



7ME EVALUATION MEETING The Hague, 15 November 2017

Towards a review of the approach to the "7 Most Endangered "

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Introduction:

The "7 Most Endangered" (7ME) is a cooperation initiative between Europa Nostra (EN) and the EIB Institute (EIBI), as well as the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). It has run over three (bi)annual rounds (2013, 2014, 2016), and a new call for nominations for 2018 was launched in March 2017.

Good policy and management practice suggest to assess the procedure applied and results obtained so far, before fully embarking on the new round, in view of fine-tuning the approach where possible. Such analysis has been done by the persons involved at EIBI and is summarized below; it was presented to and discussed at the EN Board meeting in La Valetta on 17 March 2017 and recently revised to stimulate further debate between EIBI and EN scheduled to take place in The Hague on November 15, 2017.

Overview of the 7ME initiative to date:

There is general agreement that the 7ME initiative has run rather well over its existence of 5 years. A total of 22 projects, located in 15 countries (of which 11 EU members), were selected out of a total number of some 85 nominations; they were chosen by the EN Board from shortlists distilled for each round by an Advisory Panel from the nominations on the base of a set of criteria. The same Panel discussed in Tallinn on 14/15 October 2017 a new set of 24 nominations in view of establishing the (short)list for 2018. The measures thereafter taken aimed primarily at lifting the visibility of often lesser known or forgotten heritage projects and simultaneously at increasing their credibility (through the preparation of a published, technical report, typically including a rescue plan proposal), while drawing on both European and local expertise. When combined with a strong involvement at the local and national levels, the results turned out to be quite impressive and significantly contributed to move a number of endangered sites and monuments out of the initial "danger zone".

This being said, and perhaps not surprisingly given the "base population", such results could not be obtained in all cases; also, most results only accrued over a longer period of time than initially expected, and required more support beyond the original report drafting than envisaged at the outset.

In sum, the approach worked, but there is scope for fine-tuning which should be explored. One example is the new nomination fiche for the List 2018, which has been reviewed between EIBI and EN, resulting in some changes to the questions asked, e.g. to put from the outset more emphasis on the sustainable character of 7ME project nominations.

Identified issues for discussion and possible improvement

The following nine issues were singled out so far; a similar debate within EN and preferably including EN participants in the past 7ME missions may well generate additional comments or point out other issues.

1. Stress the need for sustainable solutions for the selected 7ME projects.

Understandably, the first priority of most nominators is to ensure the restoration/conservation/preservation of the endangered site. However, the current state of decay of nominated projects is mostly due to a lack of regular maintenance over decades. The rescue proposal must therefore be on a sustainable basis, so that the same project does not qualify again for the 7ME one generation later. A sound technical, social and economic concept must include the provision (and funding) for regular maintenance of the monument, as well as a concept of how to use it in the future, such as to ensure the coverage of the funding. The situation is particularly difficult for large historical monuments (forts, monasteries, e.g. Briançon or S. Benedetto Po) located in sparsely populated regions, and/or prone to particular stress through earthquakes, or floods and other climate change impacts.

Proposed Conclusion: Insist from the outset that each project, within its specific limits, be based on a solid technical, social and economic concept, such as to permit to generate a sustainable solution. In other words: apply the principles of the study "Cultural Heritage counts for Europe" consistently within the 7ME process.

2. Should a different position be taken in case the owner of a nominated site does not support the nomination?

It is evident that the owner's support is crucial in follow up actions and thus it could be argued that a lack of owner support should "automatically" trigger the downgrading of a nomination. However, such simple position could be taken advantage of by a critical or hesitant owner; furthermore, the position of the owner(s) can change quite dramatically over time. Indeed, some of the most impressive results were exactly obtained when, also through the selection under the 7ME, an owner could be convinced to change its attitude, as e.g. in Rosia Montana or with the Bourla Theater in Antwerp. In specific cases, also, the ownership of the site may be legally ambiguous and need lengthy clarification, or there may be many owners with divergent interests (e.g. Kastoria, Chios).

Proposed Conclusion: Do not exclude nominations without owner support, but keep in mind that such projects tend to be particularly sensitive and results often require even more time than for owner-supported nominations.

3. Does the role of the nominator decrease after the election of a site under the 7ME?

The nominator should continue to play an important role (where possible in cooperation with the owner): in preparing the mission of EN/EIBI experts, in propagating the results of the reports, in implementing the follow-up actions and, as a member of EN, in reporting back to EN/EIBI. Admittedly, the "enthusiasm" of individual nominators needs occasionally some "tempering". But no 7ME project can be implemented without a strong support at the local and national levels, and only to the extent that the owner himself becomes very active and autonomous (e.g. Setubal monastery) should the nominator decrease its contribution over time.

Proposed Conclusion: Involve and encourage the nominator as much as possible. Responsibility for the project may shift to the owner, but not to EN or EIBI. See also part 8 on reporting.

4. Should EN be attributed a "self-nomination right"

Certain countries (e.g. Poland or Ireland) have to date not yet nominated a single site for the 7ME. This might also be related to a hesitation of some EN members to "go international" with heritage sites in danger, rather than trying to solve the issue nationally. Also, in some countries there are "obvious" candidates for the 7ME, which are not being taken up by an EN Member Organisation (e.g. the World Heritage site of the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro). Accordingly, the question has been raised if EN as such should not also be attributed the right to nominate candidates.

Proposed Conclusion: Attribute to EN as such the right, in specific cases, to nominate a site for the 7ME. However, a close cooperation with national Member Organisations should then be sought, also because any action on the ground would be more difficult without a local support.

5. Can EIBI or CEB "opt out" of selected projects?

Both institutions are relatively complex and policy-driven institutions. CEB can avoid an "opting out" by carefully selecting the (so far) one project per round to be dealt with under its responsibility. EIBI can occasionally be confronted with projects where its involvement might run counter operational or image considerations of its mother institution EIB. So far this has been the case only once (Malmi airport in Helsinki), so EN experts have drafted that report alone.

Proposed Conclusion: Acknowledge that an "opting out" possibility exists, but EIBI to undertake all efforts to minimize the likelihood of it being used. Where needed, EN to emulate the procedure without EIBI involvement.

6. What role should EIBI play in the case of "politically driven" or advocacy projects?

A number of projects (e.g. Rosia Montana, Hasankeyf) require primarily halting an external threat putting a heritage site at risk than undertaking deliberate action to restore or preserve the site. In such cases, the prime contribution which EIBI typically makes, i.e. the drafting of a comprehensive technical report, may be less well suited than in more "standard cases".

Proposed Conclusion: The input to be provided in advocacy cases by EIBI/CEB should be defined in view of the specific needs of the project and of the skills available at EIBI/CEB; this may imply that no full standard report needs being drafted.

7. How to define optimally the relative roles of EIBI and EN during the missions and in the report writing?

In practice, EIBI expert(s) undertake a joint mission with EN members, who often come from other countries than the one of the selected site. Whereas the EIBI expert has the overall and final responsibility for the report, the mission participants act as a team, the other experts comment intensively and thus contribute to the final result. If specific thematic contributions are made, which go beyond the expertise of the EIBI expert, or when major updates are required well after the mission but before finalizing the report, they may be put into specific chapters or annexes and be marked as such; a separate cover note by EN could also be envisaged. As routine and expertise develop on both sides, such "composite" situations may well become less frequent within the mission teams. In any case, it is important that the different contributions be complementary and without contradictions. On the other hand, the credibility of the report to an external decision maker may be higher if it is perceived as a technical document rather than another advocating text.

Proposed Conclusion: Continue to remain flexible but without shying away from a "composite report", provided it keeps an overall thrust, and quality, in support of the selected project. Producing the report shortly after mission reduces the probability of composite reports.

8. How to intensify and coordinate better the follow up reporting?

This is perhaps the area where current practice is less well established. There is good knowledge about several projects, typically those with regular progress, and clearly less information on others, either because there is no progress or because none is reported. This should be changed, and here the role of the nominator as an EN member is crucial. The objective should consist in keeping for a minimum of say 4 years a file on each 7ME project, updated at least once a year, on progress and follow up activities after the finalization of the report. This would also allow to do a more systematic reporting on the overall 7ME initiative, e.g. in the context of the EYCH. To kick start such effort, EIBI has established a four-page summary sheet on the 7ME projects notably of the 2013 and 2014 rounds, summing up the information available at EIBI, and shares this with EN for completion and correction.

Proposed Conclusion: Reinforce systematic follow up reporting on each 7ME project, involving also the nominators. Use information thus accumulated for overall reporting, notably also during EYCH, through specialized seminars, sessions, etc, in continuation of what has happened occasionally in the past (Bruxelles 2014, Oslo June 2015.).

9. How to define optimally a “graduation policy” for 7ME projects?

Experience shows that even well progressing 7ME projects need support and advice from EN and/or EIBI well beyond the date of finalizing the technical report. The need may also arise because the geopolitical situation has changed for a specific project, examples include Rosia Montana or the Nicosia Buffer Zone. Special cases occur where EIBI has made available additional "seed money" to analyse in some more depth specific technical issues identified during the mission, as has been the case for Mardin and for the Wooden Churches in Romania; both exercises have been well appreciated and were successful. But it must be clear that a small team, in The Hague or in Luxembourg, can support and enable, but cannot and should not “take over” the 7ME projects; also, it could not deal adequately with an ever-increasing number of projects. Hence, the (early) "graduation" of projects into local or national hands is both needed and desirable. Here again the role of the nominator, hopefully in good cooperation with the owner, comes in!

Proposed Conclusion: The definition of such "graduation policy" needs to be tackled. It must define in particular as from which threshold level EN and EIBI withdraw from a project when no satisfactory progress has been achieved within a reasonable lapse of time.