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## PRESS RELEASE & INVITATION

### Conservation Study of the Village Gostuša in Pirot District receives European Heritage Award on Wednesday

Niš, 25 August 2016 – The **Conservation Study of the Village Gostuša in Pirot District**, a Grand Prix winner of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award 2016, Europe's highest honour in the field, will be celebrated on **28-31 August** with various events. The programme features guided tours of the village of Gostuša and the city of Pirot, lectures and workshops and an Award Ceremony. More than a hundred of heritage and cultural professionals, volunteers and supporters, and several representatives from regional, national and European institutions, will gather to celebrate this remarkable heritage achievement from Serbia.

Guided tours of Gostuša and surrounding areas will take place on 28 August. A series of workshops and lectures on key topics related to the award-winning Conservation Study will be held on 29-30 August in Gostuša with the participation of experts from the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation, the Institute for Natural Heritage Conservation, the Ministry of Civil Engineering, Transport and Infrastructure, the Tourism Organisation of Serbia, the Tourism Organisation of Pirot, NGOs and the University of Niš as well as local authorities and representatives from the local community.

The **Award Ceremony** for the Conservation Study of the Village Gostuša will take place at the **Cultural Centre of Pirot** on **31 August** (12:00). **Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović**, Secretary General of Europa Nostra, Europe's leading heritage organisation, a top-level representative from the European Union Delegation to Serbia, **Elena Vasić Petrović**, Director of the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš and author of the award-winning research project, and **Vladan Vasić**, Mayor of Pirot, will address the audience.

Prior to the presentation of the Grand Prix, Elena Vasić Petrović and **Ivana Cvetković**, Associate at Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš, will talk about the award-winning project and the outcomes of the workshops held the previous days. **Višnja Kisić**, Secretary General of Europa Nostra Serbia, will present the key findings of the European policy Report 'Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe'. This extensive [Report](#) – recently produced by Europa Nostra together with five partners – provides compelling evidence of the value of heritage and its positive impact on Europe's economy, culture, and society, as well as the environment. The programme will end with the opening of the exhibition 'Gostuša Village' and a guided tour of the city of Pirot.

The Conservation Study of the Village Gostuša was declared a Grand Prix laureate and received €10,000 at the European Heritage Awards Ceremony held on 24 May 2016 at the Zarzuela Theatre in Madrid, Spain. This major event was co-hosted by Maestro **Plácido Domingo**, President of Europa Nostra, and **Tibor Navracsics**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

*"The conservation study of endangered vernacular architecture in this small but unique mountain village is a testament to the accomplished work and high standard of conservation which can be achieved with firm commitment and determination in spite of a limited budget. The research for the conservation work was remarkably thorough and was conducted with vision and a clear action plan"*, said the Awards Jury of this research project which was financed by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia.

The researchers carried out an architectural survey on each building and produced detailed and comprehensive documentation regarding the architecture and construction techniques used in each individual structure. The study had a compelling educational element with a strong engagement from students in the relevant fields. The project coordinators were committed to clarifying the importance of the restoration works to the local community and were intent on involving and educating the village's inhabitants in each aspect of the project. The completion of the study and building renovations has resulted in an enthusiasm for heritage among local people and an improvement in their rural lifestyle. The project is of international significance and is already acting as an influential example of good practice thanks to the researchers' contribution to international conferences and their perseverance in gaining recognition for the village of Gostuša and its surrounding landscape.

“The intention of the team to re-use the former government buildings as cultural centres which could potentially encourage tourism to the area and revitalise the village is a valuable aspect of this project”, the Jury noted. The Awards Jury found “the methodology and the approach to raising awareness of this village to be extraordinarily well done”. While the protection of the vernacular architecture is apparent, the study went beyond these material factors in boosting the cultural identity of the area and providing new potential for social and economic growth in this special region. The project should be regarded as an admirable example of the influence of good research and conservation.

The ceremony in Pirot is organised by the Institute for Cultural Heritage Preservation Niš and the City of Pirot, in collaboration with European Commission and Europa Nostra and with the kind support of the Cultural Centre of Pirot, the Tourism Organisation of Pirot and the Foundation Architect Aleksandar Radović.

### **Media professionals are invited to attend the Awards Ceremony**

Please **register** your attendance by sending an email to [kontakt@zzsknis.rs](mailto:kontakt@zzsknis.rs)

Upon request, it may be possible to arrange **interviews** with key representatives.

## **Background**

The [European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards](#) was launched by the European Commission in 2002 and has been run by Europa Nostra ever since. It celebrates and promotes best practices related to heritage conservation, research, management, voluntarism, education and communication. In this way, it contributes to a stronger public recognition of cultural heritage as a strategic resource for Europe's economy and society. The Prize is supported by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. Since 2002, independent expert juries have selected **426 award-winning projects** from **34 countries**. A total of **95 Grand Prix** of €10,000 have been presented to outstanding heritage initiatives, selected from among the award-winning projects.

[Europa Nostra](#) is the pan-European federation of heritage NGOs which is also supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals. Covering 40 countries in Europe, the organisation is the voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting Europe's cultural and natural heritage. Founded in 1963, it is today recognised as the most representative heritage network in Europe. **Plácido Domingo**, the world-renowned opera singer and conductor, is the President of the organisation. Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe's endangered monuments, sites and landscapes, in particular through 'The 7 Most Endangered' programme. It celebrates excellence through the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. It also contributes to the formulation and implementation of European strategies and policies related to heritage, through a structured dialogue with European Institutions and the coordination of the European Heritage Alliance 3.3.

[Creative Europe](#) is the new EU programme to support the cultural and creative sectors, enabling them to increase their contribution to jobs and growth. With a budget of €1.46 billion for 2014-2020, it supports organisations in the fields of heritage, performing arts, fine arts, interdisciplinary arts, publishing, film, TV, music, and video games as well as tens of thousands of artists, cultural and audiovisual professionals. The funding will allow them to operate across Europe, to reach new audiences and to develop the skills required in the digital age.

### **CONTACTS**

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