

The 6th National Heritage and Crafts Fair, Gjirokastra 2012

Gjirokastra celebrated the 6th National heritage and craft fair between September 28 – 30, with participants from all over Albania and also from Kosova. The event, organised by the Gjirokastra Foundation and the Gjirokastra Municipality saw the works of approximately 120 artisans go on display in the old bazaar of the city – and attracted tourists from abroad and all over the region.



This year the Fair coincided with celebrations of the 100th Anniversary of the National Independence and in this regard a special exhibition of handicraft products was on display to celebrate the event. On the second day of the fair, there was an exhibition of traditional foods from the region and visitors were able to enjoy the wide variety of dishes on display.

Prizes were awarded by a jury of local and international specialists to the best products on display. First prize went to Muhedin Makri, a local stonemason, for his hand-operated stone mill for grinding corn into flour; second prize was awarded to Ervin Xjoni, a violin maker from Tirana, and a special prize was awarded to Dritan Onjea, a craftsman from Saranda for his work commemorating the 100th anniversary.

On the final day of the fair, a roundtable of local businesses, tourist operators and handicraft producers was organised to discuss ways of supporting handicrafts activities and heritage in Gjirokastra, and how to ensure the long-term continuation of the annual fair. The roundtable



concluded that Gjirokastra still has great untapped potential to become a tourist destination and that more work was needed to develop income-generating opportunities that would encourage young people to stay.

A working group was created "Forum for the Development of Tourism in Gjirokastra" with the aim of creating a special fund to underwrite the cost of the fair in the future.