

Report on the 2013 activities – the Gjirokastra Foundation

2013 CALENDAR – Some of the most important activities

-April, the inauguration of the restoration at Babameto House and the idea for its revitalization through the creation of the Babameto - Culture and Heritage Centre. This project has been implemented in a very close collaboration with Culture Heritage without Borders (CHwB), the main contributor.

-End of October, the finalization of the two year complex project – REVATO (revitalization in the historic cities of Berat and Gjirokastra). This project was the second one implemented, in the last three years, by the Gjirokastra Foundation with the support of the European Commission.

-End of September, as every year, the “National Heritage and Artisan Fair”, was held in the cobbled streets of the Old Bazaar in Gjirokastra and was mainly supported by UN women Albania. Last year's fair was more enriched in its content and activities, consequently confirmed as the most important cultural and touristic event in the city. The fair is seen either as the most important activity, for the Albanian crafts, that takes place nationally on sustainable basis.

-In December, following the Fair held in Gjirokastra, the Gjirokastra Foundation organized for the very first time “The Auction of the Best Artisan women’s Products”. The Auction products have been developed by three artisan women from various regions of Albania which have been trained in a period of two-month with the support of the UN Women Albania.

-In November, completion of "From Trash to Values", a project for the recycling in handicraft production supported by Partners Albania. The project took place in the newly restored building Babameto 2, in the Old Bazaar of Gjirokastra, hence contributing to its revitalization.

In the following pages you can learn more specifically for the projects which have been implemented during 2013 by the Gjirokastra Foundation:

REVATO: where the heritage values meet the market values and potentials
(<http://revato.info>)

REVATO – “Revitalization in historic cities of Berat and Gjirokastra”, ran for two years in both Albanian UNESCO cities and is the most complex project that the Gjirokastra Foundation ever implemented in its 12 years of activity. Another complex project (EVAH) funded by the European Commission, has brought a tremendous enrichment of the Gjirokastra Foundation's experience and capacities. These include aspects of management and administration through the Public Private Partnership, as well as in the relations with the community and public institutions etc.

During the implementation, REVATO identified some fundamental problems concerning the current situation of the Cultural Heritage Management in Albania such as: interventions and indiscriminate constructions, the inadequacy of investments in the field of conservation and restoration. The project addressed three main problems that hinder the improvement of the above situation:

Problem I. The **failure to register Culture Heritage** properties in the country. Not clear ownership of these properties, which causes exclusion from private investments for the preservation, revitalization and use of the historic buildings.

Addressing this problem REVATO:

a.- **Created a database for the Monuments of Culture** - buildings in Berat and Gjirokastra, and identified their state of registration as real estate properties. This database, along with computers has been consigned to the Institute of Monuments of Culture, relevant DRKKs, as well to the Immovable Property Registration Offices (Tirana, Berat and Gjirokastra) and to the State Archives departments. For the data collection the project has worked closely with the state archives and banks, as well by interviewing in person the residents of 1000 first and second category monuments in both cities. The results were uploaded in an online registry <http://computerwizard-al.com/revato/front/index> which is effective and in use by IMC and open to the owners and investors interests.

b.- **Through a hired legal company**, in regard to the registrations process, **assistance was provided for more than 280 owners** of monuments of culture in Berat and Gjirokastra. Several meetings for legal advice were held free of charge for the citizens; 58 plans (cartographic documentation) necessary for completing the files were prepared; 50 notary acts needed in the property registration procedure, were prepared as well free of charge; 140 application files were prepared and transferred to the IPRO-s of Berat and Gjirokastra.



The conclusions of this work were summarized in a study where are analyzed the complex problems in this field and suggested the recommendations to solve the issues.

c.- For the very first time a massive evaluation was undertaken in such scale. **There were inspected more than 250 monuments of culture.** The assessment was conducted by two companies among the biggest worldwide in this field. From the evaluations resulted that the minimum and maximum prices for Berat were 200-1000 € / m² and in Gjirokastra 200-900 € / m².

d. - **10 models of business plans** were prepared with the aim to practically demonstrate how the historic buildings can develop economic activities, simultaneously making possible the revitalization and preservation of monument of culture - buildings. The models created can be used by citizens, businesses and banks.

Problem II. **Low public awareness and bypassing the role of the citizen** in the conservation and management of cultural heritage expressed in the absence of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

Problem III. **The lack of transparency in the decision-making process** of culture heritage management.

By addressing these problems REVATO:

- a. Created **an association with the participation of the citizens** in both cities. In the frame of the project they were trained theoretically and created a good experience in the field by been being activated throughout the two years period of the REVATO implementation. The association was named as well REVATO with the aim to further develop “the spirit” created during the action, by representing “the specific interests” of cultural heritage owners. The association is registered in Albania and already has been involved in various projects.
- b. Organized **a media campaign** and many open meetings with the participation of the citizens, by contacting door to door 1 000 families.
- c. Relying on **the Public-Private partnership**, through a public and completely transparent process the citizens were engaged directly in **the restoration of 11 roofs** at some monuments of culture in both cities. The roofs were selected through an open vote and directly based on the historical values of the



From the open public meetings – The Citezen Decides

monuments and in the interests for maintenance and the contribution in the restoration from the owners themselves. One of the citizens – his house was not selected - said that the competition procedure was fair and open, similar to the European Song Festival contest. One of the best examples in this regard is the “Kokalari House” where the families are making all the efforts to revitalize it.



During the restoration work



The ending conference in Tirana- 22 October 2013

The Babameto Centre: a model of Culture Heritage revitalization through the developing investments

On the 6th April 2013 was inaugurated the finalization of the restoration work at the Babameto House, one of the most imposing buildings, in the heart of the historic centre in Gjirokastra.

After many years of been abandoned and ruined, this building and the other one named Babameto 2, were restored and equipped at the best standards. Both the buildings are together in function as a Culture and Heritage Centre which offer services and spaces for trainings, cultural activities, activities in support of tourism development such as learning hours for local traditional dishes, folk dance and polyphonic singing etc.

A typical activity for this centre was the International Restoration Camp, organized by Cultural Heritage without Borders during September. The centre's facilities were used by the participant and organizers for accommodation, workshops for practical work, leisure activities etc. When such activities do not take place, the center also serves as a hostel.

For more click at:

<http://hostelbabameto.beep.com/index.htm>.

The revitalization of both Babameto buildings was a result of a long project undertaken by Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) and the Gjirokastra Foundation. The entire project, since its conceptualizing phase, actively involved the family heirs. The aim of this, was to demonstrate in practice that only the revitalization in cooperation with the owners can bring salvation for the historic buildings in Gjirokastra

This is the 6th case of "Restoration-Revitalization" in Gjirokastra, implemented successfully by the Gjirokastra Foundation, in its 12 years history of activity in Gjirokastra and in collaboration with other important partners.



The National Artisan Fair in support of the artisan products development and market – three new elements in the 7th edition



End of September 2013, in the cobble streets of the Gjirokastra Bazaar was held the 7th National Heritage and Artisan Fair.

The fair takes place regularly in the Cultural Heritage days every end of September and it is supported by the Municipality of Gjirokastra. It is already the most important event that takes place on regular basis in support of crafts in Albania. This Fair was attended by over 100 artisans which represent approximately 130 manufacturers / artisans from all over Albania, in the whole range and different types of crafts, including traditional household work (embroidery, carpets) stonework, mosaics, staples in straw, applications in various types of metal, wood, etc.

This event has a great cultural and tourist importance for the city of Gjirokastra. During the days of the fair were inaugurated two painting and handicraft exhibitions and was held a cooking competition with the best traditional of Gjirokastra food. Two roundtables were organized – for the role of women in entrepreneurship and small businesses and for the recycling in the artisan applications. While two documentaries dedicated to the artisans, were shown for the fair audience



National Artisan Fairs organized in Gjirokastra are part of the seven-year Artisan Program of the Gjirokastra Foundation for the handicrafts development and in the efforts for the revitalization of the city's medieval Bazaar. The program includes the revival of traditional crafts, the creation and support of several workshops for the produce and sale of the artisan goods. Other aims of the program

include the re-production and the restoration of the magnificent traditional costumes and the sustainability for the Artisan Centre situated in the heart of the Bazaar, housed in a newly restored building, previously ruined and abandoned.

A novelty for this fair was the support of UN women Albania (Gender Equality and Women Empowerment) which, in a close cooperation with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youths, made possible the participation of 50 artisan women and girls. As a result, the fair was conceptualized as a race between them. Three women – from Tirana, Shkodra and Pogradec - were selected to be supported and trained.

REC Albania was another partner of this fair, where a support was provided through the SENIOR-A program; meanwhile Partners Albania helped with the creation of the show-room where exposed artisan productions which are realized with reused materials were.

To be noted on this fair was the contributions for the first time from small businesses and citizens in Gjirokastra.

Currently the Gjirokastra Foundation has started the work to fundraise for the 8th fair which will be held on the 26-28th September 2014. Anyone who wishes to contribute or volunteer for the fair is welcomed to contact at info@gjirokastra.org

The artisan fair of Gjirokastra travels to Tirana – The auction of the best artisan products

During December 2013, the Gjirokastra Foundation organized for the first time the Auction of the Best Artisan Women's Products. In this auction were sold products of the three artisan women selected in the 7th Artisan Fair of Gjirokastra. The three artisans worked for two months along with professional stylists, to realize fine products based on the traditional motives, techniques and materials. The extra proceeds from the auction will be used for the organizing of the 2014 fair in Gjirokastra.



The Gjirokastra Foundation has supported during the same period, the participation of a number of artisans from Gjirokastra in the end year Fair organized by the Agency for the Promotion of the Social Business in Tirana.



"From trashes to value" the reuse of textile and plastic wastes in the handicraft processing

"From trashes to value" - was one of the very successful projects of 2013, where was combined the craftsmanship with environmental protection. The project was supported by Partners Albania, Center for Change and Conflict Management and was one of the three selected applicants in the national competition - Green Ideas 2013, held in April.

Making use of its long and fruitful experience in developing the handicraft, the Gjirokastra Foundation developed a business plan with the support of PA, where the handicraft production based in the recycling generates incomes for a number of women working with traditional methods at the GjiroArt center.

The products realized include a number of souvenirs realized with reused textiles and plastics and stones painted with motives from the city. A catalogue with the best products was printed. The 10 month project was implemented at the Babamaeto 2 house newly restored, which was equipped with handlooms and sewing machines.



Ideas for the projects and its aims were introduced in the annual Forum on Development of Philanthropy in Western Balkans: Philanthropy for Green Ideas to be held in the end of July 2013 in Macedonia.

The Gjirokastra Foundation part of an environmental network

During 2013 the Gjirokastra Foundation became part of a Network of Environmental Services, made possible by a grant of REC Albania in the framework of the Senior-A "Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organizations in Albania" Within the network enabled a wider support to the initiative "From trash to value" for artisan souvenirs with recycled material. Gjirokastra Foundation undertook a series of activities to raise awareness among citizens, especially to school children on environmental protection and reuse of materials.

The various trainings conducted within the network and SENIOR-A program were valuable for the increase of the capacity building for the GF staffs and other local specialists in the area of Gjirokastra.

Gjirokastra Foundation and the network partners, proposed to continue their activities in the coming years, with the aim to shape "a genuine voice" of the civil society in addressing environmental issues in the region of Gjirokastra



Resilience – the latest project for the women empowerment through the training in artisan skill and hotels

"Resilience" - is the newest project of Gjirokastra Foundation, launched in January 2014. The project, along with six others in various area of the country was selected to be supported by USAID, through Assist Impact program for women's empowerment.

The project aims to train women with few opportunities in artisan production and tourism-hotels. It is intended that after the training period, the women will be able to enter in the labor market. The trainings and other activities of this project will take place at the Babameto - Heritage and Culture Centre.

During the presentation of the 7 winners – organizations, 28 January 2014



*For more information please write at info@gjirokastra.org
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