



PRESS RELEASE

Europe's 7 Most Endangered Monuments and Sites Announced

Athens, 12 June 2013 - The Roman amphitheatre in Durrës in **Albania**, the buffer zone in the historic centre of Nicosia in **Cyprus**, Vauban's 17th century fortifications in Briançon in **France**, the Renaissance monastery of San Benedetto Po in **Italy**, the 15th century monastery in Setúbal in **Portugal**, the historic mining landscape of Rosia Montana in **Romania** and the Armenian church of St. George in Mardin in **Turkey** have been selected as the 7 most threatened landmarks in Europe. The announcement was made today by the leading European heritage organisation **Europa Nostra**, together with the **European Investment Bank Institute**, at a press conference in **Athens**, on the eve of its **50th Anniversary Congress**. These gems of Europe's cultural and natural heritage are in danger, some due to lack of funds or expertise, others due to inadequate planning, neglect, natural disaster or even political conflict. Urgent action is therefore required.

"These monuments and sites were selected not only because they tell a fascinating story about our shared past, anchoring the sense of belonging to a European family, but also because they are highly valuable to the local communities who are strongly engaged in saving them. Rescuing these sites would also act as a catalyst for the social and economic revitalisation of entire cities or areas. This is why Europa Nostra calls upon many public and private partners, at local, national and European levels, to join forces with them to ensure a promising future for the selected sites," stated **Plácido Domingo**, President of Europa Nostra.

"Investment in heritage conservation contributes to sustainable development and ultimately to growth and employment through its positive impacts on the local and regional economies. Support to heritage conservation therefore falls well within the remit of the European Investment Bank (EIB). The EIB Institute, together with Europa Nostra and associated partners, will undertake the necessary efforts to assess the selected sites and to contribute to the development of realistic action plans, in close cooperation with the national and local public and private entities," added **Rémy Jacob**, Director General of the EIB and Dean of the EIB Institute.

Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute, founding partner of 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme, will undertake rescue missions to these heritage sites after the summer. More specifically, experts appointed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the **Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)**, an associate partner, will provide analysis and advice on how funding could be obtained, for example, through European Union funds or, in appropriate cases, loans. The initial rescue action plans will be presented at the European Heritage Policy Conference, organised by Europa Nostra, in Brussels on 5 December 2013.

"For 50 years, Europa Nostra has been active in saving endangered heritage all over Europe, from the ancient site of Delphi in Greece in the early 1980s to the historic city of L'Aquila in Italy in the 2010s. We are proud that this year, for the first time, we have launched an advocacy and operational scheme in partnership with such a prestigious financial institution as the European Investment Bank. Our alliance demonstrates the recognition by the EU Institutions of their responsibility towards safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage, as stated in the Treaty of Lisbon (article 3.3). We expect that 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme will encourage others to support our efforts to rescue and promote the unique heritage of Europe," concluded **Denis de Kergorlay**, Executive President of Europa Nostra.

The 7 Most Endangered for 2013 were selected by Europa Nostra's Board from the 14 sites shortlisted by an Advisory Panel composed of international experts. In this initial year, civil society organisations and public bodies from 21 European countries submitted 40 nominations. 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme was launched last January, having been inspired by a successful project run by the US National Trust for Historic Preservation. **Nominations for 2014 can be submitted until 1 November 2013 by Europa Nostra's country representations, member and associate organisations.**

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TO FIND OUT MORE

www.europanostra.org/7-most-endangered/

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The 7 Most Endangered Heritage Sites in Europe *(listed alphabetically by country)*

Roman Amphitheatre of Durrës in ALBANIA

This early 2nd century AD Roman amphitheatre remained unknown to the world until the 1960s. Located in the very centre of the city, known in antiquity by the name of Epidamnos or Dyrrachium, and with a capacity of 15.000 to 20.000 spectators, it is one of the most remarkable heritage sites not only in Albania but in the whole Balkan region.

Due to its late discovery, the monument has endured chaotic urban planning, which has affected its structure, and it has suffered from continued deterioration. The major challenge is therefore to ensure its successful integration into the urban fabric of Durrës. This heritage gem is also threatened by a lack of financial resources, natural causes and neglect. Encouraging current research projects and raising public awareness about the exceptional value of this amphitheatre are steps which need to be taken urgently.

Its subsequent complete restoration would not only put the ancient city of Durrës back on the map of historic sites in Europe but also trigger the social and economic revitalisation of the second biggest city in Albania.

Buffer Zone in the Historic Centre of Nicosia in CYPRUS

The aftermath of the Cyprus dispute saw the creation of the Nicosia buffer zone in 1974. This area cuts through the historic centre and has disrupted the city's cohesion for almost 40 years. Decades of abandonment have undermined the high architectural value of the buildings, among which are medieval and neoclassical monuments, and had a devastating impact on the quality of the environment and living conditions of the entire city centre. Once the focal point of crafts and trade, the heart of historic Nicosia is today a lifeless 1.5 km corridor.

Since the 1980, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities of Nicosia have worked together, with the support of the United Nations, to produce a Master Plan for the revitalisation of the buffer zone. International assistance is today needed to start its implementation by restoring, one by one, the historic buildings located in the Nicosia buffer zone.

This important Master Plan, which is a brilliant example of cultural heritage acting as a catalyst for peace and reconciliation, received a Grand Prix in category research as part of the 2011 European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards programme.

Vauban's 17th Century Fortifications in Briançon in FRANCE

Sitting at the crossroads of five alpine valleys at the gates of Italy, Briançon is one of the most spectacular fortified cities in France. In the 17th century, Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, the renowned military engineer of King Louis XIV, was entrusted with the challenging task of designing these mountain fortifications. This defensive complex comprises urban walls, which spread over more than three kilometres; three forts (Randouillet, Dauphin and Trois Têtes) on the left bank of the Durance river, which are interconnected to the city by the Communication Y and the Asfeld Bridge; and a fourth fort (Salettes) located on the right bank of the river.

This masterpiece of mountain fortifications, considered to be one of the finest in the world and recognised by UNESCO in 2008 as part of the network of 12 fortified ensembles designed by Vauban in France, is today seriously threatened by the degradation of the rocky foundations, severe frost and a general lack of maintenance.

The municipality of Briançon has developed an ambitious strategy for the restoration and promotion of its heritage, relying on the support of local organisations, among others. However, this economic and tourism development plan, based on the revitalisation of Vauban's fortifications, can only be implemented with national, European and international assistance and expertise.

Renaissance Monastery of San Benedetto Po in ITALY

The small city of San Benedetto Po owes its historical, religious and artistic reputation to its namesake abbey complex, which dates back to the 11th century. The main buildings were designed in the 16th century by the Italian architect Giulio Romano, who is also the author of the Palazzo Te in Mantova and is known as the only Renaissance artist mentioned in Shakespeare's work.

During the last decade, an extensive and costly restoration returned this masterpiece to its former splendour. The work was largely completed when the earthquakes of 20 and 29 May 2012 struck, severely damaging the abbey and setting back the entire conservation process. Since then, large parts of the complex have become inaccessible to the public due to the risks of falling debris or collapse.

The restoration of the Monastery of San Benedetto Po is a huge challenge, both in financial and technical terms, which requires widespread cooperation and mobilisation.

15th Century Monastery in Setúbal in PORTUGAL

The Monastery of Jesus in Setúbal, the building of which was concluded in 1494, is one of the first examples of the Portuguese Late Gothic style, known as Manueline. This style skillfully incorporates maritime elements and representations from the pioneering voyages of the Portuguese discoverers. World-renowned - and

much better preserved - examples of this architectural style are the Monastery of Jerónimos and the Tower of Belém in Lisbon.

Recognised as a tangible witness of Europe's shared history - having served as the setting for the ratification of the signature of the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 between Spain and Portugal which paved the way for Europe's expansion both to the Americas and to the Far East - the European Commission decided in 2011 to confer to this exceptional monument with the "European Heritage Label".

This gem of our common heritage has been generally closed to the public for more than 20 years. It is in an advanced state of decay and urgently requires European expertise and financial support.

The complete restoration of this ensemble would also act as a catalyst for the social and economic revival of the historic city centre of Setúbal.

Historic Mining Landscape of Roşia Montana in ROMANIA

The landscape of Roşia Montană has been masterfully transformed by mining activities for more than three millennia. The subterranean heritage consists of a vast gallery network (some 150 km, of which 7 km date from Dacian and Roman times) and in situ equipment and artefacts. The remnants of surface habitation (Roman funerary sites, edifices and roads, as well as medieval and modern areas) demonstrate an intense interaction between man and the environment throughout the centuries.

The mining landscape of Roşia Montană, one of the most representatives in Europe, is today seriously threatened by a large-scale, open-cast gold mining project.

Local NGOs, supported by national, European and international heritage organisations, have been campaigning against this project for years. They call for an alternative and sustainable solution, a long-term social and economic development plan based on the preservation of Roşia Montană's unique assets: the mining landscape with its cultural and natural heritage.

Armenian Church of St. George in Mardin in TURKEY

For 15 centuries the Church of St. George was the spiritual home of the large Armenian community in the Turkish city of Mardin. This Grade I registered historical building was founded in 420 AD and was in use until 1915, when the Armenian population had to leave the city. In spite of its outstanding historical and cultural importance, this monument is currently in an advanced state of decay.

Europa Nostra Turkey, with the support of the owner, the Mardin Armenian Catholic Church Community Foundation, is strongly committed to rescuing this tangible witness of Turkey's multi-cultural history. The preservation of the church and its annexes would enable future generations to understand the contribution of Armenian people to Mardin's history and identity and, at the same time, allow a wider public to appreciate their cultural expressions and artistic achievements. The local authorities, who are also aware of the economic advantages from future tourism development, are supportive of restoration projects in their town, but their endeavours need to be encouraged and supported by national and European partners.

Background information:

Europa Nostra - the Voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe - represents a growing citizens' movement for the safeguarding of Europe's cultural and natural heritage. With its vast pan-European network of members (organisations and individuals), associates and partners, Europa Nostra forms an influential lobby for cultural heritage. It campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes. It seeks to influence European and national policies related to heritage. It celebrates excellence through its Awards Scheme run in partnership with the European Commission. In 2013, Europa Nostra is celebrating its 50th anniversary. www.europanostra.org

The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** is the long-term lending institution of the European Union owned by its Member States. It makes long-term finance available for sound investment in order to contribute towards EU policy goals. www.eib.org

The **EIB Institute** promotes European initiatives for the common good. It was created as part of the EIB Group (European Investment Bank Group) in January 2012 with the aim of acting as a catalyst for social, cultural, educational and research activities that are directed towards economic and social development in Europe. Detailed information on the activities of the EIB Institute can be obtained from its website <http://institute.eib.org/>

The **Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)** is "the social bank of Europe". A multilateral development bank with 40 member states, it represents a major instrument of solidarity policy in Europe. Preserving Europe's cultural heritage is part of its mandate. www.coebank.org