

II Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forum
“Urban heritage – collective privilege”
Helsinki, Finland, 7 – 11 June, 2005

***THE OPENING SPEECH OF THE MS PAULA PURHONEN, DIRECTOR GENERAL,
NATIONAL BOARD OF ANTIQUITIES OF FINLAND.***

Honoured participants of the 2nd Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forum! Dear colleagues!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Interaction among people living in the Baltic Sea region has deep roots, starting from the multi-phased settlement of the region. During the past millenniums and centuries the interaction of tribes, families, trades- and craftsmen, soldiers and officers, sailors and fishermen, scholars and students have left visual testimonies and intangible traditions and histories in the region. They are to be found under and above the earth and the sea, in urban patterns and fabrics, integrated with heritage skills and know-how and use of traditional materials.

Today, in the present situation with the enlarged European Union, together with accelerating globalisation, Baltic Sea regional heritage co-operation faces new needs, challenges and possibilities for joint approaches. This Forum, which is the second Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Forum, forms one platform to enhance these approaches.

The theme of the Forum is “Urban Heritage – Collective Privilege”. The presentations deal with the actual challenges of the pressure of change and the question of how to cultivate the urban environment with diversified qualities and multiplied layers for good ways of life. The actual target for urban heritage professionals is to integrate urban heritage values with sustainable development and the policies of local communities.

The Forum creates a platform for authorities, researchers and professionals to exchange and compare management experiences and thus enhance regional and local capacity building. It promotes cross-sector co-operation and local involvement which is needed to manage the complexity of urban heritage management.

Events on the market site and additional exhibitions promote the know-how of the cultural heritage sector and the significance of this heritage to the public at large.

The Conference of the Forum takes place at our National Museum, Kansallismuseo, by architects *Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren* and *Elieel Saarinen*. This building was built at the turn of the twentieth century – Jugendstil buildings in the National Romantic form added an interesting and visible layer to the built heritage of Helsinki. The National Museum was placed on the edge of the then existing urban structure of the capital of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland. This new building was erected in a semi-rural environment. The style and the concept of the Museum interpreted and manifested the freshly constructed history of the nation of Finland. The building was a landmark then, and this skyline is still preserved.

New buildings, important to the national identity, have been built around the National Museum: the House of Parliament by architect *Johan Sigfrid Sirén*, the Finlandia House by architect *Alvar Aalto*, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Kiasma, by architect *Steven Holl* and the Sanoma Building of the leading media corporation by architects *Antti-Matti Siikala* and *Jan Söderlund*. In between there are still remains of red brick warehouses from the Russian era, now in temporary use waiting to be replaced by the new Music House in the near future. A topical picture of changes and continuity in the townscape at your disposal!

The responsible organisers of the Forum are the National Board of Antiquities of Finland and the thematic working group “Sustainable Historic Towns”. The National Board of Antiquities is the Lead Partner of the project “Sustainable Historic Towns – Urban Heritage as an Asset of Development”. This project has financing through the Interreg III B-programme in the years 2003-05. Thus, even the European Union is involved in the arrangement of this project. The other organisers are the Monitoring Group of the Cultural Heritage Co-operation in the Baltic Sea States and the thematic working group “Building Preservation and Maintenance in Practice”.

The Forum is financed also by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Environment of Finland. Several networks, such as DOCOMOMO and ICOMOS, and actors on cultural heritage are involved with the Forum exhibition and thematic meetings.

The international co-operation between national boards is the obligatory challenge of today. This profits both the national and international work. I wish this Forum successful working days and fresh approaches to the sustainable management of our common urban heritage!

On behalf of the National Board of Antiquities of Finland, it is a great honour for me to address my collegial greetings to all participants of the 2nd Baltic Sea Region Cultural Heritage Conference. I hope you will achieve an interesting exchange of experiences, and that this Forum will contribute to new approaches on cultural heritage management in the Baltic Sea region.

