



PRESS RELEASE

European experts release report for the rehabilitation of the Prinkipo Greek Orphanage

29 July 2019 - Europa Nostra, the leading heritage organisation in Europe, and the **European Investment Bank Institute** issued today a [technical and financial report](#) comprising an action plan to recover the **Greek Orphanage** complex, located on Büyükkada / Prinkipo, one of the Princes' Islands in the Marmara Sea, forming part of greater Istanbul. The complex was listed among the [7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2018](#), following a nomination made by **Europa Nostra Turkey**.

The report was formulated on the basis of the outcome of the three-day mission to Turkey undertaken on 29-31 May 2019 and on the structural report produced by Clive Dawson, a structural engineer with wide experience of work on historic buildings, who visited the building in April 2019. During the mission, heritage and financial experts from Europa Nostra, Europa Nostra Turkey, the European Investment Bank Institute visited the Orphanage and met with local stakeholders and national authorities – including His All Holiness, Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, Members of the of the Princes' Islands Municipality, the Protection Boards of the Ministry of Culture of Istanbul and Ankara and Mr Christian Berger, Ambassador to the EU in Turkey. Non-governmental civil society organisations and other stakeholders also joined the meetings, with the aim of mobilising efforts towards saving this iconic complex of buildings.

The complex consists of the main Orphanage and the Secondary School buildings, with more than 15,000 m² of total floor space. The main building is thought to be the largest wooden construction in Europe and the second largest in the world. Designed and built as a hotel and casino at the end of the 19th-century by the architect Alexander Vallaur, the site was ultimately donated to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1903 with the condition that it would be operated as an orphanage after the intended function of the building could not be realised. The Orphanage was closed in 1964 and was abandoned thereafter. Since then, bad weather, a fire in 1968, the earthquake Turkey suffered in 1999 and the lack of maintenance have extensively damaged the buildings, leading to its current state of extensive disrepair and serious risk of collapse.

“The Orphanage offers a remarkable visual impression from both the island [of Büyükkada/Prinkipo] and the seaside. Aside from its unique artistic and aesthetic value, the structure is exemplary of the technical skills of construction and architectural design of the period in which it was built. The Orphanage is of significance to the mythology of the island and holds a special place in the shared memory of the local communities, especially in the minds of the Rum (Greek) community of İstanbul,” highlights the report.

“The buildings have been in a state of disuse since 1964 and currently there is no human habitation, with the exception of a concierge. Bad weather, in particular during the winter (i.e. heavy rains and strong northern winds), the earthquake Turkey suffered in 1999 and the lack of maintenance have extensively damaged the buildings, resulting in a state of extensive disrepair and serious risk of collapse. (...) The primary purpose of this project is the recovery of the site, and putting the buildings in a safe condition. Afterwards, the site would be given new life, offering the possibility of combining several different permanent and temporary uses. The basic intention is not to restore it completely back to its original status but to adapt it to new attractive uses, also making the degradation it has suffered over recent years visible to the greatest possible extent,” notes the report.

The following proposed actions and recommendations for its preservation and future utilisation are put forward in the report:

- As far as the site is currently abandoned to decay, an immediate preliminary intervention should be quickly designed, planned and implemented to protect the buildings from further deterioration. The technical assessment and proposals presented in the report of the Technical Mission (April 2019) and other previous work can be utilized as a basis for the planning of the implementation of preliminary interventions. This action, with an estimated cost nearing two million euro, could probably be taken and funded by the Patriarchate [the owner] with the support of external donors, if feasible.
- The first activity of the recovery project would consist of the development of a definitive concept about the future use of the site. The basic primary idea is to convert the Orphanage into an Environmental and Inter-faith Dialogue Centre, free from any political agenda. However, other compatible uses would also be considered, and indeed be needed, to generate some revenue to ensure the viability of the project. The participation of stakeholders in this process is crucial.
- Before putting in place any rehabilitation intervention, a Management Unit should be set up and a comprehensive business plan carried out in order to assess to what extent the final product would be sustainable in the future. It should basically consist of the identification and design of the final plan to be adopted, as well as the estimation of the investment costs required for the construction, operation and maintenance of the site. Studies related to risk analysis, the identification of the works' procurement strategy and a project implementation plan has to also be prepared. The participation of international experts, entailing a multidisciplinary team, should be an important requirement.
- Due to the particular environment in which the Orphanage is located and the special characteristics of the building, it is recommended that, although not legally required, an informal Environmental Impact Assessment following the standard procedures established at international level, is to be carried out, in particular dealing with the construction phase.
- The operation and management of the project will be the responsibility of the owner. Nevertheless, these activities may be delegated to a private operator having extensive experience in the management of such a complex building, both from the technical and administrative standpoints.
- The Patriarchate, through the final legal owner of the Site, would be responsible for raising the necessary funds for financing the main works and to carry out the implementation of the project. Several international potential sources of a different nature must be explored.

According to the report, there are many caveats and uncertainties which make it impossible to provide an estimate of the final project costs. However, on the basis of the information to hand, it is reasonable to expect that the project would require a total investment of at least **€40 million** but this figure could be much higher. This would generate considerable employment opportunities throughout the project (likely within the range of 250-300 persons per year), including some very specialised workers. The report estimates that the project would take 4-5 years to complete.

A phased approach is proposed, beginning with a technical assessment of the current status and the implementation of urgent measures. The technical assessment and proposals presented in the report of the Technical Mission (April 2019) and other previous work can be utilized as a basis for the planning of the implementation of preliminary interventions. Stakeholder discussions to decide on the future uses of the site are then proposed, followed by a feasibility study and preparation of a business plan. The technical design of the architectural solution would then finally be followed by the implementation of the works. This final phase of the project is estimated to take 2-3 years to complete.

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TO FIND OUT MORE

[Photos of the monuments in high-resolution](#)
[Photos of the mission to Prinkipo Greek Orphanage in May 2019](#)
<http://7mostendangered.eu/>
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](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>

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.

Europa Nostra Turkey

Europa Nostra Turkey / Bizim Avrupa Derneği, aims to the development of activities in the field of cultural heritage in Turkey and to make joint efforts and execute projects together with institutions and people who work on this field in Europe and Turkey. It is an independent non-governmental organization operating in Turkey that works in line with the network of Europa Nostra (European Cultural heritage organizations Federation). It was officially established on October 14th, 2010 with 65 founding members. Europa Nostra Turkey / Bizim Avrupa Derneği, directly and through the work of its member organizations, carries out its activities with the vision of; bringing sectors of cultural heritage in Turkey around a shared understanding and concept of cultural heritage following the definitions of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union, establishing a sound communication between institutions and organizations working in the field in Turkey, advocating for a higher level of influence of conservation of cultural heritage within the cultural policy and raising standards in the practice of cultural heritage conservation.