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**12 European heritage sites shortlisted for**

**the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018**

The Hague / Luxembourg, 16 January 2018 – At the opening of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, **Europa Nostra**, the leading heritage organisation in Europe, and the **European Investment Bank Institute** announce the **12 heritage sites shortlisted for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018** by a panel of experts in various fields. These endangered heritage landmarks from 10 European countriesare: the Historic Centre of Gjirokastra, **Albania**; the Post-Byzantine Churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi, **Albania**; the Historic Centre of Vienna, **Austria**; the Coal Preparation Plant in Beringen, **Belgium**; the Buzludzha Monument, **Bulgaria**; the Aerial Cableway Network in Chiatura, **Georgia**; the David Gareji Monasteries and Hermitage, **Georgia**; the Castle of Sammezzano, Tuscany, **Italy**; the Constanta Casino, **Romania**; the Prehistoric Rock-Art Sites in the province of Cadiz, **Spain**; the Prinkipo Greek Orphanage, Princes' Islands, **Turkey**; and the Grimsby Ice Factory, **United Kingdom**. Some of these sites are in danger due to neglect or inadequate development, others due to a lack of resources or expertise. **The final list of 7 most endangered heritage sites in Europe will be unveiled on 15 March.**

The 12 monuments and sites were selected while taking into account their outstanding heritage and cultural value as well as the imminent danger that they are facing. The engagement of local communities and the commitment of public and private stakeholders to saving these sites were also considered crucial. Another main criterion was the potential of these sites to act as a catalyst for sustainable socio-economic development.

*“2018 is the year to celebrate Europe’s unique cultural heritage and to highlight its key role in promoting our common identity and building a more inclusive Europe. Raising awareness and mobilising widespread efforts to save endangered heritage sites across Europe is another objective of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. What better occasion for Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute to implement a new edition of the 7 Most Endangered programme, with the support of the EU Creative Europe programme,”* stated **Denis de Kergorlay**, Executive President of Europa Nostra*. “This shortlist is, first and foremost, a call to action. We urge public and private stakeholders at local, national and European levels to join forces to rescue the heritage gems which tell our shared story and which must be saved for future generations,”* he added.

*“Saving these 12 sites will not only benefit the cultural heritage monuments alone. The investment will also generate socio-economic benefits at the local, regional and national levels”*, said **Francisco de Paula Coelho**, Dean of the European Investment Bank Institute. *“Well prepared and well implemented investment in cultural heritage pays off in terms of social, economic and cultural development, and it is important to spread this message during the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018”*, he added.

Nominations for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018 were submitted by civil society organisations or by public bodies which form part of Europa Nostra’s vast network of member and associate organisations from all over Europe. 12 sites were shortlisted by a panel of experts in history, archaeology, architecture, conservation, project analysis and finance. The final list of the 7Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe will be selected by the Board of Europa Nostra.

The 7 Most Endangered 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. 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. Its aim is to serve as a catalyst for action and to promote “the power of example”. It has the support of the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, as part of Europa Nostra’s network project ‘Sharing Heritage - Sharing Values’.

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**12 European heritage sites shortlisted for**

**the 7 Most Endangered’ programme 2018**

*(listed in alphabetical order of their country)*

**Historic Centre of Gjirokastra, ALBANIA**

The city of Gjirokastra is situated in the Drino valley, the richest archaeological area in Albania, dating back to the middle Bronze Age. The Historic Centre of Gjirokastra has been inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2005. It includes several types of constructions, such as social and public buildings, places of worship and residences, all harmoniously composed in an outstanding historical urban landscape. The core of the Centre is the old bazaar with shops found in parallel lines, representing an urban character typical of the 17th and 18th-centuries. Out of 615 monuments located in the Historic Centre, more than half are subjected to illegal or out of context constructions, while 169 are in critical condition or at risk of collapse. Moreover, a controversial Bypass Road project has recently been approved by the national and local authorities. This development will seriously damage the structural and visual integrity of the Centre, which is the essence of its outstanding value. The **Gjirokastra Foundation** made the nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018.

**Post-Byzantine Churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi, ALBANIA**

A number of Post-Byzantine churches in Voskopoja and Vithkuqi, situated in southeastern Albania, are the most representative monuments of 17th-18th century ecclesiastical art in the Balkans and are masterpieces of the post-Byzantine style. War, plundering and natural disasters have seriously damaged this group of 12 churches. The surrounding Christian population has greatly declined and a subsequent lack of clergy has resulted in the majority of the churches remaining unused for most of the year. The main threat now is the total negligence by those administratively responsible for the churches at the national level, namely the **Institute of Cultural Monuments**. The listed Church of Saint George in Voskopoja, which won a Europa Nostra Award in 2011 for its outstanding conservation, faces the threat of theft and highlights the urgency with which these remarkable churches need to be protected. The nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018 was submitted by **“The Past for the Future” Foundation**.

**Historic Centre of Vienna, AUSTRIA**

The Historic Centre of Vienna has immense significance to Europe’s tangible and intangible culture, as a city of great architectural importance and as an exceptional centre for the development of arts. In 2001, it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In 2012, a high-rise development, which will include the rebuilding and enlargement of the Hotel Intercontinental, was planned on the site of the Vienna Ice-Skating Club. The development would totally spoil the most famous view of the city from the Belvedere Palace and Gardens. In 2014, the City Council of Vienna issued a “High-Rise Concept” and a “Glacis Master Plan” which permit the construction of high-rise buildings on several points of the Ringstrasse area. These high-rise buildings would spoil the urban character of this area as well as the roofscapes and morphology of the Historic Centre of Vienna. Following numerous and unfruitful exchanges with Austria and the Vienna City Council, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Historic Centre of Vienna on the List of World Heritage in Danger in July 2017. **Europa Nostra Austria** made the nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018.

**Coal Preparation Plant in Beringen, BELGIUM**

The Coal Preparation Plant in Beringen, with its equipment, is the only such plant preserved on a European and even on a global scale. The construction of this large coal preparation plant started in 1923-1924 (coal washery 1) and was later enlarged (coal washeries 2, 3 and 4). The four components form one building, which was classified as an Historic Monument in the 1990s by the Flemish Government. In 2009, the re-use of the mine was assigned to the PPP Company BE-Mine and its partners. The company concluded that the conservation of the complete coal preparation plant was not possible and - without a thorough study of the building’s history - decided on the imminent demolition of coal washeries 1 and 3. The company’s plans for development suggest keeping just one of the four buildings. This proposal neglects to acknowledge the importance of the integrity of the building. The demolition of the first component could set a dangerous precedent for further destruction of the building, leading to the incremental loss of the entire site. The nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018 was submitted by the **Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology**.

**The Buzludzha Monument, BULGARIA**

Located in the mountains in the heart of Bulgaria, the Buzludzha Monument is an imposing example of 20th-century Modernist architecture. The building now attracts increasing international attention. Built in 1981 to be the House-Monument of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the structure was used for just 8 years. Soon after the end of the Communist regime, the monument was abandoned and has since been victim to thefts, vandalism and severe weather conditions. The ostentatious finish of its Brutalist architecture, heavy iconography and colourful mosaics has decayed. No action has been taken by the responsible authorities to protect the site so far. The **Buzludzha Project Foundation**, which made the nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018, proposes that the Buzludzha Monument could become an example for the preservation of other similar heritage sites throughout Eastern Europe. Conservation work and the preparation of the monument for sustainable tourism are suggested as the most viable long-term solutions for its survival.

**Aerial Cableway Network in Chiatura, GEORGIA**

In 1913, the booming manganese mining industry led to the creation of a unique cargo and civic cableway network in Chiatura. The network – composed of 18 passenger and 27 cargo cableways – is striking in its diversity of architectural styles and engineering solutions. The absolute majority of cableways retain their original architectural and technological components. The “Perevisa-Town” cableway and various buildings are listed as historic monuments. Most of the cableways are owned and operated by the private mining corporation **LLC “Georgian Manganese”** and the **municipal administration**. Due to the lack of maintenance, many of the passenger cableways have deteriorated and have been closed down. Few of the cargo cableways function today. This important site of industrial heritage benefits from the support of local and national institutions, including the nominator, the **Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia**. However, (trans)national funding seems to be lacking, which threatens any sort of viable future for the cableway network.

**David Gareji Monasteries and Hermitage, GEORGIA**

The David Gareji Monasteries and Hermitage are located in Eastern Georgia, on the semi-desert Iori plateau and partly extend into neighbouring Azerbaijan. Dating back to the 6th-century, the site is comprised of 22 rock-hewn monasteries and more than 5,000 sanctuaries and cave-cells. The combination of rock architecture, medieval murals, prehistoric archaeology and paleontological fields makes the entire ensemble a masterpiece of Georgian culture. It is registered as a Monument of National Importance. The monastery complex faces the threat of irreversible deterioration. The main problem is the disintegration of the rocks. The churches and other spaces suffer extreme structural damage. The collapse of the structures also threatens the wall paintings. The monastery complex is under the ownership of the **Patriarchate of Georgia**. It is still an active monastic center with daily services and this adds to its importance and underlines the urgency of its preservation. Increased tourism to the site presents an opportunity but its sustainability needs to be addressed. The **Georgian Arts and Culture Center** submitted the nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018.

**Castle of Sammezzano, Tuscany, ITALY**

The Castle of Sammezzano is a rare example of eclectic and Moorish architecture in Europe. Over the second half of the 19th century, this formerly medieval castle was transformed into a fine example of the Orientalist fashion by Marchese Ferdinando Panciatichi Ximenes d'Aragona. Ferdinando was influenced by several Eastern trends, focusing on two particular styles: Arabic-Moorish, with its white "intertwined ropes" of stucco, and Indo-Persian, characterized by strong polychromatic colours. Following the Second World War, the castle became a luxury hotel. However, for over 25 years the site has been unoccupied and neglected with its ownership remaining insecure. As a result, broken windows have gone unmended and leaking roofs unrepaired, which in turn led to severe water damage and major deterioration of the fabric of the building. The lack of security has laid the site bare to thefts and vandalism. The **Touring Club Italiano**, together with the Save Sammezzano movement, made the nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018.

**Constanta Casino, ROMANIA**

Built in 1910, the Constanta Casino has become a landmark of the Black Sea shore. Daniel Renard, the Swiss Romanian architect who designed the building, opted for a lavish expression of Art Nouveau to reflect Romania’s modernisation during the reign of Carol I. Following many years of alternating commercial and state held responsibility for the building’s care, during the 2000s, the Casino was abandoned. It remains so to this day due to local authorities’ inability to find funding and to launch a rescue and restore operation. There have been several transfers of administrative rights from the Municipality of Constanța, the last of these being to the **National Investments Agency within the Ministry of Development**. The main danger to the building comes from the corrosion and rusting of structural metal parts. Sea storms and winds have shattered most of the windows facing the sea. It is very likely that the roof will collapse if this process continues. The nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018 was submitted by the **ARCHÉ Association**.

**Prehistoric Rock-Art Sites in the province of Cadiz, SPAIN**

This exceptional set of Prehistoric Rock-Art Sites developed in an extended period of time of about 20,000 years, stretching from the Upper Paleolithic to the Iron Age. It consists of approximately 300 caves and shelters, within which are paintings and engravings of animals and human figures and symbols of diverse styles, the majority belonging to Iberian Schematic art. Biological deterioration, structural damage, misuse and acts of vandalism have greatly compromised this important rock art. In fact, misuse and acts of vandalism have done more damage to these caves than natural processes have in thousands of years. The drastic rate of decline in the quality of conservation of these sites - located in the province of Cadiz - has motivated several organisations and individuals to raise awareness of the serious threats to this important heritage site to the local regional and national authorities. However, only minor action has been taken to alleviate the threats. **Hispania Nostra** made the nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018.

**The Prinkipo Greek Orphanage, Princes' Islands, TURKEY**

The Prinkipo Greek Orphanage is considered the largest wooden building in Europe and the second largest in the world. Located on Prinkipo, on the Princes' Islands off the coast of Istanbul, it was built in 1899 to the design of French architect Alexandre Vallaury. The timber framed structure features elaborately decorated wooden columns in the grand hall and panelled ceilings with decorative mouldings. The building functioned as an orphanage until its closure in 1964. Since then, the neglected structure has deteriorated. Damaged by a fire in 1980, today the building is exposed to adverse weather conditions. Sections of the roof and corner posts have already fallen and the Orphanage is now at immediate risk of further collapse. **Europa Nostra Turkey** submitted the nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018. The setting up of a Centre of Environmental and Interreligious Dialogue in the building, as conceived by the **Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople** Patriarchate, should figure as the most appropriate future use of the Orphanage

**Grimsby Ice Factory, UNITED KINGDOM**

The Grimsby Ice Factory is understood to be the earliest surviving ice factory in the United Kingdom. Designed by the engineer W. F. Cott, the Factory dates from 1900 and is a substantial Grade II\* listed red brick industrial building. The site is arguably the most prominent physical reminder of Grimsby’s fishing and maritime heritage, the largest fishing port in the world at the start of the 20th century. The Factory has been in a state of serious decline since its closure in 1990. The roof is now severely damaged allowing water into the interiors, and much of its metal work and electrical fittings have been stolen. Moreover, there have been threats of demolition. The Factory has remained in private ownership. A mixed use development proposal initiated by the Great Grimsby Ice Factory Trust, estimated to potentially create upwards of 125 jobs, has so far been unsuccessful in securing funding, resulting in the future of the Ice Factory remaining uncertain. The nomination for the 7 Most Endangered programme 2018 was made by **SAVE Britain’s Heritage**.

**Background information**

[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 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](http://7mostendangered.eu/). 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 has strongly promoted and is actively contributing to the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](http://www.europanostra.org/our-work/policy/european-year-cultural-heritage/) 2018.

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](http://institute.eib.org/)

The [Council of Europe Development Bank](http://www.coebank.org) (CEB) is “the social bank of Europe”. A multilateral development bank with 41 member states, it represents a major instrument of solidarity policy in Europe. Preserving Europe’s cultural heritage is part of its mandate.

[Creative Europe](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm) 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.