

The Hague, 23 December 2014



Mr Klaus Iohannis
President of Romania

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Sector 6, Bucuresti, Romania
Cod postal 060116

Dear Mister President,

On behalf of *Europa Nostra*, the pan-European federation for cultural heritage, we wish to extend our warm congratulations on your election as President of Romania. Your compelling victory in the recent vote showed the commitment of Romanian citizens to the values and aims which underpinned your candidacy – integrity, competence, rigour, but also the fight against corruption – and inspired admiration and hope across Europe.

Following your taking office last Sunday, please receive, alongside our heartfelt praise, the expression of our sincere hope for establishing a fruitful cooperation with you and your team in the field of cultural heritage. In this respect, we acknowledge your remarkable achievements as Mayor of Sibiu, a city which has been transformed during your successive terms in office, to a significant extent due to laying culture and heritage as a base for its sustainable development. The special attention you have given to culture and to heritage is best expressed by the designation of Sibiu / Hermannstadt as a 2007 European Capital of Culture alongside the city of Luxembourg. From those years we recall with great pleasure European heritage events hosted by the city of Sibiu, namely the Europa Nostra Scientific Council Meeting in 2005 with its symposium on “Fortified Churches and Monasteries”, and the 2007 Annual Meeting of the European Heritage Days National Coordinators, a joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Union, where Europa Nostra acted as Liaison Office, and organised, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs of Romania, a workshop on “Communicating about the Cultural Heritage”.

As you certainly know, Europa Nostra has been selected by the European Commission to be its non-governmental partner for the running of the annual *European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards*. In this framework, we have been proud to grant our prestigious European awards to impressive and exemplary achievements in the field of cultural heritage by Romanian individuals and organisations. These awarded achievements place your country among the highly significant actors on the scene of European heritage. Let us recall especially the most recent award – this year’s Grand Prix in the category Conservation and Public Choice Award for the exemplary restoration of the 17th century frescoes at Dragomirna

The Voice of
Cultural Heritage
in Europe

La Voix du
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Monastery. In the past years, several other awards were given to Romanian organisations and individuals, such as Ms. Paraschiva Kovacs (Dedicated service, Grand prix, 2012); Golia Monastery (Conservation, 2012); Dr Hans-Christian Habermann (Dedicated service, 2011); Brukenthal National Museum in Sibiu (Education, Training and Awareness Raising, 2010); Mr. Şerban Cantacuzino (Dedicated service, 2008); International Built Heritage Conservation Training Centre at Bánffy Castle in Bonţida (Education, Training and Awareness Raising, Grand Prix, 2008); Mihai Eminescu Trust (Dedicated service, 2006); Hill Church, Sighişoara (Conservation, 2004); Mr. Călin Hoinărescu (Dedicated service, 2003); and finally Rîmetea Heritage Conservation Project (Conservation, 1999).

Concurrently, our organisation is campaigning in favour of saving endangered heritage, and in this field of action, one of our long lasting campaigns is dedicated to the safeguard of Roşia Montană, the outstanding historic mining cultural landscape in the Apuseni Mountains. We have been following this case for many years, and one year ago, on launching our new *7 Most Endangered* Programme, run in partnership with the European Investment Bank Institute and with the support of the Council of Europe Development Bank, we have considered the nomination made by our Romanian member organisations - Pro Patrimonio, ARA and Alburnus Maior - and placed Roşia Montană on our very first list of Europe's most endangered monuments and sites.ⁱ This year, our second list of the 7 Most Endangered includes, upon the nomination of Pro Patrimonio, the wooden churches of northern Wallachia and southern Transylvania (counties Gorj, Vâlcea, Sibiu, and Hunedoara). The main aim of our "7 Most Endangered" programme is to put the spotlight on endangered heritage sites in Europe and to mobilise public and private stakeholders to save those sites through creative projects geared at ensuring the sustainable development of the regions concerned, precisely by using their cultural and natural assets as key resources for sustainable economic and social development.

Dear Mr President, please allow us to convey to you, at the very beginning of your mandate, our special message with regard to Rosia Montana. In the past years, Europa Nostra has repeatedly addressed the Romanian authorities urging them to save Roşia Montană, a place of utmost cultural importance, and to envisage and implement a long-term sustainable development strategy for the inhabitants and the heritage and environment of the region. We have also supported, along other international bodies, such as ICOMOS, the initiative of Romanian national and local organisations to include Roşia Montană on Romania's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites.ⁱⁱ Our stand is made in support of well defined and well documented positions adopted by distinguished Romanian organisations, such as the Romanian Academy, Babeş-Bolyai University, the Romanian Chamber of Architects, the Romanian Union of Architects, ARA, Pro Patrimonio, ICOMOS Romania and others. In this important campaign, Europa Nostra and its Europe-wide network of heritage NGOs are joined by major international bodies, such as ICOMOS,ⁱⁱⁱ UIA – International Union of Architects, CEA – European Council of Architects. The Roşia Montană campaign also enjoys a wide international professional support, repeatedly expressed over the past decade.

We have noted with much interest that you, Mr President, have in the past repeatedly expressed your disagreement with the open-cast gold mining project proposed at Roşia Montană, based above all on environmental and social grounds. You also spoke of the state's share in the project and the distribution of gains, and you did mention the importance of cultural heritage, particularly the Roman galleries.

We indeed feel very much encouraged by your position on Roşia Montană and especially about your clear reference to the valuable cultural heritage of this area. In this respect we wish to stress that, in our view, this is the strongest of arguments in favour of Roşia Montană, because it has a lasting value. If technologies and shares are the only arguments against the proposed mining project, these may change in time ultimately leading to the start of a large-scale, open-cast mining with inevitable destruction of the area's invaluable cultural and natural heritage. We therefore believe that the sustainable future of Rosia Montana can be ensured only through the safeguard of its cultural heritage which, if well maintained and preserved, will only get richer, and will become a source of economic and social prosperity for the entire region and an example to be followed in other similar cases not only in Romania but also in the rest of Europe. Please therefore allow us to reiterate, in this context, that Roşia Montană is *above all a cultural heritage place* – a cultural landscape, to be more precise – of greatest value for European culture and civilization. Among many reports and assessments on the value of Roşia Montană in terms of cultural heritage we recall here the recently disclosed report by British archaeologists of Oxford and Leicester Universities, which places Roşia Montană on the World Heritage level.^{iv}

In closing, we have to express once more our concern over the apparent commitment of the Romanian Government to kick-starting the mining project, renewed just a few days ago by the Minister of Economy upon his investiture.^v After the wide public protests ignited just one year ago over the same initiative of the government, such a position is disquieting. Last year's public stand for constitutional rights and in support of the safeguard of cultural heritage and environment, which grew into a movement coined as "the Romanian Autumn", was inspiring for all concerned and engaged European citizens. We therefore believe that the messages expressed by such a strong civil society movement, should not be easily disregarded.

Under these circumstances we feel that a firm and well-argued public position on the value of this outstanding site, coming from you, as the new President of Romania, will be effective in placing the debate on the positive and promising track of cultural heritage and its value for society, in tune with the latest European policy strategy and directions.

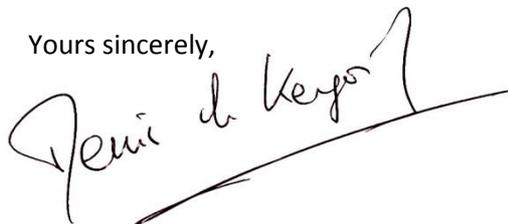
In concrete terms, we strongly recommend to you and the Romanian Government, to use the available EU structural funds, for financing the much-needed authoritative feasibility study on an alternative development strategy for the area of Rosia Montană which would ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the society and the environment of the entire region.

We, at Europa Nostra, would be very happy to assist you and your team in any way that would be considered useful, and this on the basis of the vast expertise and commitment coming from our membership. We also stand ready to cooperate with your office on a new vision and development plan for the area of Roşia Montană, something which has been recognised as necessary in many international public positions lately, and which is currently being prepared by our Romanian member organisations with the support of our network and partners. We will be very happy to set up a meeting with your office in the near future to discuss ways in which we could cooperate on the case of Roşia Montană and on more general matters with regard to Europe's cultural heritage located in Romania.

We wish you, Mr President, every success in your new and weighty responsibilities and we look forward to our future fruitful cooperation and constructive dialogue.

On behalf of our President, Maestro Plácido Domingo,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denis de Kergorlay". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid black horizontal line that extends to the right.

Denis de Kergorlay
Executive President

ⁱ The 7 Most Endangered Programme: <http://www.europanostra.org/2013-list/>

ⁱⁱ Position expressed in several letters to Romanian authorities and in public positions. See *Europa Nostra appeals to Romania's Parliament to opt for an alternative and sustainable development of Rosia Montana*, Oct. 15, 2013, <http://www.europanostra.org/news/383/>, or *Rosia Montana: Europa Nostra writes to the new government of Romania*, Jul. 17, 2012, <http://www.europanostra.org/news/268/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ See latest resolution, adopted at the 18th General Assembly, in Florence, in December 2014: *Rescue of the Roşia Montană mining landscape and promotion of sustainable development model*, <http://www.icomos.ro/pdf/ICOMOS-18GA-RezolutieRosia-Montana.pdf>

^{iv} *Statement of Significance. Cârnic Massif, Roşia Montană, jud Alba, Romania*, https://www.academia.edu/4800467/Statement_of_Significance_C%C3%A2rnic_Massif_Ro%C5%9Fia_Montan%C7%8E_jud_Alba_Romania and *Response to D. Jennings, A Critical Analysis of the Report: 'Statement of Significance: Cârnic Massif, Roşia Montană, jud Alba Romania'* by A Wilson, D Mattingly and M Dawson, https://www.academia.edu/5475221/Response_to_D._Jennings_A_Critical_Analysis_of_the_Report_Statement_of_Significance_C%C3%A2rnic_Massif_Ro%C5%9Fia_Montan%C4%83_jud_Alba_Romania_by_A_Wilson_D_Mattingly_and_M_Dawson. From the first document we cite the following paragraph:

“Together, the subterranean workings, the surface landscape of ore processing areas, settlements, religious places and cemeteries, and the documented history of the associated communities are an extraordinarily detailed record of the activity of Roman, medieval, Early Modern and communist-period mining exploitation. They constitute a powerful case for regarding the Roşia Montană mines as of equivalent importance to listed World Heritage sites. If assessed against the UNESCO criteria of significance of outstanding universal value (only one of which need to be satisfied to make a site eligible for World Heritage status), we believe that for Roşia Montană a strong case can be made that it meets the following criteria:

(ii) exhibits an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or **technology**, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

(iii) bears a unique or at least **exceptional testimony** to a cultural tradition or **to a civilization** which is living or which has disappeared;

(iv) is an **outstanding example** of a type of building, architectural or **technological ensemble or landscape** which illustrates a significant stage(s) in human history;

(v) is an **outstanding example** of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.”

^v *Mihai Tudose a spus că doreşte o nouă lege a minelor. Legat de acest lucru, Tudose a afirmat că susţine proiectul Roşia Montană, dacă exploatarea se va face în condiţii de securitate*, <http://www1.digi24.ro/Stiri/Digi24/Actualitate/Stiinta+si+Mediu/Mihai+Tudose+ministrul+propus+la+Economie+sustine+proiectul+Rosj>; *New Economy ministers favors Rosia Montana exploitation*, <http://www.romaniajournal.ro/the-new-ponta-govt-gets-the-parliaments-green-light/>