



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

UNESCO Summit: Culture can build bridges and reconciliation, says Vassiliou

Brussels, 2 September 2011 - Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, addressed the 9th UNESCO Regional Summit of Heads of State of South East Europe at the Roman site of Viminacium in Serbia today (2 September).

The Commissioner, who is in the country for a three-day visit at the invitation of President Boris Tadic, spoke on the theme of "Modern Art and reconciliation in South East Europe".

Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is one of the main objectives of the EU and the Cypriot Commissioner highlighted the role of culture in replacing the barriers that separate people "with the bridges that unite them".

"In the cultural sector, we have often started with heritage. We transformed it into a powerful tool for reconciliation, mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue. In this spirit, we have, for example, worked jointly with the Council of Europe on heritage rehabilitation projects in the Western Balkans," she said.

The Commissioner also underlined how openness to cultural diversity enhances the pool of potential new ideas, creativity and cultural expression. *"Our capacity to imagine, create, and innovate is a crucial economic and social asset in the knowledge age. People with different educational, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, brought together in an open working environment, can create an inspiring and innovative workplace, and generate new ideas," she added.*

The Commission recently proposed a budget increase of 37% for a future "Creative Europe" programme in 2014-2020, which will bring the current Culture, MEDIA and MEDIA MUNDUS programmes under a single umbrella.

During her visit to Serbia, Commissioner also held meetings with her counterparts in the Serbian Government, Minister of Education Žarko Obradović, Minister of Culture Predrag Marković and the Minister of Youth and Sports, Snezana Samardžić-Marković.

Greek translation to follow

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