

The 7 Most Endangered 2013

Project Fact Sheet

<u>Project Title</u>	Buffer zone, historical centre of Nicosia
<u>Location</u>	Nicosia, Cyprus
<u>Initial input date</u>	25.07.2017
<u>Current status</u>	Post appraisal follow-up
<u>Latest update</u>	09.2018

Summary, status, prognosis

Urban heritage site of political importance.
Some slow progress on preventive actions, but less action recently.
Further activity hoped for but rather uncertain, very dependent on the political situation.

Classification: C Slow progress

Basic data

Nominator:

Athena Aristotelous-Cleridou
President, Cyprus Architectural Heritage Organisation.

Brief description:

Heritage sites of historical importance.

Owner:

Many private and other institutional owners. None has endorsed the submission.

Administrator:

Formally: UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).
Planning and support: Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) Team.

Context, description

Nicosia, the capital city of Cyprus from the 10th century, has a rich architectural, cultural and historical heritage. The old city is contained within the Venetian fortress dating from the 16th century. Commercial and trade activities over centuries expanded the central east-west axis as the active heart of the old city.

In 1974 Cyprus was divided and Nicosia was cut in two with a central “buffer” zone separating the two communities. This zone was both militarily and politically highly sensitive with restricted access and being in effect abandoned. With time the fine buildings and infrastructure in the zone became derelict and many buildings are now in ruins. This was confirmed in 2007 by a detailed survey by the NMP bi-communal team and further deterioration has occurred since.

The objective of the initiative is to help create conditions in the “buffer” zone to allow and encourage its eventual rehabilitation and use, being properly integrated into the adjacent urban areas.

Three types of initiative are proposed:

- interventions of structural stabilisation on existing buildings (classified as emergency, medium term (mainly façades), and monuments)
- renovation of selected project areas to provide crossing points,
- strategic and area planning studies.

Issues, problems, threats

The main threat to inaction is that further degradation will certainly occur and impact negatively on the condition of the whole historical centre. Without prompt coordinated action, the historical buildings in the buffer zone could become so ruined that they will not be able to be restored thus irrevocably destroying the heart of the city and its numerous heritage buildings.

In addition the opportunity to link together the two halves of this divided capital so as to build confidence between the communities for their future security and prosperity and to share their joint cultural heritage would be lost.

Status pre-mission

Many actions have taken place in the past to safeguard the buffer zone within the framework of the bi-communal Nicosia Master Plan (NMP) project. The main basis for actions was the 2007 detailed survey of the buildings which recorded their architectural heritage and assessed their structural condition and from this an emergency intervention programme was defined and some limited actions undertaken.

The NMP team undertook further restoration and support work particularly at the Ledras crossing point, a significant central public crossing point of the buffer zone, which opened in 2008 and has been a great success and example to emulate.

Numerous practical proposals for stabilisation and restoration were being considered in the three categories identified. Also the implementing and funding issues under the prevailing political and practical constraints were being reviewed.

Summary EN/EIBI mission recommendations, action programme

The Technical report was issued in November 2013 (also on EN website).

It confirmed and encouraged the approach adopted by the dedicated bi-communal NMP team to develop further the technical solutions in detail and to seek support from the Local Authorities, representatives of which participated in the discussions.

A pragmatic programme of works and activities was suggested based on the identified possibilities, together with a phased tentative programme and outline cost estimates.

It was recommended that a unique bi-communal agency should be established as a separate identity to allow effective operations in the buffer zone, based on the successful NMP arrangements.

It was also proposed that the much delayed Area Scheme study for the Turkish/Cypriot community should be carried out to complement that done for the

Greek/Cypriot community thus supporting and putting into context the future developments in the buffer zone on both sides.

Grant funding should be sought from various sources, notably but not only from the EU. The complicated administration of funding to be reviewed and simplified.

A monitoring system to track potential benefits and changes from the project would be desirable to support future work.

It was recognised that further progress would largely depend on political agreement from all the parties on the wider issues of Cyprus. Having a better defined project as proposed should help to engage both parties in positive coordinated action.

Progress on recommendations and latest status

The report, its conclusions and recommendations were generally well received by those involved, notably the Nominator and the NMP team.

Practical action has inevitably been constrained by the political situation with some passive obstruction to progress.

However some progress has occurred and by the end of 2015:

- Short term urgent repairs of 13 buildings completed, 2 new ones added.
- Medium term significant building programme - 5 sites active, out of 49.
- Very nominal physical progress on other sites, and the new crossings, but joint discussions have been held on these but without much real progress.

The cost of the 2013-5 programme (200 k Euro) was covered by public funds from the Greek/Cypriot community.

- Administrative changes suggested to facilitate progress have not advanced.
- Search for funding has been frustrating but potential sources still possible.

In conclusion rather disappointing but some limited progress made, rather to be expected with the difficult context.

Since 2015, there has been little progress except some planning studies.

Impact of EIBI/EN intervention

Nominator's Comments:

Because of the political situation the sought protection of the cultural heritage in the buffer zone area has not been achieved. The project was limited to the stabilisation of a few buildings and to the formulation of planning provisions within the framework of the New Vision project for the city core.

Europa Nostra and the EN/EIBI can assist with the provision of funds from European or international sources that have been identified. This would facilitate the support, and in some cases the restoration, of valuable traditional buildings.

Appraisal Team's Comments:

An unusual heritage project with potentially important impacts on the urban development and cultural heritage of the capital city of divided Cyprus.

In addition the project should contribute to confidence building between the communities by confirming the importance of retaining the city's historic central zone and also practically by opening up crossing points through this buffer zone.

These laudable and important objectives have not been met, except to a limited extent. However the EN/EIBI appraisal and follow-up may have helped support the NMP team's approach and has provided guidance on technical, administrative and financial issues. It has also highlighted publicly through its report and during meetings the need for action and has helped contribute towards a more positive approach which may assist in advancing the safeguarding of the city centre and achieving the wider political objectives.

More recently, progress disappointing, reflecting the political impasse.

It will take some time to restart activity and it will certainly remain challenging.

Lessons learned

This was always recognised as a very difficult project due to its sensitive political context despite its relative simplicity in purely technical terms.

A long-term approach combined with consistent sound and balanced advice was called for and generally provided.

Some follow-up contacts including being active in an EN sponsored Conference was part of this process of persuasion but with limited immediate effect.

However this was considered a worthy but ambitious initiative needing a long term approach and patience.

Data on inputs & timing	Dates, Participants
Nomination form submitted	March 2013
Project selected as 7 ME:	June 2013
Questionnaire from EIB Institute	August 2013
Response to questionnaire	September 2013
Appraisal mission	14 -15 October 2013
Participants:- EN - EIB Institute	Sneska Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic, John Sell, Costa Carras, Gianni Perbellini. Peter Bond
Feedback letter post mission	11 September 2013
Response to further questions	10 October 2013
Technical report issued	November 2013
Request for progress report	29 April 2014: 2) April 2017
Response on progress	29 May 2014: 2) June 2017
Follow-up visit	26 - 27 October 2015
Participants: EN EIB Institute	Costa Carras Peter Bond
Report on follow-up visit	6 November 2015
Fact sheet prepared by	Peter Bond

Fact Sheet updating	
Request for information / mission	August 2018 / no mission
Report's revision	September 2018
Updated report's author	Peter Bond