



PRESS NOTE & INVITATION

Europa Nostra and European Investment Bank Institute mission visits Post-Byzantine Churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi

Korça, 18 September 2018 - Experts from **Europa Nostra**, the leading heritage organisation in Europe, and the **European Investment Bank Institute** have arrived today in Albania on 18 September for a four-day mission related to the Post-Byzantine Churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi. The churches were listed among the 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2018, following a nomination made by “**The Past for the Future**” Foundation. The European delegation of heritage and financial specialists will meet with national authorities – including the Minister of Tourism and Environment **Blendi Klosi**, the Minister of Culture **Mirela Kumbaro**, the leading representative of the Orthodox Church in Korça, Voskopoja and Vithkuqi **Johan Pelushi**, non-governmental civil society organisations and other stakeholders, with the aim of mobilising efforts towards saving these iconic churches.

The churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi in south-eastern Albania are a group of 12 churches built during the 17th and 18th centuries. They are the most authentic evidence of the extraordinary economic development of these two Christian centres during Ottoman rule in the Balkans. Some of these churches, large in size, represent a new architectural and unique form of domed basilicas. They are the most representative monuments of 17th-18th century ecclesiastical art in the Balkans and are masterpieces of the post-Byzantine style. Despite their rare historic value, the monuments are in an advanced state of decay. Water damage and humidity pose a serious threat to the interior wall paintings. The theft of artefacts is an enduring problem as none of the churches are secured with cameras or alarms.

Peter Bond and **Lourdes Llorens Abando**, Technical Consultants contracted by the European Investment Bank Institute, **Paolo Vitti**, Member of the 7 Most Endangered advisory panel and Europa Nostra Board member, **Lida Miraj**, Architect Conservator and Individual Member of Europa Nostra, will participate in this mission. **Kliti Kallamata**, Architect Conservator of “The Past for the Future” Foundation, will represent the Albanian NGO that nominated the churches to the 7 Most Endangered programme.

On 18 September, the delegates will have a meeting with the Minister of Tourism and Environment, Blendi Klosi at the Ministry of Tourism and Environment in Tirana and will hold discussions concerning the preservation and renovation of the site.

On 19 September, the delegation will visit the Post-Byzantine Churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi.

On 20 September, the delegates will meet with the leading representative of the Orthodox Church in Korça, Voskopoja and Vithkuqi, Johan Pelushi, which is the owner of the churches of Voskopoja and Vithkuqi, and the with Mayor of Korça, **Sotiraq Filo**.

On 21 September, the delegation will meet representatives from national authorities in Tirana, including the Minister of Culture, Mirela Kumbaro and also with Director of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

On the same day, at **17:30**, the experts will give a **press conference** about the mission.

Media professionals are invited to attend the visit to the Post-Byzantine Churches on 19 September and the press conference on 21 September.

For more information about the programme of the mission, please contact Kliti Kallamata.

PRESS CONTACTS

“The Past for the Future” Foundation

Kliti Kallamata

E: past4future@gmail.com

T: +355 692147022

Europa Nostra

Joana Pinheiro, Communications Officer

E. jp@europanostra.org

T. +31 70 302 40 55

TO FIND OUT MORE

<http://7mostendangered.eu/>

www.europanostra.org/7-most-endangered-news

twitter.com/europanostra

youtube.com/user/EuropaNostraChannel

Background information

The 7 Most Endangered programme

[The 7 Most Endangered programme](#) identifies endangered monuments and sites in Europe and mobilizes public and private partners on a local, national and European level to find a viable future for those sites. The programme was launched in 2013 by **Europa Nostra** with the **European Investment Bank Institute** as founding partner and the Council of Europe Development Bank as associated partner. It was inspired by a successful similar project run by the US National Trust for Historic Preservation. The 7 Most Endangered is not a funding programme. It is a catalyst for action and promotes “the power of example”. The 7 Most Endangered is supported by the **Creative Europe** programme of the European Union, as part of Europa Nostra’s networking project ‘Sharing Heritage – Sharing Values’.

Since 2013, 29 threatened monuments and heritage sites from 19 countries across Europe have been selected for the 7 Most Endangered. The first list was published in 2013, the second list in 2014, the third list in 2016 and the fourth list in 2018, during the European Year of Cultural Heritage. In 2016, the Venice Lagoon in Italy was declared *the* most endangered heritage site in Europe.

An international advisory panel, comprising specialists in history, archaeology, architecture, conservation and finance, meet to discuss the applications submitted to the 7 Most Endangered programme and to shortlist the most threatened monuments and sites. The final list of 7 sites is selected by the Board of Europa Nostra.

Heritage and financial experts from Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute undertake missions to the 7 sites, together with the nominators. The multidisciplinary teams assess the sites and help formulate a feasible action plan for each of them, in close cooperation with national and local public and private stakeholders. The results and recommendations of these missions are summarised in technical and financial reports. The programme partners assist with the implementation of these [reports](#).

Europa Nostra

[Europa Nostra](#) is the pan-European federation of heritage NGO’s which is also supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals. Covering more than 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, 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. Europa Nostra is an official partner and has been greatly contributing to the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) 2018.

European Investment Bank Institute

The [European Investment Bank Institute](#) (EIBI) was set up within the EIB Group (European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund) to promote and support social, cultural, and academic initiatives with European stakeholders and the public at large. It is a key pillar of the EIB Group’s community and citizenship engagement. More information on <http://institute.eib.org>

Creative Europe

[Creative Europe](#) is the EU programme that supports 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 allows them to operate across Europe, to reach new audiences and to develop the skills required in the digital age.

“The Past for the Future” Foundation

The Past for the Future Foundation is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2002 with the protection, study, conservation and restoration of historical monuments and cultural heritage as its objective. The centre of the foundation is in Korca, Southeast Albania – an area with a great number and variety of historical monuments, while the activity of the foundation is extended in all of Albania. The foundation has greatly contributed to many projects, including studies and works related to the protection of pre-industrial architecture and technology in Albania, archaeological surveys on pre-historical monuments, conservation works on art and architecture of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments and the protection of urban areas.