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**PRESS RELEASE**

**European experts issue report for the**

**rehabilitation of the Constanța Casino in Romania**

**Constanța / The Hague, 14 September 2018** - **Europa Nostra**, the leading heritage organisation in Europe, and the **European Investment Bank Institute** today published a [**technical and financial report**](http://www.europanostra.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/7ME-2018-Romania-ConstantaCasino-Report.pdf) for the rehabilitation of the **Constanța Casino in Romania**, listed among the **7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2018**, following a nomination made by the **ARCHÉ Association**.

Built in 1910, the [Constanța Casino](http://7mostendangered.eu/2018/01/16/constanta-casino-romania/) has become a landmark of the Black Sea shore. Daniel Renard, the Swiss Romanian architect who designed the building, opted for a lavish expression of Art Nouveau to reflect Romania’s modernisation during the reign of Carol I. Following many years of alternating commercial and state held responsibility for the building’s care, the Casino has been abandoned since the 2000s.

The technical and financial report was formulated on the basis of the outcomes of a four-day mission in Romania undertaken from 8-11 June 2018, during which representatives from Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute visited the Constanța Casino and met with local and regional stakeholders.

**The following proposed actions and recommendations are put forward in the report:**

**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 million euro).

The owner and operator of the Casino, the Constanța City Hall (CCH), hands over construction and design responsibility to the National Investment Company (NIC) through an agreement valid until early 2019.

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 National Investment Company seems keen to start works – perhaps to respect the agreement between the Constanța City Hall and the Ministry of Regional Development (MRDPA) –, 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 the National Investment Company and the Constanța City Hall 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.

The complete technical and financial report for the rehabilitation of the Constanța Casino in Romania is posted on the 7 Most Endangered programme website: [http://7mostendangered.eu/reports](http://7mostendangered.eu/reports/)

The missions to the six other [sites listed in 2018](http://www.europanostra.org/europe-7-most-endangered-heritage-sites-2018-announced/) will be held by the end of 2018 / beginning of 2019. The technical and financial reports will be released a couple of months after the missions.

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**Background information**

**The 7 Most Endangered programme**

[The 7 Most Endangered programme](http://7mostendangered.eu/about/) 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.

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](http://www.europanostra.org) 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](http://7mostendangered.eu/). 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](http://www.europanostra.org/our-work/policy/european-year-cultural-heritage/) 2018.

**European Investment Bank Institute**

The [European Investment Bank Institute](http://institute.eib.org/) (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](http://institute.eib.org/)

**Creative Europe**

[Creative Europe](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm) 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.

**ARCHÉ Association**

The [ARCHÉ Association](http://www.arche.ro) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, which undertakes both research and conservation activities and pursues the appreciation and promotion of cultural heritage. Its mission is to support and promote the interest for heritage by fully grasping its social role and its specific values. Ever since the Association’s founding, the main endeavor of its members has been to initiate and implement projects that facilitate the exchange of information between experts from different fields who are involved in the protection of historical monuments, as well as between specialists and the general public.

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