



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### **Partnership between the Municipality of Athens, Europa Nostra and ELLINIKI ETAIRIA - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage (ELLET) for the protection and promotion of cultural heritage**

### **Athens will host Europa Nostra Heritage Hub for South Eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean**

*Athens, 1 June 2022*

A strategic partnership between the **Municipality of Athens, Europa Nostra** - the pan-European federation of cultural heritage organisations - and **ELLINIKI ETAIRIA - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage (ELLET)** was established yesterday. Following the decision of Europa Nostra - which is based in The Hague and in Brussels - **Athens becomes, after Kraków, the second city in Europe where a Europa Nostra Heritage Hub is being established**; a decision that upgrades and consolidates the key role of Greece in the field of cultural heritage as well as its protection and promotion.

The establishment of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens is the result of a close cooperation between Europa Nostra, the Municipality of Athens and ELLET, which is selected by Europa Nostra for the coordination, management and representation of the Hub in the wider region of South East Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean (with special focus on the Eastern Balkans).

The role of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens is to develop and strengthen the activities of the organisation in this important part of Europe and to involve civil society organisations in the protection of Europe's heritage. At the same time, through the Hub, the role of the Greek capital, as a leading European centre in the field of cultural heritage conservation and in the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and other key European documents related to cultural heritage, will be strengthened.

The **main areas of activity of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens** will include:

- Highlighting the role of cities and local authorities in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, which is a thematic priority for the Municipality of Athens, and the study / identification of good practices from cities and regions of the EU, starting with the study of good practices in Europe to support housing in historic cities;
- Engaging the youth in cultural heritage with raising awareness programmes, capacity building and networking;
- Developing a "SOS for Endangered Heritage" programme, based on the long-standing experience of ELLET in campaigning for the preservation of cultural and natural heritage at risk, an experience that spans over a period of 50 years; and
- Expanding ELLET's Programme 'Greek Paths of Culture' to the countries covered by the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens.

The establishment of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens would not have been possible without the long-standing experience of ELLET, Country Representation of Europa Nostra in Greece. ELLET cooperates regularly with Europa Nostra, contributing to the promotion and consolidation of its flagship initiatives, namely the 7 Most Endangered programme and the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, with the aim of preserving and promoting our shared cultural heritage.

### **Plan to strengthen housing in the historic centre of Athens**

The establishment of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in the Greek capital will also, among other objectives, contribute to addressing the key issue of the protection of housing in the historic centre of Athens, in relation to its urban fabric and its residents. Best European practices for strengthening the housing in the historic cities will be studied by the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens and useful conclusions will be used as examples for the other cities that will be covered by the Hub.

As part of this effort, the central priority will be the promotion of (affordable) housing in the centre of Athens - in order to contain the worrying trend of residents leaving the city centre - as well as the adaptive reuse of abandoned old buildings, while preserving the rich intercultural and social diversity of the city.

### **Launch of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens**

**The Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens was launched yesterday at the headquarters of ELLET in Plaka, in the presence of the Mayor of Athens, Kostas Bakoyannis, the President of the ELLINIKI ETAIRIA - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage, Lydia Carras, the Secretary General of Europa Nostra, Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, and Alexandra Mamalinga-Prokopiou, representative of ELLET in Europa Nostra.**

In a statement, the Mayor of Athens, **Kostas Bakoyannis**, said: *"Athens is a natural 'laboratory', when we talk about culture, nature, peace and democracy. With this strategic partnership, launched with ELLET and Europa Nostra, we are giving additional impetus to these comparative advantages. We enrich, with knowledge and good practices, our overall planning for the Athens of 'tomorrow' with respect to the Athens of 'yesterday'. Particularly important, especially at this time, is the fact that, through this partnership, we will achieve the promotion of housing in the historic centre and the adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings, which were part of the identity of the city. Today, we are making a visionary start. I wish the network a good and long prosperity that will make us proud"*.

The Executive President of Europa Nostra, **Prof. Hermann Parzinger**, stressed in his message: *"On behalf of Europa Nostra, I wish to sincerely thank the City of Athens, under the visionary leadership of Mayor Kostas Bakoyannis, for their confidence and support in establishing the second Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in the magnificent City of Athens, capital of Greece, but also historical capital of Europe and cradle of democracy. We are sure this Hub will contribute to strengthen and further structure the voice of civil society committed to natural and cultural heritage in South Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, and to create closer synergies among local, national, regional and European actors – both public and private"*.

**Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailovic**, Secretary General of Europa Nostra, noted: *"The establishment of the second Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens is a most gratifying continuation of a long-standing and fruitful partnership with our Country Representation in Greece, ELLET. During the past decades, Europa Nostra and ELLET have worked hand in hand for the benefit of cultural heritage in Greece, which has such a fundamental value for the past, present and future of our Europe. It is very symbolic that the launch of this Hub takes place in the very same year when ELLET celebrates 50 years of outstanding dedication to cultural heritage. On such a special and memorable day, I wish to pay tribute to ELLET's co-founder and Europa Nostra's late Vice-President Mr. Costa Carras. Whilst he is no longer physically with us, his legacy will live and be carried on by the work of this Hub"*.

The President of ELLET, **Lydia Carras**, highlighted: *"I would like to thank Europa Nostra for proposing ELLET as the coordinator of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hub in Athens, as well as the Municipality of Athens for their eagerness to support this initiative from the beginning - something necessary for the operation of the Hub. I*

*believe that the Hub will offer us the opportunity to study good practices from other European countries and to promote them in the participating countries from the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. I believe that we will learn a lot from them and we are looking forward to receiving their ideas. This is an excellent initiative of Europa Nostra and a true honour for our country. I sincerely believe that the strongest foundations for our Europe are the cultural foundations: the heritage of all people, which is the shared heritage of all of us - the sense of belonging to a community of European citizens, a sense that the economy alone cannot cover."*

The representative of the ELLET in Europa Nostra, **Alexandra Mamalinga-Prokopiou**, said: "This is a very important initiative of Europa Nostra that recognises the important work of ELLET and will further strengthen a constructive cooperation of many years, for the benefit of our shared cultural and natural heritage. After all, it is our shared cultural heritage that unites all the people of Europe".

## **Horizon 2025**

The establishment of the Europa Nostra Heritage Hubs is included as a priority in Europa Nostra's Strategic Plan Horizon 2025, which defines the key role of cities in laying the foundations for regional leaders to act within Europa Nostra's Heritage Hubs as catalysts for positive change based on sustainable development, social cohesion and quality adaptation to climate change.

## **Europa Nostra**

[Europa Nostra](http://www.europanostra.org) is a pan-European federation of heritage NGOs. Based in The Hague, it brings together over 250 member organisations and 150 associate organisations from over 40 countries, public bodies and private companies, creating a network of over 5 million people who care for Europe's heritage. It is recognised as the largest and most representative heritage network in Europe, maintaining close relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international bodies.

Europa Nostra runs advocacy campaigns widely covered in the media, such as the 7 Most Endangered programme and the prestigious European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards for excellent heritage projects.

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### **TO FIND OUT MORE**

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