




**Conference on Natural and Cultural Capital: the Future of  
Europe**

Botanical Garden of Rome, Italy. 24 November 2014


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- ▶ Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to thank for being with us today all the representatives of the European Commission, as well as the representatives of European and national research institutions, the stakeholders and NGOs.
- ▶ I am pleased to greet you and introduce the work of this conference by welcoming you to this prestigious venue, the Botanical Garden of Rome, which, as explained by Professor Blasi, is not only an important site for the realization of projects of ex Situ plant conservation and for environmental education, but, being located in the heart of Rome's historical center, is also part of the immense cultural heritage of this city.

- ▶ We have then decided that this was a particularly appropriate venue to discuss the topics this conference is focused on and that will be also addressed in the meetings of the Nature Directors to be held tomorrow and the day after.
- ▶ The Natural capital is closely influenced by the knowledge and skills developed by the human being over the centuries by benefiting from natural resources, and at the same time, the cultural capital is permeated with suggestions, materials, inspirations, constraints dictated by the natural resources available in each specific territory. Nature and culture make each one of the countries of our "old" Europe unique and unparalleled.

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- ▶ The topic of the Conference is exactly to draw our attention towards the interconnections and synergies between natural and cultural capital and the importance of their conservation and promotion, especially at a time of economic crisis like the present, when it is necessary to take into account the needs today imposed on any development policy: to integrate the conservation of the environment with the new frontiers of development for the livelihood of the communities.
  - ▶ Natural capital and cultural capital are crucial for the redefinition of a sustainable model of economic development of our continent, based on the extraordinary value of our natural heritage inextricably interlinked with cultural and architectural values.

- ▶ This conference aims at being an big opportunity for exchanging experience between the research and the institutional world, an opportunity to focus the attention on the interaction between natural capital and cultural capital, present and discuss best practices at various levels, promote synergies, propose initiatives, activities and projects.
- ▶ This instrument promoted by the Italian Presidency of the EU to deliver these messages is the "Charter of Rome on the Natural and Cultural Capital", whose main topics are guiding the agenda today

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- ▶ •We are particularly honored the audience in the hall today, including leading representatives from the research institutions, Universities, the European Environmental Agency, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, several Member States, including the Director of the Ministry of the Environment of Latvia, who will hold the next Presidency of the EU Council of Ministers in the first half of 2015.