



The 7 Most Endangered 2018

Programme run by **Europa Nostra**,
the Voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe,
in partnership with the **European Investment Bank Institute**

Constanta Casino Romania

Technical Report

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1. Summary

The purpose of the project is to restore the dilapidated and abandoned Casino to its former state as a fine *Art Nouveau* building and adapt it to new relevant uses.

The Casino, situated on the sea promenade, was completed in 1910 and was operated successfully as a casino up to the Second World War. It was significantly extended several times and suffered war damage. After 1950 it was repaired and converted to social uses under the Communist regime. A further major repair programme took place in 1980 after which decline set in. After 2000 the Casino was abandoned and left to deteriorate and it is now closed and in very poor condition both inside and outside.

The project is to restore and refurbish the building to modern standards for multiple cultural uses such as concerts, theatre, cinema, conferences and exhibitions and to include a restaurant and café. It will require some structural repairs and changes to the configuration to modernise for the new functions. The restoration of the special features and the decorations will be a major work. The upgrading and repair of the surrounds and improvement of the sea defences are also required. Emergency works to protect the building from further damage before restoration starts are envisaged.

The owner and operator of the Casino is the Constanta City Hall (CCH) who hands over the construction and design phases to the National Investment Company (NIC) through an Agreement with the Ministry of Regional Development (MRDPA). This will be valid until early 2019 and requires works to have started by then.

Preliminary studies into the condition of the building have been carried out in the past and a Feasibility Study to update these studies is in hand under the NIC. The project will be implemented on the basis of these preliminary investigations through a “design and build” contract following an international tender. This is the third attempt to launch the project by NIC under similar arrangements, with the inadequate quality of contractors causing the recent cancellation. There are major concerns on these proposals which seem to cede responsibility for detailed design to the contractor with light administrative supervision by the NIC. This approach is considered totally inappropriate to restore and modernise this sensitive heritage building. Also due to the nature of the work changes during construction are inevitable and these must be controlled firmly by the Administration and not by the contractor. Under the proposed arrangements, the risk of poor quality work and contractual problems with costs and timing will be unacceptably high. A different approach is deemed essential.

The estimated costs including VAT of the Main Construction (NIC) is €12.6 M and the Subsidiary Works (CCH) is € 0.30 M. Both these estimates are preliminary and will be reviewed and revised by the Feasibility Study. The total overall financing requirement is thus estimated, probably optimistically, at about €13 M.

It appears that funding for NIC of €12 M is assured by Government and the Subsidiary Works will come from CCH finances, perhaps through EU funding or otherwise.

Construction may take 2 years or more, so completion could be by 2021/2.

To address these serious concerns, it is strongly recommended that NIC and CCH review the overall arrangements for the project preparation and contract strategy and make fundamental changes to reduce the perceived high risks.

The main proposals to help this process are summarised below:

- Ensure the extension beyond early 2019 of the Agreement between CCH and the MRDPA concerning the NIC management of the construction/design phases.
- Recognise the complex nature of the restoration and modernisation of this building which requires enhanced preparatory work and design with strong management, much more than currently envisaged. A serious review is needed.
- Instigate further investigations and a detailed design phase before tender by competent consultants to cover all aspects notably the structure, the actual needs, the modernisation, and the repair/adaptation of the special features.
- Ensure that the tender and the associated works' scope/specifications are appropriate, using traditional "construction only" contract(s). These should be refined to allow flexibility for the nature of the works and also for potential changes during the works. The contract(s) should be firmly managed, preferably by experienced independent Consultants, under the administrative aegis of NIC.
- Establish a coordinating Project Implementation Unit (PIU) or equivalent under the aegis of MRDPA to have overall control of the direction and progress of the project. It would be the key control and decision maker driving the project.
- Establish within the CCH a focal point at once and a Casino Contact Group with senior CCH personnel, representatives of NGOs and others to liaise with the PIU, and to prepare for the operational phase and to coordinate with the public.
- Ensure that the CCH immediately start with the Emergency Works to protect the Casino from further damage prior to the main works contracts starting.
- Review the sea defences to ensure long term protection and take appropriate action including the possibility of an offshore breakwater to the east.
- Consider the more detailed recommendations in the text and summarised in §13.

In summary:

A very worthwhile and interesting initiative, but with serious concerns on the manner in which the project is being prepared and proposed for construction, with high risks of serious under-performance (in quality, cost and timing).

Radical changes are proposed to the contract strategy and to enhance the project preparation to limit these risks.

2. Purpose, location

The purpose is to restore the dilapidated and abandoned Casino building to its former state as a fine *Art Nouveau* building and to modernise and adapt it to new relevant uses.

The Casino is in Constanta, Romania, on the Black Sea coast and situated prominently on the seafront promenade.

3. Context

Constanta, with a population of 280 000, is the most important Romanian city on the Black Sea. It is an ancient settlement and active in Roman times and before. It comprises the largest port in the country being the outlet of the Danube – Black Sea canal and is the regional centre for the country's Black Sea tourism.

The Casino is situated adjacent to the old city in a prominent position between the old harbour and the new port. It is built on an artificial promontory jutting out from the fine sea promenade. This area was transformed in the early 1900s as part of a programme initiated by King Carol I to modernise the medieval city.

The Casino was designed in *Art Nouveau* style by the Swiss Romanian architect Daniel Renard, following an international competition. It was at the time a contentious decision and a bold step to modernity. The Casino project was initiated in 1903 and the Casino was constructed between 1907 and 1910.

The Casino was and is still owned by the Local Authorities (now the Constanta City Hall - CCH) who benefitted much from its former success. It was leased out to several different operators and between the World Wars formed part of a network of casinos, including Monte Carlo, which enhanced its fame and activities. Despite the financial benefits to the city, the local population were not always enthusiastic about the gambling activity but nevertheless its impressive position and architecture meant that it became an iconic symbol of the city and its still considered as such, despite its run-down condition. It is currently classified as an “architectural monument of national and international value” and is included in the list of historical monuments of the Ministry of Culture.

The Casino's initial success led to a major extension of the building on the sea side soon after opening. This increased the size significantly at level 1 and 2 and changed the sea façade by eliminating the large central fan window and replacing it with two storeys of large arch windows. These works were designed by Daniel Renard in a style consistent with the original. A low restaurant building was also added at this time to the north (land) side of the Casino. Much later in 1980s this building was converted to house an

aquarium and was redecorated externally. In the 1930s other significant extensions took place on the east end of the Casino with two storeys of mainly technical facilities housed in an ornate extension with curved towers at each end. These works were in keeping with the *Art Nouveau* style although not under the original designer Daniel Renard. Other changes included adding a ramp access to the kitchen area on the east end.

The Casino suffered serious damage in both World Wars and major repairs were carried out between 1928 and 1930 and also between 1951 and 1952, the latter repairs being undertaken by unskilled conscripted labour with the inevitable effect on quality. In 1947 under the Communist regime the Casino was designated for cultural activities and called the Cultural House of the Unions. The significant earthquakes of 1977 and 1986 inflicted damage on the building. A major restoration took place in the 1980s to modernise it for the new functional needs and to upgrade the decorations. There were many changes in the detail of the original design and again the attention to detail and quality was not high. With time and lack of maintenance and general neglect the Casino gradually became run down and in about the year 2000 the building was finally abandoned and left to the elements. An initiative to sell the casino to an Israeli group in 2005/6 failed. Being on an exposed sea shore, the building deteriorated rapidly and is now unsafe with access forbidden to the public except under special conditions. The immediate concern is the damage resulting from the rain entering through the damaged sections of the roof and the windows and the encroaching dampness throughout the building.

4. Description

The building is of rectangular form, oriented east/west with the two major façades facing the land and the Black Sea. It is richly decorated with flamboyant *Art Nouveau* forms, many with a marine connection, and topped by an elegant roof. It comprises three floors, a basement level with services, a ground floor level with the main entrance at the west end, and the first floor - the *piano nobile* – with the large main public rooms, the former gambling salons. The first floor was expanded to provide further space and this leads to the seaside terrace. At the east end later additions provide toilet and other facilities. A technical access has been added to the east end with a tunnel to the basement. Floor access is by the staircases there being no lifts in the building and the building has no air-conditioning, just natural ventilation.

The building has overall dimensions of 52m long, 27m wide and 25m high with a total floor area of about 4000 m² and the *piano nobile* area of 1270 m². The vertical structure is variously of brick, stone and steel, with some concrete columns inserted as World War II damage repairs. Some floors are of steel I beams with brick arches and some are in reinforced concrete. The roof is a steel frame with a metallic covering.

The Casino is situated on an artificial platform with a concrete structure and this is surrounded by a sea wall with concrete block protection. A breakwater close offshore protects the southern approach from storms.

The project is to restore this dilapidated and abandoned building and to modernise it for use as a Community and Cultural Centre.

The works main components are:

- the repair and renovation of the vertical and horizontal structures.
- the refurbishment of the façades and the replacement of the windows and the external doors.
- the repair and modernisation of the roof and its structure.
- the adaption and modernisation of the interior for the new usages.
- the conservation, repair or replacement of the interior decoration.
- the modernisation of the services including heating, ventilation, lighting, toilets and lifts to meet current standards and expectations.
- the upgrading of the utility services (water, waste water, gas and electricity).
- the repair and renovation of the surrounds and the terrace.
- the necessary works to ensure platform stability and the proper sea defences.

The works and services are to comply with the current standards and in particular to respect the criteria for energy conservation with proper insulation (e.g. in roof and windows) and to respect notably seismic standards and those for fire and access.

An immediate “Emergency Action” is planned to protect the building from further deterioration by rain and the elements. This would require, as a minimum, to ensure no leakage through the roof or the windows and to block off the exposed windows to avoid further damage.

The definition of the works to be carried out is still not established in detail.

The studies carried out in 2013 form the basis of the project. These general and preliminary studies concentrated more on the structure than on the decoration and ornamentation. Further clarity should be provided at the Feasibility Study stage where these previous studies will be updated at least to incorporate any recent deterioration. The new developments for the changed use are less well defined. As discussed later under § 6 Implementation, major concerns exist on the manner in which this is being managed with the detailed scope and specification of the works being a key concern.

There would be an interest to investigate the provision of a new offshore breakwater to the east of the Casino, similar to that provided to the south. It is noted that damage to the east side of the building is more severe as it is much more exposed than the south side, which has the benefit of being partly protected by the main port breakwater.

5. Technical aspects

The main problems arise from the highly corrosive environment on the steel, concrete and plaster work, the change of usage proposed on the structure and the loadings, and the application of modern standards and the insertion of new services.

The structure of the building reflects the tradition at the time with brick and steel vertical structure and I beam and arch brickwork floors. The general state of the structure appears reasonably sound and some sample checks have been carried out to test this. Further investigation would be recommended before the design is finalised.

For example, the effect of corrosion on the lowest floor with its exposed I beams in a humid enclosed environment should be checked. The roof's wood planking may need attention, appearing to be in poor condition. Excessive crowd loading (e.g. jazz concerts) may be beyond the capacity of the existing floors designed for more sedate activities. The earthquake risk is significant in central Romania and Constanta has been hit in recent years (notably in 1977, 1986, 1990). Appropriate design checks and reinforcement of the structure and joints will be required to comply with the seismic codes and preliminary studies show that full compliance might be difficult. In addition, the stability of the sea wall has been noted as a cause for concern.

Note that even if thorough investigations have been carried out on the condition of the structure, it is quite likely that unexpected conditions will be discovered during construction when more of the structure is actually revealed. This needs to be clearly acknowledged in the site control and management arrangements.

The unique feature of the building is its *Art Nouveau* design and decoration which must obviously be retained, to the extent possible. It is essential to make a detailed census of the existing details and to determine their history as to whether they were in the original building or when they were added. On the basis of this data, detailed decisions may be made about the restoration of each component, independent of the contractors. The result must be consistent with the overall design of the building but should also allow for the changes needed to meet modern standards and the proposed new usages, so subjective judgements may be required. As an example, the chandeliers in the main salons (which were not original but added after the 1980 upgrade) may be inappropriate in the revised room configuration aimed at theatre and concerts; special attention may be needed to the technical requirements for musical events (acoustics, stage form, back stage space). Another example is the large windows which feature *Art Nouveau* curved shapes formed by metal inserts as their upgrading to modern standards of insulation may not be simple. Specialist advice should be sought to ensure the overall design and work quality are appropriate and to the necessary standards. There may well be problems from a shortage of skilled craftsmen able to undertake these works. See Appendix 3 for an appropriate methodology for the restoration process.

The approach should be pragmatic probably by restoring the Casino to its overall extent and state in its “heyday” and maintaining the spirit of the original concept in the details but by allowing modernisation to meet current standards and expectations. A challenging agenda which will require adequate time and considerable expertise.

6. Implementation

6.1 Responsibilities:

The Owner of the Casino is Constanta City Hall (CCH).

The CCH has the responsibility for the building and its surrounds up until it hands over to the NIC to prepare and execute the main works. CCH regains responsibility after construction for the operation phases including the maintenance. It is responsible also for any works on the platform underneath the building, its sea protection and the terrace and surrounds.

The Project Administrator with overall responsibility for the construction contracts is the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA). Detailed responsibility for the main works, their preparation and site supervision is with the National Investments Company (NIC), a department of the Ministry.

A protocol was agreed between the CCH and the MRDPA in 2014 to define responsibilities for the project’s execution by the NIC. This has been extended until early 2019 on condition that works start before that date. This seems improbable (see §6.4 Planning) and new arrangements will be needed to ensure continuity.

The proposed transfer of responsibility solely for the construction phase for such a complex project is unusual and could create problems by splitting responsibilities. In order to minimise this risk, pragmatic cooperation between the principal parties, the Owner CCH and the Administrator NIC, is essential. Thus, regular reporting and meetings should be arranged as appropriate and it is unclear whether such arrangements are currently envisaged (see proposals later).

6.2 The Approval Processes

This major public project requires a special procedure for approval by the authorities, and the key stages are as follows:

1. A Concept Note and Design Brief by the Owner (CCH) to the Contracts Administrator (NIC).

2. A Feasibility Study leading to the Technical Document for Construction Authorisation (TDCA), being a comprehensive technical, historical and architectural assessment.
3. The Technical Project Documentation adequate for tendering.
4. The Execution Design Details required for construction.

The Ministry of Culture has to approve the final proposals as this is a listed heritage building. Its role could be significant in ensuring the quality of the final outcome.

6.3 The Contract Strategy

The Administration considers that the preparatory studies necessary for the TDCA are effectively already available and merely require a review and updating to be in order. The proposed approach seems to be to combine final design and construction in one overall “design and build” contract and in this context, it is unclear how the approval processes are to be implemented. This general approach is similar to two previous attempts to launch the project both of which have failed for legal and administrative reasons at the tender stages. These past setbacks should be a cause for caution. It is considered by the NIC that recent changes in the law on restricting firms disputing the selection procedure should avoid some of the past difficulties. The other reason for cancelling the tender seemed to be the perceived inadequate quality of the bidders, a serious on-going concern.

These setbacks could reflect a wider problem of an inappropriate contract strategy being adopted to match the capability of the Romanian contracting industry. A large and unusual contract under “design and build” method requires very competent firms or groups of firms and preferably enough to provide good competition.

Compounding this past experience, there are major concerns about the overall strategy proposed for this particular project: the restoration of an unusual heritage building, in poor condition and with a lack of detailed technical data and preparation.

The main concerns in more detail are as follows:

- The quality and scope of the existing studies, dating from 2013 and even earlier, are generally adequate as preliminary work but more detailed work is needed before proceeding to tender, as is acknowledged in these studies.
- The studies and research to determine the functional use of the Casino have not been made available despite requests but they appear to be limited. The present proposal of use provides a reasonably sensible menu of activities but more work is required to confirm these choices and provide more relevant information for planning purposes. The functional design depends on these details so more and firmer information is important at an early stage not after construction is complete.

- The Feasibility Study as proposed seems to be an exercise in confirming the previous work. The scale of the study is controlled by the budget of €50 000 with a duration of 90 days, which is unlikely to provide any substantial new contribution. In scope and depth, it is more like a feasibility study in the classical sense – an initial exercise to assess the data and test the feasibility or interest in continuing with the scheme, and also to recommend how to proceed. The present Study lacks any critical analysis or call for recommendations and does not provide any Cost Benefit Analysis or equivalent which would justify the “feasibility” title.
- The NIC proposes to use this Feasibility Study as the basis for the construction contract which will be on a “design and build” basis. The “design and build” contract is most suitable for well-defined standard buildings where few changes are likely during the construction phase and thus the design and construction can be optimised by the contractor without much concern to the quality of the resulting works. The emphasis is on cost cutting for the contractor at the risk of works’ quality for the client. This is the exact opposite of what is required for this sensitive heritage project where the precise definition and specification of the works must be fixed by the Owner/Administrator aided by experts, outside the construction phase, and where the works’ quality is essential for success. In addition, it is likely that during the construction phase, when the real condition of the structure or state of repair of the items is revealed, that unexpected changes will be needed. It is not for the contractor to decide on these changes but for a strong independent consultant working under the auspices of the Owner/Administrator or his representative.
- These weaknesses are compounded by the apparent lack of concern or understanding of the complexities involved in managing the restoration of a heritage building such as the Casino. Site supervision responsibility seems unclear with NIC providing a standard site presence to follow the administrative aspects of the project and perhaps a local site supervisory involved also. It is unclear what control there will be on the “design” carried out by the contractor and whether this will be by NIC personnel or outside specialists.

The main issue is the lack of control of the works by the Administration and that the main responsibility for design and build is being ceded to a contractor. This is against a background of lack of detail knowledge of the state of the building and the proposed works together with a low-level of site control. The capacity of potential contractors is not of the highest standing and this would compound the problems.

This combination presents a high risk of failure to achieve the laudable objectives of restoring this building to its former splendour. The result is likely to be poor quality work and a high probability of cost and time overruns spiced with contractual disputes. This is an iconic and very special work of art to be restored and it is being treated as if it were a standard building.

A radical change in approach is recommended as described below:

The Feasibility Study tenders are being launched (July 2018) and it is unclear whether the terms of reference could possibly still be extended and made more meaningful at this stage or not. This would be the preferred option, making this study into a preliminary feasibility study in the classic sense (as referred to above).

This stage should be followed by employing competent consultants (comprising architects, structural and service engineers, planners and other specialists) for the design and then detailed design phases, including providing appropriate specifications.

These detailed proposals would be carried out by a Contractor (or Contractors) under the supervision of an experienced Consultant with project management capacities.

The Construction Contract would need to be flexible to account for the specialist actions required in the restoration work and the possible changes which may result during construction. Thus, some items may need to be on a “daywork” basis or a “cost +” basis as appropriate. To ensure adequate quality and experience from the Contractor, and to simplify the selection, a Pre-selection or Pre-qualification process is recommended. It may be that specialist subcontractors are nominated for certain work.

Some adjustments in contract strategy may be needed to reflect the availability of competent firms to undertake the specialist works. It might be appropriate for example to split the work into separate specialist contracts (structure, equipment, decoration etc.,) with a Contract Manager with an overall coordinating role. More thought is needed to optimise the contract strategy at an early stage.

While the contracts could be managed and administered by or through the NIC (as proposed by the Government), the Owner should be involved much more in the process to ensure his interests are properly considered. To reinforce this cooperation and to manage the whole process effectively, a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) or equivalent should be considered reporting to the Ministry with representatives of the main parties (e.g. NIC, CCH) and to include some external project management expertise as overall managers of the process.

As noted above, this change in strategy could still be accommodated as the Feasibility Study process is at an early stage. It is noted that the parties (NIC, CCH) were alerted to these broad concerns shortly after the mission by letters dated 6th July 2018, well before the finalisation and issuing of this report. The main thrust being to reinforce the management capacity and thus the control over the design/construction processes.

In addition, it would be appropriate for the CCH to create now an internal Focal Point and also a wider group such as a Casino Contact Group (CCG), to help manage its part of the project. This would liaise with the PIU and establish regular contact with the

public and interested parties so as to ensure proper information exchange and that local interests and ideas are considered. This would have been most useful in the initial phases but could still be of interest in relation to the detailed works to be done and the eventual operational phase.

6.4 Planning and programme

The current emphasis of the NIC is to proceed with the project as rapidly as possible despite the reserves expressed by several parties over the lack of preparation. It may be that the rush to start work is driven by the agreement between CCH and the MRDPA which expires in early 2019 unless work has started. This pressure must be relieved by a further extension (if the higher Authorities really want NIC to manage the project) as the project's success is at risk by this lack of proper preparation.

No clear programme has been made available so a possible scenario is presented here to help fix ideas. Note that the approval process may be lengthy and also that site working may be curtailed due to the weather conditions in the winter months.

In any scenario two essential first steps are essential:

Immediate action is required to protect the building with the “Emergency Works” to be administered by the CCH. These should be completed before the winter of 2018.

As noted above, the Agreement between the CCH and MRDPA for the project's management by NIC must be extended and perhaps reconvened on sensible terms.

Administration's Programme:

At present the CCH has submitted the Concept Note and Design Brief to the NIC who have acted on it to launch a call for tender for the Feasibility Study in mid-June 2018. The return of proposals is set for mid July 2018 and a 90 days duration is envisaged. On this basis, study completion could be by early 2019 at the most optimistic. Delays well into 2019 are likely however.

If the proposed “design and build” Main Contract were to be launched in early / mid 2019 with contract signature say by late 2019, this could mean, optimistically, the contract completion after 2 years by end 2021 or more realistically into early 2022.

On this basis completion could be expected in 3.5 years from now, all being well.

Alternative Programme:

If the alternative approach to the contract strategy as recommended in this report were to be adopted, the planning and programme would be different. As a very preliminary outline, the following activities at least need to be undertaken:

Preliminary activities (6 months):

Set up appropriate Coordinating mechanisms such as the PIU and the CCG.
Undertake a revised Feasibility Study to prepare the data and overall concepts.
Decisions on the concept of defining the project and the implementation strategy.

Preparation for construction (12 – 15 months):

Select a consulting group to undertake final investigations and detailed design suitable for tender for the construction phase.
Preparation of final design and tender documents for administrative approvals.
Launch tender for construction.

Main construction (18 – 21 months):

Undertake the main construction works and commission the building.
Prepare for the hand-over and operation phase.

Realistically, a time frame of some 3.5 - 4 years seems indicated but this could be accelerated by some parallel working and by expeditious decision making.

Note that the difference in overall time for the two scenarios is not great as construction would be shorter with the proposed alternative due to better preparation.
Also the risks are likely to be much less in this proposed alternative.

7. Procurement

These major design and construction works will need to be put out to appropriate tendering procedures following the EU Directives. The threshold value requiring international tender for services contracts is €144 k and for public works is €5.55 M .

The Authorities intend to follow the provisions of the EU Directives.

Discussion on the contract strategy are given above in §6 Implementation.

8. Environment, sustainability, social

The Casino has a prominent position in the city by its location and by its architecture. In general, when completed it will significantly enhance the local built environment, exchanging a derelict building for a vibrant and attractive centre of social and cultural activity.

The promenade was rehabilitated in 2012-14, part financed by the EU, and is now in a good condition. Upgrading the adjacent Aquarium, another local attraction of *Art Nouveau* by Architect Renaud, to enhance the overall impact would be desirable, preferably by converting it from its present (rather noisy) use.

The CCH has committed to ensuring adequate services to the enhanced Casino in terms of electrical and gas supply, water and drainage. Apparently, these services can be easily accommodated according to the CCH. Adequate local parking may be a concern and merits review in the wider urban plans. The construction works need to be properly carried out in terms of limiting any local disruption and disturbance and to ensure proper protection to the local environment.

The Casino once restored needs to be sustainable in terms of its activity and to ensure proper maintenance and upkeep. Responsibility for this must be allocated in future arrangements with operators but the ultimate responsibility reverts to the Owner, the CCH. A proper maintenance programme with adequate funding must be put in place to avoid a repeat of the past experience which led to its current demise.

The new Casino is envisaged as a centre of social activity with restaurants, conference facilities and space for cultural events such as exhibitions and music concerts. It would thus be a moral and social improvement on the former casino activities.

9. Use, market, demand

Tourism is a significant industry on the Romanian Black Sea coast centred on Constanta, being 40% of the national total. It is very seasonal concentrated on the four summer months. In 2017 the number of tourists were 1 050 000 with only 4% being foreigners. In recent years there has been a consistent positive trend (+5% pa).

The number visiting Constanta itself is not known and more detailed work on the potential visitors and their impact on the local economy would be useful. Constanta has 120 hotels of different grades with a total of 22 200 beds. The large majority of tourists visit the Black Sea resorts and not Constanta itself. However, Constanta is near an active tourist destination area and this would help attract visitors to the Casino.

The restored Casino will not be used as a casino but for community, social and cultural activities. The CCH had ideas about the usage and launched a local on-line survey to a selected public to confirm these. The current proposals are to provide for a Performance room (theatre, music, cinema), an Exhibition area (possibly for a museum, or temporary exhibitions), a Restaurant and a Shop for cakes and local produce. Some space will be allocated for administrative offices. A detailed study of these choices, giving a reasoned justification and the implications for the City has not been made available; nor seemingly has any research into the likely usage and thus the potential revenue been carried out. These studies should be carried out to help confirm the choices and to define the actual needs in terms of space and equipment so as to optimise these and also to assess the Casino's potential revenues.

There already exists an active National Opera and Ballet theatre in Constanta and a smaller theatre for plays. The Casino in its main public space (the former casino hall) could concentrate more on concerts and musical events, as well as conferences and other social gatherings (dinners, balls). Theatre may also be possible but may need special provisions for the stage and back stage.

There are several well-established museums in Constanta (The Arts Museum, The Folk Art Museum, The History and Archaeological Museum, The Naval History Museum, and The Ion Jalea Museum) and so there is limited scope here. Small temporary exhibitions, say for local artwork, could be an interesting possibility.

A restaurant and a café are obvious uses, but the scale and level of services needs to be studied and decided upon. The associated services to be provided in the building and the facilities depend on these decisions which are needed well before completion.

The Casino can certainly find valid uses for its facilities as it is such a unique building in a special setting. These should be studied in detail to determine the scale and commercial interest of the competing uses and to define the detailed requirements to be agreed before the restoration e.g. whether a permanent or movable stage is required, the acoustic conditions, the lighting requirements, scale of the kitchens. Expert advice should be sought on these issues at an appropriately early time.

10. Operation

The operation and management of the Casino will be the responsibility of the Owner, the CCH. The scope will cover the permanent restaurant/café activities as well as the special events in the main hall. The latter will require considerable promotional and technical inputs for success.

From informal discussion it seems that the CCH prefers to manage the Casino internally, within its own organisation, and if so this needs further study as a special unit may need to be established. It is usual for this kind of activity to be carried out through an external concession and this would be the recommended approach.

Regular maintenance of the Casino is important to keep it in good state after the restoration. CCH have responsibility for this and it should set up a programme and allocate a budget to ensure it is done correctly, well before the project is completed. Indicatively 1% – 2 % of investment cost may be required annually for maintenance.

11. Investment cost

Preliminary cost estimates were carried out in 2014 and these have been indexed to present values and are summarised below in Euro (taking 1€ = 4.658 Lei):

A. NIC responsible works:

| | | |
|---|--------------|-----|
| Design and technical assistance | 490 | k € |
| Consolidation and restoration works | 7800 | |
| Installations and equipment | 540 | |
| Site organisation, NIC expenses, taxes | 530 | |
| Construction contingencies, miscellaneous | 1270 | |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>10630</u> | k € |
| VAT | 2000 | |
| <u>Grand total</u> | <u>12630</u> | k € |

B. CCH responsible works:

| | | |
|--|------------|-----|
| Studies, technical assistance | 28 | k € |
| Utility connections | 16 | |
| Construction works | 145 | |
| Site organisation, CCH expenses, taxes | 25 | |
| Provisional sum Emergency Works | 50 | |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>254</u> | k € |
| VAT | 50 | |
| <u>Grand Total</u> | <u>304</u> | k € |

TOTAL for the project (A + B) 12 934 k € - say 13 M €

These estimates are to be reviewed and up-dated in the Feasibility Study. Even so they will be based on preliminary studies. The NIC has added a contingency margin of about 11% for its works, a low margin in the circumstances.

It is not possible to comment in detail on the validity of this overall budget as the detailed proposals are not yet available. However, the overall figures may be accepted as a working hypothesis for the works awaiting further clarification. Note that preliminary estimates have been included for the sea wall repairs and CCH's Emergency Works and that no extra provision is included for major breakwater works.

If the recommendations of this report are followed, the fees for extra consulting services (design, supervision) would be significant, adding some 5-8% to the above.

The overall cost could be considerably higher than the €13 M currently envisaged.

12. Financing possibilities

The funding for the project to be executed under the NIC (i.e. 12.6 M €) seems to be assured by the Government from its budget, with an indicated 12 M € being available. This may be slightly short of the needs as estimated. The exact status and the conditions controlling this funding are unclear, apart from the timing condition on the NIC activities (see under §6.1).

The funding for the other works under the responsibility of the CCH (i.e. 0.3 M €) will need to come from local resources. It may be that EU grants under the European Regional Development Fund/ERDF available for Urban development could be used to cover some of these, provided that the use of such funds can be justified by the expected positive impact on the urban and tourism development and the ensuing socio-economic benefits. This justification should be possible.

Note that the issue of availability of funding seems a less critical issue here than for many of the “7 most endangered projects”.

13. Conclusion: Proposed actions and recommendations

This is an iconic building in a key location in the city and it certainly merits being restored to its former splendour to provide for social and community activities.

This very worthwhile initiative is confirmed by the proposed Government support with the allocation of substantial funds for its rehabilitation (reportedly €12 M).

However, there are major concerns on how the project is to be executed as there is a combination of weaknesses notably:

- The existing state of the building, which has been abandoned for some years, is not well known in detail and only feasibility level studies have been undertaken so far. This lack of firm data makes the definition and cost of the repair works on the structure and the restoration of the decorations problematic.
- The proposed usage seems not to have been studied in sufficient detail for firm long term credible decisions to be made on the design details of the new layouts and associated arrangements.
- The new configuration and layout to provide added features and the necessary modernisation to current standards is still to be defined in detail.
- The proposed strategy is to update the Feasibility Study in a limited exercise (budget 50 000€) before final approvals and launching the construction tender.

These weaknesses could be overcome by further detailed work prior to proceeding to the construction tender stage.

However, the NIC seems keen to start works (perhaps to respect the CCH – MRDPA agreement) despite this lack of preparation and by using a similar strategy as in the previous aborted attempts notably:

- The main contract would be on a “design and build” basis, based on the tender documents prepared from the Feasibility Study and other preliminary studies.
- The construction contract would be administered by the NIC with a normal site presence with some local support and this would be monitored from Bucharest.
- The Owner (CCH) hands over responsibility to the NIC for the construction phase via a Concept Strategy Note and Design Brief and only becomes involved again at final handover.

These arrangements - for the Contractor to take responsibility for the detailed design combined with an administrative approach to managing the main contract - are considered to be totally inappropriate in the circumstances and would create a high risk of failure in terms of quality, cost and timing. The lack of any direct Owner involvement at the construction stage is also to be regretted.

It is strongly recommended that NIC and CCH review these overall arrangements for the project preparation and contract strategy and make fundamental changes such as summarised below:

- Extend beyond early 2019 and appropriately amend the agreement between CCH and MRDPA concerning the NIC management of the execution phase.
- Recognise the complex nature of the restoration and modernisation of this building which requires enhanced preparatory work by experienced experts and overall strong management, much more than currently envisaged.
- Complement the Feasibility Study with further investigations and a detailed design phase to cover notably the structure, the actual needs through a special study, the modernisation in terms of layout, equipment and facilities, and the repair/adaptation of the special features.
- Prepare the tender and the scope and specification of the works so as to have a traditional “construction only” contract, or contracts. This or these should be refined to allow flexibility to account for the nature of the works and for potential changes during the works. The contract(s) should be firmly managed, probably by experienced independent Consultants, under the aegis of the NIC.
- A coordinating Project Implementation Unit (PIU) or equivalent should be set up under the aegis of the MRDPA to have overall control of the project’s progress as soon as possible. It could be managed by external consultants with project management experience and comprise senior personnel of the NIC and the CCH and perhaps others. It is the key control and decision maker driving the project.
- Establish within the CCH a Focal Point as soon as possible and a Casino Contact Group with senior CCH personnel to liaise with the PIU, to begin to prepare for the operational phase and to reach out to the public for ideas and support. Selected

NGOs and members of the public should form part of this group, which should be relatively compact to be effective.

- Implement the several recommendations and suggestions included in the text of this report (e.g. involving experts in the *Art Nouveau* restoration, seismic design checks, CCH to study further the usage so as to define the needs better, CCH to address and prepare for the operating phase, CCH to be aware and prepare for the maintenance responsibility, the need to prepare for increased funding for cost overruns and higher consulting fees).
- Proceed as soon as possible with the Emergency Works under CCH's responsibility to protect the Casino from further damage before starting works.
- Undertake a review of the sea defences to provide long term stability for the sea wall and the foundation platform. Also, to consider improved protection by building a breakwater offshore to the east similar to that location to the south.

A challenging agenda for a worthwhile objective.

Peter Bond
Luxembourg

September 2018

Mission details, references

EN / EIB-Institute mission: Stefan Balici EN Board Member
 Barbara Van der Wee Prof. Arch. Leuven Univ.
 Peter Bond EIB-I Consultant

Dates of Mission: 8 – 11 June 2018
 Meeting Constanta City Hall
 Site visit
 Meeting NIC, Bucharest

Persons met:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| ARCHÉ Association | Camelia Raluca Barbulescu Daniela Costea Irina Leca | President |
| National Institute of Heritage | Stefan Balici | Director |
| Constanta City Hall (CCH) | Decebal Fagadau Mirela Turfor | Mayor Investment Service |
| National Investment Co.(NIC) | Adrian Cefalan George Stanica Cristina Seurtu | Investment Director Technical Inspector Procurement Specialist |

The Casino in 2018



The Casino from the north-west



Details of Ornaments



Details of Fan Window

Source: Prof. Arch. Barbara Van der Wee

Short description of an appropriate methodology for the restoration process of an historic monument by Prof. Arch. Barbara Van der Wee.

This document is proposed as a reference which could help to structure the restoration process that is currently proposed for the Constanta Casino.

Key aspects of the restoration actions are:

- **Interdisciplinary team of specialists (preliminary study, specifications)**
- **Comprehensive preliminary study**
- **General conservation philosophy**
- **Heritage value assessment**
- **Restoration masterplan**
- **Appropriate professionals at all levels**

A **restoration project** deals not only with the **technical problems**, but also offers an answer to the question of **building reuse**.

In the case of an adaptive reuse of a **monument** it is important that the interventions, necessary for an optimal functioning of the new programme, are integrated in a way that the specific qualities of the building, namely the **heritage values**, are preserved.

The heritage values are defined by an **interdisciplinary team of specialists** that is put together to elaborate the preliminary research which is needed to set the options for an appropriate conservation project.

Each restoration project is therefore preceded by a comprehensive **preliminary study** which consists of a complete survey and inventory of the current state, the building history, the architectural and the building physics analysis. Apart from describing the heritage value of the monument, this study defines a **general conservation philosophy** for the future restoration project:

- will all the building phases and adaptations that the building went through in its past be kept?
- or will a well-defined moment in its lifecycle be conserved, namely an “**heyday**”, which from architectural and historical point of view expresses its most valuable features and should be preserved in its completeness?

This last option, if rigorously applied, would result in the dismantlement of all the interventions that are carried out after this “heyday” moment.

The **restoration options** are summarized in a **restoration masterplan**.

This document determines, within the established philosophy of conservation, which interventions are viable providing that the heritage value is preserved: in which spaces is conservation and/or restoration necessary? are there parts that needed to be reconstructed? which additions are disturbing or out of character and may need to be demolished? which spaces can be renovated? is there space for new building additions?

This restoration masterplan is an essential synthesis document for the realisation of a **restoration project**. With the programme analysis of a proposed function, there will always be choices that have to be made about which functions can be allocated in which spaces without negatively affecting the heritage value. Therefore the **heritage value assessment**, which is defined in the preliminary study is of major importance as a reference document.

Finally, throughout the elaboration of the restoration dossier, the different functions are allocated according to the heritage value of the respective spaces. In practice, this means that the spaces with a high heritage value are mainly being assigned with primary functions (representative functions, ...) and that the spaces with a low heritage value are mainly being assigned with supporting functions (technical spaces, storage, stairs and lifts ...)

In the preparation of the **technical specifications** of a restoration project it is of major importance to get a good understanding of the specificities of the restoration aspects of the building. Therefore the collaboration of the architect's team with specialised study teams for the structural analyses, the building physics, the technical installations and others is crucial.

The last phase of a restoration process, the realisation of the works on the **building site**, can only be successful when the **appropriate professionals** are appointed at all levels. They should all have the adequate skills to fulfil their assignment within the restoration process: these include the project managers of the client / owner, the coordinators of the general contractors, as well as the craftsmen who must have the knowledge of the traditional construction techniques and the specialised professionals with engineering experience and knowledge of the **new advanced conservation technology**.