

URBANISM WATCH

Prizrenit Urban Planning under
Constant Watch

23 March 2015, Prizren

Press Release #19

PRESS RELEASE

Prizren Hammam Remains Vulnerable for Quite Some Time

In March, EC Ma Ndryshe investigated the restoration of the roof of Gazi Mehmed Pasha Hammam in Prizren, namely the reasons for suspension of works in this Project.

Based on information received from the responsible staff at the Regional Cultural Heritage Centre (RCHC) it comes out that works in this Project were supposed to be completed in May 2014, but since the UNESCO funds were spent, restoration was suspended.

UNESCO initiated this Project. The Restoration Plan was designed RCHC. UNESCO announced an international tender for the completion of works, and according to information available at RCHC, the amount allocated for restoration works for this stage was EUR 163 thousand and 528. UNESCO signed contracts and made payments directly with the contractors, following the confirmation and verification of every restoration position by the RCHC supervisor and UNESCO-s.

According to RCHC, during the restoration some additional works emerged, since considerable structural weaknesses were identified in the Hammam structure, including poor restoration works made in 1960/70 on four domes and one vault endangering the Hammam structure to collapse. Therefore, following UNESCO's and work supervisor's approval it was decided that interventions in these parts should also be carried out.

Responsible staff from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports have confirmed that works in the restoration of the Hammam roof have been suspended due to the lack of funds. MCYS explained that it reviewed the possibility of financial support for the additional works foreseen in the Hammam, but due to budget review delays no action was undertaken in this respect.

RCHC staff explained that the required funds for the completion of works in Hammam roof amount to EUR 57 thousand and 730, and the requests for financial support for the completion of first stage works have been sent to MCYS, Municipality of Prizren, foreign embassies and agencies, but to this date there was no positive response.

MCYS confirmed the receipt of request sent by RCHC, and made it known that it has addressed it as priority and expects its approval.

While awaiting the funds for the continuation of restoration, last month it was reported that in two instances Hammam was targeted by vandals, who are suspected to have damaged the lead layer mounted on the roof, which was also confirmed by the Kosovo Police involved in case investigation. In fact, theft of lead sheet also occurred in the past.

Considering these findings, EC Ma Ndryshe considers that failure to complete the works in Hammam facility makes it vulnerable. Consequently, urgent actions should be taken in the completion of restoration works and improvement of safety measures, considering the fact that a very important cultural heritage site is at stake.

Therefore, EC Ma Ndryshe would like to recommend the RCHC and MCYS to apply more diligent planning in the future in order to foresee funds for potential additional works or to address such requests more urgently;

We would also like to call upon the MCYS to urgently seek funds for the completion of restoration works in Hammam roof.

RCHC and MCYS need to find solutions for placing guards, as additional safety measure; and

We recommend the Kosovo Police to shed light on the cases of theft of lead sheets from Hammam, as well as to increase the frequency of patrolling around the cultural heritage sites.

In July 2013, "EC Ma Ndryshe" started with the implementation of the Project "Prizren Urban Planning under Constant Watch", which is financially supported by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). The Project shall continue the monitoring and publication of findings for urban and spatial planning sector, as well as addressing the institutional responsibility.

Kindly yours,

Valon Xhabali, Project Coordinator

NGP EC Ma Ndryshe

Rr. Saraçët, Nr. 5, 20000 Prizren &

Bulevardi Nëna Terezë 30B H-I-.5, 10000 Prishtinë

www.ecmandryshe.org & info@ecmandryshe.org

+381 38 224 967 & +381 29 222 771

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Prizren Urban Planning under

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is funded by Kosovo Foundation for Open Society



Fondacioni i Kosovës për Shoqëri të Hapur
Kosovo Foundation for Open Society
Kosovska Fondacija za Otvoreno Društvo