the **2018 Year of Cultural Heritage** will be an occasion to highlight the importance of European culture, and what the EU can do regarding conservation, digitisation, infrastructure, research and the development of skills. Events will be organised across Europe, as well as information, education and awareness-raising campaigns. It will provide an opportunity to seek answers to the challenges of decreasing public budgets in culture, declining participation in traditional cultural activities, environmental pressures on heritage sites, evolving value chains and digital transformation. ECTN and its members can contribute to and benefit from the above planned activities of EYCH 2018.

The Communication acknowledges the role of the **'European Heritage Alliance 3.3'** (EHA), of which ECTN is an active member, in facilitating the rich debate at EU level regarding policy developments

on cultural heritage. EHA brings together relevant networks and organisations, coordinated by Europa Nostra. Alliance 3.3 refers to Article 3.3 of the 'Treaty on European Union' that states: '*... the EU shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced*'.

ECTN greatly welcomes the EYCH 2018 and will strive to incorporate its activities into the EYCH programme. In particular, the **Interreg Europe CHRISTA Project** Interregional Workshops on **Industrial Heritage** in Goteborg, Sweden, and **Heritage Interpretation** in Sibiu, Romania, to be held during the preparation year 2017, will be enriched in the scope of EYCH and the Workshop on **Innovation and Digitization** in Latvia to be held in early 2018 will be included in the EYCH activities. Furthermore, the ECTN annual Conference (11th edition) to be held in September 2018 will be planned as an event within the EYCH framework and programme.

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