

F oreword

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Cultural heritage is an essential part of our surroundings and life. It shapes our identities and everyday lives. It is rich and diverse even within one country. Therefore, as we can imagine, it is much richer and even more diverse throughout the European Union. The diversity of cultural heritage is also the result of the fact that we inherited it from many generations of our ancestors. It includes natural, built and archaeological sites, museums; monuments, artworks; historic cities; literary, musical, and audiovisual works, and the knowledge, practices and traditions of European citizens. We use it and we create new artifacts with the hope that they will survive for future generations. Sometimes, however, we destroy some valuable objects intentionally or by accident. Often, destruction is the result of so-called Acts of God.

It is our duty to acknowledge cultural heritage and preserve it for future generations. For this reason, The European Union has declared 2018 as *the European Year of Cultural Heritage*. At European level, all EU institutions are committed to making the year a success. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, as well as the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee will organize events to celebrate the year and launch activities focusing on cultural heritage. The slogan for the year is: *Our heritage: where the past meets the future*.

This issue of Uncommon Culture entitled *Cultural heritage: real and virtual* perfectly fits into this year's goal. As a Member of the European Parliament, former journalist, and European citizen fascinated by European history and culture, I am grateful to all authors who made an effort to digitize and present to the public so many examples of our cultural heritage. A manifestation of our time are the activities of cultural institutions that, thanks to the use of information technologies, allow us to learn about the cultural heritage of so many countries. It is a complex task, which requires research and actions conducted by many different kinds of specialists. It is a phenomenon of our time that distance access allows us to better understand and appreciate cultural diversity.

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