

Giuseppe BELLANDI, EHTTA President speech

Ladies and gentlemen

Dear Mayors and elected representatives

Distinguished representatives of thermal towns

Dear friends of cultural routes,

First of all I would like to express a great gratitude to the City of Baden-Baden for welcoming us and for having agreed to answer with the Route Spa Towns of the Massif Central and the European Association of Historic Thermal Towns EHTTA, along with eight other cities, to the last call for proposal of the Culture Programme of the European Commission.

This decision was taken after a careful consideration, was certainly based on the choice of the theme Baden-Baden presented. The prestigious musical past of the city that was considered the gathering place of the nineteenth century's greatest composers and performers in Europe, present here on a regular basis or permanently, made clear the idea of asking experts to examine how much musical creation was and is still dependent on major sites whose activity had continued steadily for almost two centuries.

The presence of one of the most important orchestras in Europe, the Berlin Philharmonic and worldwide known interpreters reinforced the idea that the Easter Festival was a key moment for synergy between events showing clearly the dynamism of our members and their world-renowned cities and open discussions organized through a series of Cafés in Europe.

These cities knew how to invest in new ideas and approaches and are now preparing a reinterpretation of the "spa culture" in the broadest sense, a culture which adds key inventions in terms of health, taking into account a natural environmental protection, but also an cultural atmosphere necessary to the rereading of a "European common culture" that may be used on the economic turmoil we are going through. We have to invent, without waiting for miracles to happen. We are seeking for synergies with other cultural and scientific initiatives like ours that have also adopted a framework for European cooperation to be developed. I am referring to other cultural routes of the Council of Europe.

Furthermore we would like to invite our guests to discover heritages dating back to the great period of the thermal investment, but also to be aware of the intangible heritage, especially of those that tell the stories of celebrities, artists, and heads of state ... that made the reputation of our towns. The case of Baden-Baden is particularly remarkable, including its historical role in an attempt to neutralize potential conflicts or at least it was a neutral ground where meetings were organized between neighbouring countries in conflict with one another due to historical events.

The presence of the French culture, like Russian culture in this city is certainly the proof that new Cafés of Europe must continue to play the role of dialogue and to encourage through these meetings the creation of synergies between cities, regions, countries and the stability of peace in Europe.

It is therefore a part of this common and sometimes conflictual European history that we are tracing today with the music and partly through literature.

Today we are looking for stories of the past to be aware of our present, and in this sense we still need archives, prints and writings that represent our memory and most importantly the expertise of professionals to help us have a clearer vision.

However, these Cafes, places of fantasy and imagination are also locations to discuss and plan future prospects considering that the European Commission expects suggestions for EUROPE 2020, while the Council of Europe that had us successfully evaluated us wishes the foundations of European culture to be developed day by day and universally spread.

I am therefore particularly pleased to see this large public, diverse as its cultural origins as by its national origins.

I know how the representatives of the Council of Europe would have been pleased to be here today and I do know how attentive they are, in Strasbourg, within the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes which is our legal framework and within the European Institute of Cultural Routes, to enhance and to assist us in the European dialogue we opened here over four years ago by creating the EHTTA Association. I will read the words of encouragement that have been addressed to us by the Director of the Democratic Governance in charge of Culture. Words that our network has to be proud of it.

Thank you again and let me say that I completely share the words of Christian Corne, our Honorary President that pronounced at the first Café of Enghien-les-Bains: “our public, residents and visitors, patients and tourists that are the democratic elite with which we are now working together alongside the European institutions whom I thank for supporting us.”

I wish you a pleasant Café of Europe in a flow of music that evokes and recalls our common heritage.

Thank you all.

Giuseppe BELLANDI
Président EHTTA