

to the Members of the Central Archaeological Council (KAΣ)

The Hague, 16 December 2019

EUROPA NOSTRA APPEAL FOR THE

ANTIQUITIES OF VENIZELOS METRO STATION IN THESSALONIKI

EUROPA NOSTRA, representing on the European level civil society organisations that are committed to the safeguard of Europe's cultural and natural heritage, expresses its concern and strong reservations in respect of proposed changes, already publicly announced, regarding the planned in situ preservation of the antiquities that have been discovered at the Venizelos Metro Station in Thessaloniki.

EUROPA NOSTRA underlines the European significance of the aforementioned archaeological remains, which constitute a unique find of an urban ensemble of monumental scale and in a very good state of preservation. It is the only one preserved in the whole area once occupied by the Eastern Roman Empire and dating to the relatively unknown Late Roman and Early Byzantine period (4th-9th century AD).

EUROPA NOSTRA is convinced that any alteration to the solution already agreed of in situ preservation and valorization of the antiquities will represent a very negative development; in particular the reinstatement of an earlier proposal to temporarily remove and later reinstall antiquities after the completion of the station's construction will cause irreparable damage to the physical condition of the antiquities during their extraction and removal as well as a drastic reduction in the authenticity of the monumental ensemble. It will lead instead to the creation of a scenic setting within a contemporary metro station, while reducing radically the historical, cultural and educational value and significance of the archaeological remains. Furthermore, it is certain that the archaeological excavation, that compulsorily - in accordance with the Greek Archaeological Law - will follow the removal of the antiquities, will cause a further delay and probably unavoidable cost increases, in a much delayed but much expected public work, as is the metro of Thessaloniki, scheduled currently to be completed by 2023.

EUROPA NOSTRA considers the co-existence between antiquities and contemporary cities as an appropriate solution which is in accordance with contemporary conservation and development trends throughout Europe. These aim to upgrade and revitalize historic city centres through highlighting their monumental background, which constitutes a valuable resource and indeed investment of education and into historical memory and sense of belonging, generating economic growth and psychological well-being for European citizens, as well as increasing attractiveness of the city for tourism.

For these reasons, EUROPA NOSTRA appeals to the Greek government to continue the implementation of the already agreed conservation in situ of the archaeological remains at the Venizelos Metro Station in Thessaloniki. This would be consistent with the European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage signed in Valetta (1992), ratified by Greece in 2005, mandating signatories *"to make provision, when elements of the archaeological heritage have been found during development work, for their conservation in situ when feasible"* (Article 5, IV).

We remain confident that our appeal will be heard and followed by all bodies concerned.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Hermann Parzinger
Executive President



EUROPA
NOSTRA

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Cultural Heritage
in Europe

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