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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Experts from Europa Nostra and European Investment Bank Institute visited**

**Patarei Sea Fort**

**Tallinn, 27 September 2016** - Experts from **Europa Nostra**, the leading heritage organisation in Europe, and the **European Investment Bank Institute** were in Tallinn for a four-day mission related to Patarei Sea Fort, listed among The 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe in 2016, following a nomination made by the **Estonian Heritage Society**. On 16-19 September, the European delegation of heritage and financial specialists met with national authorities – including the Minister of Public Administration **Arto Aas** and the Minister of Culture **Indrek Saar** –, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, with the aim of mobilising efforts towards saving this gem of Europe’s cultural heritage. The key findings and recommendations of the mission will be published in a report by the end of this year.

Patarei Sea Fort is the largest and most impressive intact classicist style building in Estonia, remarkable for its architectural value, being one of the biggest military/defence ensembles to survive as a whole unit and much to its initial layout in the Baltic Sea Region. Historically and culturally, the site represents a complex overview of Estonia’s history in the 19th and 20th centuries and serves as a monument to the tens of thousands of political prisoners detained therein during the Soviet and Nazi occupations.

Despite its rare historic and heritage value, the monument is in an advanced state of decay due to lack of funding from the owner, the Estonian State, to cover the extensive and costly rehabilitation project. Moreover, there is insufficient recent data on the state of the Fort building, making it difficult to calculate the actual cost of the renovation.

The delegates voiced serious concern about the sale of the Patarei ensemble to the private sector and aspects of the proposed zoning plan. Doubt was expressed about the viability of the business plan for a private sector sale as it seems unlikely that the financial potential from developing the site and its buildings would be adequate in relation to the financial commitment required to restore and renovate Patarei Sea Fort. The specialists shared the worries of the Estonian Heritage Society and other NGOs that the new plan will not safeguard the restoration of the Patarei ensemble. They also noted that Patarei Sea Fort, together with the adjacent Tallinn Seaplane Hangar, has the potential to turn the seashore area into an environmentally and culturally valuable town space, provided new commercial buildings were not squeezed in too close to Patarei.

**Piet Jaspaert**, Vice-President of Europa Nostra, **Peter Bond**, Technical Consultant provided by the European Investment Bank Institute, and **Patrizia Valle**, Architect Conservator and Member of the Scientific Council of Europa Nostra, participated in the mission. The Estonian Heritage Society Board Members **Helle Solnask** and **Peep Pillak** and its honorary chairman **Trivimi Velliste** represented the Estonian NGO partner.

On 16 September, Piet Jaspaert and Peter Bond took part in the international conference Ökomäss. The experts spoke about ‘The 7 Most Endangered’ programme and their participation in missions to other endangered sites listed in previous years, and highlighted the value of heritage and its positive impact on Europe’s economy, culture, society, and the environment.

On 17 September, during a meeting held in the Estonian War Museum, the representatives discussed with Director **Hellar Lill** the interest and possibilities of the museum in connection with Patarei Sea Fort.

On 18 September, the delegates visited Patarei Sea Fort and other outstanding heritage sites in Estonia, such as Tallinn Seaplane Harbour, a Grand Prix winner of the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award in 2013, and held discussions with stakeholders involved in the preservation and renovation of the site.

On 19 September, the delegation met with representatives from national authorities in Tallinn, including the Minister of Public Administration Arto Aas, the Minister of Culture Indrek Saar and the Vice-Mayor of Tallinn **Taavi Aas**. On the same day the experts gave a press conferenceabout their initial impressions from the on-site visits and various working meetings at the premises of the Estonian Heritage Society.

The delegates from Europa Nostra and the EIB Institute expressed hope that the future of Patarei Sea Fort would be openly discussed between the representatives from the involved ministries, the municipality of Tallinn and NGOs such as the Estonian Heritage Society and SA Kalaranna Patarei. It was suggested that a Steering Group be set up to tackle the issue of poor communication between all stakeholders. It was also highlighted that decisions concerning the development of public space must be made in consultation with communities and civil society organisations, who can offer valuable know-how and assistance.

The experts put forward other valuable suggestions with the aim of achieving the optimal solution to preserve, restore and develop Patarei Sea Fort as a significant monument in Estonian and European history.

Photos in high-resolution of the mission can be downloaded [here](https://www.flickr.com/photos/europanostra/albums/72157674401252245)

**Background information**

[**‘The 7 Most Endangered’**](http://7mostendangered.eu/) 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 January 2013 by **Europa Nostra** with the **European Investment Bank Institute** as founding partner and the Council of Europe Development Bank as associated partner. ‘The 7 Most Endangered’ is not a funding programme. Its aim is to serve as a catalyst for action and to promote “the power of example”. ‘The 7 Most Endangered’ has the support of the **Creative Europe** programme of the European Union, as part of Europa Nostra’s networking project ‘Mainstreaming Heritage’.

Heritage and financial experts from Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute undertake “rescue 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 reports that are presented during a public event and made available online.

[**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 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 and conductor, 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.

The [**European Investment Bank Institute**](http://institute.eib.org/) promotes European initiatives for the common good. It was created as part of the European Investment Bank Group in January 2012 to act as a catalyst for social, cultural, educational and research activities directed towards economic and social development in Europe. Detailed information on the activities of the Institute can be obtained from its website: <http://institute.eib.org/>

[**Creative Europe**](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm) is the new EU programme to support 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 will allow them to operate across Europe, to reach new audiences and to develop the skills required in the digital age.

[**Estonian Heritage Society**](http://www.muinsuskaitse.ee)acts for the preservation of national heritage in Estonia through involving all interested organisations and individuals into its activities and through supporting civic participation in safeguarding cultural and historic heritage.

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