

PRESS RELEASE



**EUROPA
NOSTRA**

Fédération européenne du patrimoine culturel
Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage

Stop Gazprom from Devastating the World Heritage Skyline of St. Petersburg!

Président / President
S.A.R. le Prince Consort de Danemark

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APPEAL TO PRESIDENT PUTIN

The Hague, 7 December 2007 – Europa Nostra - the Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage representing 250 heritage organisations throughout Europe - has just launched an urgent appeal to President Vladimir Putin, calling on him to intervene for the safeguarding of the historic core of St. Petersburg. If no urgent action is undertaken, this unique city – and particularly its delicate silhouette – will be forever ruined by the construction of a 396 metre high skyscraper for the new headquarters of Gazprom, Russia's energy monopoly. Europa Nostra is profoundly distressed at the planned construction of Gazprom City in this unique location and joins the international heritage community and the outraged public in Russia in its widespread opposition to the project which, if constructed, will have a severely detrimental impact on this outstanding historic urban landscape.

St. Petersburg, also known as the “Venice of the North”, with its canals, 400 bridges and exquisite buildings, is the result of a colossal urban planning project initiated in 1703 by Peter the Great. Its principal virtues – which granted it UNESCO World Heritage status in 1990 - are the horizontal skyline, urban historic integrity and the architectural unity of style that have been preserved intact over the centuries.

Gazprom City and its glass-clad tower, designed by the British architectural firm RMJM, would rise 23 metres taller than New York's Empire State Building and more than three times taller than the tallest spire in St. Petersburg, the Peter and Paul Cathedral, soaring eight times higher than the maximal surrounding building height of 48 m permitted by local zoning regulations. It would lie directly across the River Neva from the Baroque gem of Smolny Cathedral which would forever be overshadowed by the looming tower. The horizontal skyline of St. Petersburg – which has up until now been preserved intact throughout the ages – has rendered the city famous. If the State Party fails to respect its obligations to the Convention and the Gazprom City project is not brought to a grinding halt, St. Petersburg faces the likelihood of deletion from the World Heritage List next year.

In its appeal, Europa Nostra urges President Putin to ensure that the current zoning regulations applicable at the selected location are respected and that an alternative location far from the historical centre be selected for the Gazprom City project in order that the historic urban landscape of St. Petersburg be preserved for the long-term benefit of present and future generations. In this emblematic case, it is vital to find an appropriate balance between contemporary architecture and the preservation of heritage.

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Europa Nostra, the pan-European Federation for Heritage, is the representative platform of over 250 heritage NGOs active throughout Europe. It is the voice of this vast movement of European civil society active in the field of heritage towards international bodies concerned, in particular the European Union Institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Europa Nostra is dedicated to putting heritage and its benefits in the mainstream of public consciousness and to making heritage a priority for public policies both at European and national levels. Its specific objectives are to promote, at a European level, high standards of quality in the fields of heritage conservation, architecture, urban and rural planning and to advocate a balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural, built and natural environment.

Europa Nostra supports national and international campaigns for the preservation and rescue of Europe's heritage at risk. It encourages exemplary initiatives in favour of the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage by recognising outstanding heritage achievements, in particular through the running of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. Through its various activities, Europa Nostra seeks to highlight the importance of cultural heritage as a building block of European identity and as a contribution to the strengthening of the sense of European citizenship.

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