



## PRESS RELEASE

### European experts put forward action plan to preserve the Buzludzha Monument

**5 December 2018** - **Europa Nostra**, the leading heritage organisation in Europe, and the **European Investment Bank Institute** published today a [technical and financial report](#) comprising an action plan to preserve and develop the Buzludzha Monument in Bulgaria. The building was listed among the [7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2018](#), following a nomination made by the Buzludzha Project Foundation.

The report was formulated on the basis of the outcomes of the three-day expert mission in Bulgaria undertaken from 26-28 September 2018. During the mission a delegation of European specialists in cultural heritage and finance visited the Buzludzha Monument and met with representatives from the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Culture and the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora.

According to the experts, “the Buzludzha Monument is a unique engineering achievement” and “a masterpiece of architecture and crafts, with evident **European interest** due to its historic significance, its peculiar characteristics and its numerous potential future uses”. The Monument is currently abandoned to decay. “The primary purpose of this action plan is the recovery of the Monument, firstly to return it to a safe and usable condition, and then to bring it into a new life, offering the possibility of organising cultural/touristic visits and many other types of events (e.g. seminars, concerts, exhibitions). The basic intention is not to restore it completely back to its original status but to adapt it to new attractive uses. Notwithstanding, it has to be noted that a crucial target of this action plan is to **keep the Monument out of future political controversies**,” states the report.

#### Summary of the detailed action plan proposed in the report:

The Monument is state-owned and currently managed by the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora. The Bulgarian Council of Ministers must **transfer the ownership of the Monument** to the public administration, including the responsibility of implementing the project and managing it in the future. This is most likely to be the Ministry of Culture or, alternatively, the Regional Administration of Stara Zagora or the Municipality of Kazanlak. Private ownership or concession is highly not recommendable as it would result in no direct control over the future use and content of the Monument. Nevertheless, private management of the Monument during the operational phase is to be considered.

In parallel, **the Buzludzha Monument must be designated as a Cultural Heritage Monument of National Interest** protected by Bulgarian law.

An immediate **Emergency Action** should be planned and implemented to protect the building from further deterioration and prepare it to safely receive visitors. As a minimum requirement, the building should be made weather-proof to ensure no water penetration through the roof or the windows to avoid further damage. Basic repair activities include cleaning the interior and managing waste, demolition of elements at risk, urgent mosaic repairs, installation of windows and covering the roof. This Emergency Action could probably be undertaken and funded by the Bulgarian Government under an emergency initiative. A pre-condition is carrying out a technical assessment to evaluate the current status of the building, and defining the best solutions for its minimum conservation. The cost of this urgent action is estimated at roughly 500,000 euros plus taxes.

A detailed **Feasibility Study** must be conducted to fully evaluate the building’s current condition, conservation needs and priorities. The study would consist of the development of a definitive design concept for the future use of the Monument, allowing it to be shaped through public discussion. As a basic starting point, the study could consider the design proposal made by the Buzludzha Project Foundation – which puts forward a creative, interactive and innovative reuse of the Monument. Furthermore, the study must include architectural scanning,

technical studies, a business plan, risk analysis, a project implementation plan and environmental impact assessment.

In general, there should be a **pragmatic approach**, maintaining the spirit of the original concept while allowing modernisation to current standards and expectations. The main symbolic communist elements (e.g. the stars, the sculpted text on the main façade, the central hall ceiling medallion and the mosaics) should be retained for their architectural/artistic/craft value, but not enhanced. The presentation, story and interpretation of the Monument should make clear that such design details are not retained to promote the former socialist period but to set it within the broader context of the Bulgarian history over the last two centuries. Finally, a glass elevator could be added to allow visitors to explore the spectacular views across the Balkan range from an open deck at the top of the tower.

The project has a preliminary estimated cost (including emergency action) of **7.5 million euros** plus taxes. This cost estimate has been prepared with the assumption that the concrete structure and elements are not suffering from any unusual difficulties. The rehabilitation project would generate employment for some 600 people per year. (Local unitary costs may considerably vary, so these estimates must be reviewed in depth and updated in the feasibility study.) In total, a **period between 4 and 5 years** would be reasonably necessary to complete the works.

The **main economic (intangible) benefits** are basically related to the generation of employment (both during construction and during operation), environmental benefits, tourism attraction to the region and creation of indirect new business, and visibility of the importance of the Monument and its surrounding environment. The **tangible benefits** the project would generate are revenues from tariffs paid by visitors, incomes generated by the organisation of special events, revenues produced by other directly related activities (e.g. expositions, merchandising), and subsidies and grants.

It is foreseen that the project would be eligible under the regulations of one of the European Structural Funds, most likely the European Regional Development Fund or the Cohesion Fund. Eligibility criteria would be justified as contributing to regional development, cultural tourism promotion, environmental protection and rural development in deprived areas. If Bulgarian authorities are interested in managing and completing the funding of the project, the **EIB-JASPERS facility could provide technical support (free of charge)** for the preparation of the application form.

Furthermore, if the Ministry of Culture takes responsibility of the Monument, a much more ambitious **project for the entire National Park Museum Shipka-Buzludzha** could be developed and implemented with European Funds. In addition to the preservation of the monuments and the nature of the park, the project could include an integral fire prevention system, new tourism infrastructure and the inclusion/promotion of the park as part of international cultural routes.

The preservation of Buzludzha Monument would mark the “revitalisation of an iconic landmark immersed in a singular environment, and offering great future opportunities from cultural, touristic and socio-economic perspectives.” Moreover, “the project could **become an example** for other currently neglected artefacts from the socialist period, both in Bulgaria and in Eastern Europe, and might open the door for reassessing other heritage sites in terms of education, conservation and reuse,” concludes the report.

***The full technical and financial report can be downloaded [here](#).***

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## **TO FIND OUT MORE**

[www.buzludzha-project.com](http://www.buzludzha-project.com)

[www.buzludzha-monument.com](http://www.buzludzha-monument.com)

[www.facebook.com/buzludzhaproject](https://www.facebook.com/buzludzhaproject)

[Photos of Mission & Monument in high resolution](#)

<http://7mostendangered.eu>

[www.europanostra.org/7-most-endangered-news](http://www.europanostra.org/7-most-endangered-news)

[twitter.com/europanostra](https://twitter.com/europanostra)

[youtube.com/user/EuropaNostraChannel](https://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 NGOs 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.

### Buzludzha Project Foundation

The Buzludzha Project Foundation is a Bulgarian NGO that campaigns to preserve the Buzludzha Monument. It was founded in 2015 by the Bulgarian architect Dora Ivanova. The organisation raises awareness and support for the preservation of the Monument among both political and professional communities, the media and the general public at national and international level. The activities carried out by the Foundation have led to a comprehensive reassessment of the monument and the re-evaluation of the socio-economic value of the site.