

Welcome to Vilnius Opening Ceremony

31-August-2016

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The live stream of Opening Ceremony is available at: <https://youtu.be/CbhT3T88UHM>

Dear members, dear colleagues, dear friends,

Dear Lithuanian authorities with whom I have the pride to share this ceremony: Prof. Albinas KUNCEVICIUS, Minister of Culture, Mr. Sarunas BIRUTIS, Rector of Vilnius University, Prof. Arturas ZUKAUSKAS, and Head of the Department of Cultural Heritage, Mr. Algimantas DEGUTIS

Welcome to Vilnius, the 22nd Annual Meeting of EAA. My welcome is extended to all those attending and to those who cannot attend. Conscious of great work of the local organizers, the Scientific Committee and other EAA Committees, we look forward to another very successful meeting. We also send greetings to those of our members and all the other who are right now in Kyoto, at WAC.

This is my first meeting serving as president. Thus Vilnius is a very special occasion for me. I just say this because in my first busy year as your president, I did not change my basic view that acting as president is not a merit but a service, as I said in my first address to members at the Annual Dinner in Glasgow.

Beyond this, Vilnius 2016 will be, for sure, a very relevant meeting for our organization. Let me quickly refer why. But before coming to this, I wish you all together stand up and **keep a minute of silence** for those fellow members who have passed away this year. They were highly relevant for the EAA and a model for our discipline. Perhaps there are some other whose death we are not aware. In any case we will keep a minute of silence for all those. PLEASE, STAND UP.

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THANK YOU. In the future we will keep this silence as a tradition in all our Opening Ceremonies.

Vilnius 2016 presents a significant opportunity for analysis on how current events are likely to affect us as archaeologists, as citizens and as an organization. In this past year, every member of the EAA has been affected one way or another by events across our continent. French, Belgium, Dutch, German, Italians, Greek, Turkish, British, Irish, Spaniards..., you know what I mean. The question for us, now, is how these contexts influence our approaches to our archaeological profession and practice; how we can positively contribute from Archaeology to overcome these problems. Immediately after the dramatic terrorist raid of last November in Paris and Saint Denis, I proposed a session on **Archaeology after Saint Denis, Archaeology for "convivencia"**. Just taking the example of Saint Denis Archaeological Unit as an instance of what Archaeology can do to live together.

Vilnius 2016 is where we hope to refresh and reinforce our links with Eastern European Archaeology. It is a time and place to experience, once again, the dynamic that our Eastern colleagues bring to archaeological research and heritage management. We have an opportunity to reflect on how the archaeological record demonstrates how movement and migrations have contributed to our present identities and the role of the Baltic and Eastern Europe in the development of Western Europe, as a meeting place between East and West and with connections to the Middle East and Asia.

Vilnius 2016 provides opportunity for significant reflection on recent events - and how they affect the future of union in Europe. As European organization, EAA has to offer a major reflective contribution towards a future for union in diversity in a Europe that must be built upon solidarity, trust, openness and the trans-national borders. It is with this aim that we promoted the **special session on Brexit**. The matter is not talking about Brexit itself and the UK after Brexit. The real matter is to think how EAA could help to maintain and extend a project for Europe that, in many senses, is better and stronger than the current EU project.

2016 will be an important year for EAA and its members. Vilnius is the point at which EAA begins to activate a major process of strategic reflection. The framework document for strategic development has been distributed to members. We urge all members to engage with it and the future direction of EAA's sustainable growth. We aim for much improved membership engagement, membership participation and membership services. This means to develop the capabilities of EAA for producing policies but also to create our own domestic policy. In this sense we hold this morning the **session on Political Strategies for the EAA**.

Our final aim must be to place EAA and European Archaeology at the forefront of current contribution to social and cultural debate and to society, for the benefit of our members and those communities we serve.

Let me finish with the same words I use to end my First Letter to Members in the Winter issue of TEA: We afforded challenges because we *wanted things to change*. But at the time being we need to be more realistic. We must afford challenges because *things will not change*. Things do not change by themselves. Things compel us: they require our absence to be kept as they are; and they *require our presence to become a new thing*.

Some help is ever needed. And this time the help has been provided by Vilnius local organizers. We must express our best gratitude to: Vilnius University, to the Academy of Cultural Heritage, to the Society of Lithuanian Archaeology, to the Department of Cultural Heritage, and to the Lithuanian Council for Culture.

Let me say **ACIOU, Thank You so much in advance**. We'll see what next day brings. But we are here now because the work you have devoted to our vision.

(Felipe Criado-Boado, EAA president, on the behalf of EAA Executive Board and Committees).