



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 countries are: 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 7 Most 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’.

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 neighboring 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.

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.

[See also Europa Nostra web](#)