'The Role of Cultural Heritage in Building the Future European Citizenship.'

Key points made in introductory remarks by Brian Smith, Secretary General, European Association of Historic Towns and Regions.

1. The concept of European citizenship requires acceptance of the principle an overall European identity - balanced alongside recognition of Europe's cultural diversity – a concept cannot be imposed but rather should be encouraged to emerge.

2. This no doubt requires action at all levels and in many differing ways; -

   - At the world level it is important that the concept of a European cultural identity is recognized and reinforced by agencies operating at that level e.g. UNESCO.
   - At the European level the concept can be encouraged and facilitated partly through the new constitution and of course by the policies and tools developed by the European Commission.
   - At national level, governments have equally important opportunities to facilitate the emergence of shared values on culture through legislation and it's influence on key policy sectors e.g. education.

3. It is at the local level however that I wish to focus my comments in the short time available. Specifically, I want to explore the potential role of the historic city in fostering the evolution of European citizenship particularly focusing on the potential contribution of municipalities.

4. Historic cities are the context within which citizens tend to experience much of Europe's finest cultural heritage – clearly not all cultural heritage – but a significant part. Cultural heritage influences and defines the character of historic cities – providing identity and diversity. It impacts on the stability and quality of urban life and contributes to the economic prosperity of citizens.

5. If cultural heritage is to have the role implied in the subject of this discussion, then clearly measures need to be in place to ensure that we invest in heritage –that we protect and realize the full potential of our cultural heritage.

6.	EAHTR has established a working group of cities called INHERIT in order to better understand the underlying processes that have led to successful regeneration of the city through heritage led investment. Cities such as Newcastle in the UK, Verona in Italy, Gothenburg in Sweden, Santiago di Compostela in Spain, all show the key leadership role that progressive municipalities play in developing inclusive processes that engage with the citizen.

7.	There is currently a real opportunity that Europa Nostra should consider. It is the opportunity to engage with municipalities in historic cities. Local authorities are moving into the ascendancy in many European countries with government devolving responsibilities in recognition of the key role the local authority can play in the field of cultural heritage and sustainable management. History is becoming 'fashionable' as the citizen becomes increasingly interested in their roots both at the level of the family and in the wider context. The potential of "a bottom up process" does exist. The current democratic deficit where we see low turn out in many European country's elections also creates an environment where politicians are recognising the need to make politics more relevant through sharing decision making with the community including all stakeholders.

8.	In conclusion, cultural heritage can play a major role in building European citizenship if it is seen as central to the social and economic processes that ordinary people relate to. One starting point in this process is to encourage the leadership role of municipalities particularly in historic cities to engage with and provide a framework within which all stakeholders can participate –including Europa Nostra's members. It is I believe timely for you to define the role you might play in this process –an opportunity to play a key part in influencing decision-makers and thereby playing your part in helping securing a key role for cultural heritage in building European citizenship.