

### 1. Completion of restoration proposals for two monumental houses of the Babameto Family in Gjirokastra



After many months of intensive work, the technical restoration proposal for two houses belonging to the Babameto Family in Gjirokastra, have been completed and approved by the Scientific Council of the Institute of Monuments Culture. The project will need to have the final approval of the National Restoration Council and of the Babameto Family after which the restoration proposals will be

implemented. The aim is to revitalize the houses which are part of the Gjirokastra Bazaar.

The restoration and the revitalization of the Babameto Houses are part of the “Gjirokastra 2009 – 2011”, a joint program of Culture Heritage without Borders and GCDO, financed by Swedish International Development Agency and Packard Humanities Institute. The program includes the organizing of several restoration camps and the training of young architects in restoration.

### 2. An Ottoman oven discovered during the restoration works for the Museum of Gjirokastra

Extensive works to restore the castle galleries to house the new museum “Chronicle on Stone” are close to completion. The work has entailed the cleaning and re-pointing of gallery walls, the removal of many tones of rubble, the installation of a new thermally-insulated floor, and the installation of new double-glazed windows as well as electrical cabling. During the course of the renovation, a large Ottoman-style bread oven was unearthed behind a



modern wall. The oven will feature in the new museum, which will celebrate the history of Gjirokastra.

Work is continuing on the design concept of the museum. A research program is ongoing to amass material for the exhibition from state archives and a program of local consultation involving oral histories and family photographs is about to start. Meanwhile Dr. Diana Walters, a museologist from University of Gothenburg, Sweden, visited Gjirokastra, to provide advice. Her visit was made possible thanks to the support of the Swedish NGO, Culture Heritage without Borders.

### 3. Omarate Craft Centre - close to completion



The Omarate Craft Centre, a 200 m<sup>2</sup> venue for the training of artisans, located in the heart of the bazaar, is close to completion. The building has been re-roofed, re-floored and renovated to produce an attractive bright space. The restoration has been financed by the UN Joint Programme Culture and Heritage for Social and Economic Development.

In the same building, two ground-floor shops will become venues for experienced artisans to work alongside apprentices. Tourists will be welcome to visit these workshops.

### 4. The tourist season begins

The month of March is the beginning of the tourist season in Gjirokastra. A new Tourist Information Centre is being renovated in the main square thanks to the financial support of the UN Joint Programme Culture and Heritage for Social and Economic Development in collaboration with the Gjirokastra's Municipality and the support of GCDO. This will be the third year of the TIC, originally



created by the GCDO. It provides valuable information to visitors including guidebooks, leaflets, and guided tours and it also conducts surveys which help to inform the effort to improve the town's tourism service. The new TIC will be

managed by the Municipality of Gjirokastra with the technical assistance of GCDO. Last year, 12 993 foreign tourists visited Gjirokastra - an increase of 8.9% compared with 2008 and 116% with 2007.

## **5. Collaboration with CESVI in Përmet**

GCDO signed a memorandum of collaboration with the Italian civil society organization CESVI which is implementing a three year tourist-based development program in Përmet. Both organizations share the same objective and will explore areas of collaborating to promote cultural heritage tourism to the region.

## **6. GCDO extending its international partnerships**



The Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization is now a member of the SEE Heritage (South East Europe Heritage), a not-for-profit network of NGOs working in the field of cultural heritage in South East Europe.

GCDO strongly believes that the networking will help dialogue and ease the response and solutions to all heritage issues in Gjirokastra.

## **7. GCDO staff members trained for European Union project proposals**

During February 2010, GCDO staff members were trained by TACSO (Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations) in fundraising and proposal-writing for

European Union grants. The GCDO Executive Manager was selected by competition to participate in a regional pilot training in Istanbul, while three members of GCDO staff participated in a three-day local training in application techniques for EU grants.

## 8. International expert on heritage tourism development joins GCDO

Stephan Doempke, a German specialist with widespread international experience has joined GCDO as Heritage Tourism Coordinator. His appointment has been made possible through the support of the German organization CIM's "program of integrated experts". Mr. Doempke was previously the Coordinator of the UN Joint Programme Culture and Heritage for Social and Economic Development in Albania where he got to know GCDO. The CIM program enables very experienced German experts to work with local organizations to help develop their capacity.



*"I come here with a great desire to work and live in Gjirokastra", said Mr. Doempke, Gjirokastra and its region have great tourism potential which makes the challenge for heritage tourism even more interesting for any heritage tourism expert."*

**Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.**

*\* If you would like more information about the GCDO and our efforts to help Gjirokastra, please contact the Director, Sadi Petrela on [spetrela@gjirokastra.org](mailto:spetrela@gjirokastra.org) or telephone 00355 6920 78767.*



**Spring in Gjirokastra**