# Commentary on Section’s Keynote Presentations

Irina Subotic

Europa Nostra Board Member

Europa Nostra Serbia President

I have the honour represent at this importnt Conference in Moscow devoted to dialogue and cooperation between the Russan Federation and the European Union – is an umbrella network of heritage organisations and is considered today to be the Voice of Europe’s organised civil society committed to cultural heritage. The network is composed of 250 Member Organisations, 210 Associate Members and 1500 Individual Members from 53 countries, of which 45 in Europe. The power of our network comes from a shared passion for cultural heritage and the readiness of its members to invest their time, expertise, connections and often money for the pursuit of our goals.

It is extremely important to use every occasion – and particularly in the cadre of this kind of intercultural dialogue – to underline the importance of our cultural heritage, both natural and built, as being one of the main assets of the European civilization, and how it can be used as a tool to encourage mutual understanding and cooperation. Building consciousness and raising awareness for the need of preservation of this heritage and introducing educational programmes about its values and meanings, must lie at the heart of the European Cultural policy, particularly in view of the development and cohesion of local communities and the activities of civil society.

These goals are crucial to Europa Nostra’s mission and I feel obliged to ask that they receive more attention in the future, particularly on occasions such as at this extremely important Moscow Conference, with such a high level of representation of both Russian and European authorities and specialists attending.

Russian heritage is extremely rich, with its layers of identities, connected in the same time to the Slavic and Byzantine East, to the European West and to the different remote Oriental sources. All these subjects, similarities and differences define also the identity of Europe, and therefore point to a real dialogue between the cultures: I am sure that such a dialogue on heritage issues between Russia and the European Union will be very important, fruitful and beneficent for all the interested and involved partners. Therefore I would like to request the organisers of this Conference to include in the Conclusion document, the proposalto organise in the near future an additional specialised conference devoted entirely to heritage issues and their historical context, as well as a call to stimulate and deepen dialogue between European and Russian heritage institutions, experts and civil society, on the subject. I am sure that such an opportunity will help to better know the common and different heritage layers, to raise the general awareness about heritage questions and problems, particularly important at this moment of great economic potential in the Russian Federation, with the establishment of many huge local, regional and international business projects. By putting heritage in the mainstream of public attention on all the levels – international, regional, national and local - and by making heritage a priority for public policies and actions, transnational understanding, respect and cooperation could be further supported and developed.

Therefore *Europa Nostra* is always ready to underpin heritage campaigns, to advocate for heritage policies, and to strengthen capacity across the heritage sector. One of our major aims is to establish cooperation on all levels, from governmental to civil organisations, and to watch most carefully that the common heritage is duly protected, preserved and presented for the benefit of all Europeans. Every nation’s cultural heritage is the great asset for national identity. This is the case with the Russian heritage too, as it also provides an important, substantial and recognised contribution to the enormous and valuable European heritage. For achieving the aim of a common understanding, I believe that the heritage in general should be more acknowledged, better protected on all the levels, and be omnipresent in the consciousness of every citizen, particularly of the young. This is also the mission of *Europa Nostra*.

I was asked to comment on two presentations:

1. Alfredo Ronchi, Professor of Politecnico di Milano (Italy): Cooperation in the field of Exchange of Digital Collections and Cultural Content.

This new and very challenging approach to the various aspects of cultural contents is a promising way for preservation, distribution and communication of art collections and other aspects of cultural activities.

The major concern is in the field of very rapid technological changes and improvements which may represent a real danger of losing digitased material, in spite the fact that great efforts were done and great financial means invested to prevent this from happening.

2. Ekaterina Selezneva, Deputy Director, the Department of Contemporary Arts and International Cultural Relations, Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation: Dreams and Reality of Arts Mobility by the example of the Exhibition “Europe – Russia – Europe”.

This was, I would say, a successful realisation of multi-national / international cooperation between Russian and European museums. It was obviously very important to present simultaneously in Moscow, selected treasures – works of art, particularly paintings – from many big and small, well or less known European museums. The aim was to establish the professional collaboration which may lead towards new common projects, and to further improve the exchange of knowledge, experiences, museums objects, editions etc.

The large and very democratic concept of this international exhibition offered various readings and different approaches to its meaning. Nonetheless, the most important accomplishment was that Russian organisers succeeded in establishing good connections with many European museum organisations and opened the way for such possibilities for future collaboration.