

Gjirakstra Foundation- Newsletter 2[23], 2013

1.A Centre for Culture and Heritage housed in the restored Babameto buildings

The restoration work of the Babameto house, one of the most imposing buildings, monument of the first category in the heart of the historic centre of Gjirakstra, was completed last April. The restoration of this house, along with the other smaller building of the same name- Babameto 2, was a result of a three year cooperation program between the Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) and the Gjirakstra Foundation, including public entities.



The two abandoned and ruined buildings, once an eyesore and symbol of degradation of the city's cultural heritage, are now splendid models of good restoration standards.

The project partners' aim is to show another example of the revitalization at the historic buildings in Gjirakstra, under the motto "No restoration without revitalization ". Gjirakstra Foundation has prepared a business plan for the utilization of both Babameto buildings, which, with their conference and training rooms, exhibitions spaces, workshop and accommodation facilities, will function together as a Culture and Heritage Centre.



*Exhibition with
paintings by R.
Pilafi, May 2013,
Babameto Centre*



This centre is already functioning, by offering and organizing activities which are related to the preservation and development of the traditions and culture heritage, as well to the development of the crafts and ecotourism in the city and its soundings. It is forecasted that this centre will host the international restoration camps that are organized twice a year by the Culture heritage without border – CHwB.

The restoration-revitalization process of both buildings was developed and implemented through the public-private partnership, thus including since the very beginning the numerous Babameto families-owners.



Revitalized Omari house

*Zekate house (restored by the GF in the past),
on the 15 July 2013 – UNESCO day*

The contract with them defines that in exchange to the donor's funds for the restoration; the buildings will be used as semi-public venues for the benefit of the culture heritage preservation in the city.

This is the 5th case of “restoration-revitalization” implemented successfully by the Gjirokastra Foundation in Gjirokastra in its 12 years history of activity in Gjirokastra. Soon another building in the Bazaar, property of Omari family, will be consigned restored and revitalized

to the family after a period of being in use by GF.



During the Folkloric Festival May 2013

As seen in these photos, the Babameto Centre was hosting the folk group from Gostivar, who participated in the Folkloric Festival during May in Gjirokastra.



Old photo exhibition of Babameto Family

Once again the GF expresses gratitude to the Babameto family (owners) and CHwB for the trust, understanding and the support.

After many years of deterioration the family members have visited and continue to visit their restored house. They are excited by the work done and this is the best reward for the project implementers.

None of numerous family members live today in Gjirokastra, which is an indication of one of the major problems city is facing: abandonment by its inhabitants.



*A Balkan story,
photo
exhibition,
15 July 2013*



*Guests from Spain
visiting the centre*



2. In the footsteps of Edward Lear

In the context of cultural activities and its mission, the Babameto Centre, welcomed in June Jonathan Warrender, a Scottish painter of landscape, rural and historic houses. Mr Warrender is inspired by the 19th century English painter Edward Lear, who traveled and painted in Albania and Gjirokastra. The Castle, old houses and their interior were subject to Warrender's work, who spent 10 days in Gjirokastra, which is part of his tour in Southern Albania. Warrender is regarded as the best painter in this subject in the United Kingdom since 18th century.



3. "From trashes to value" the reuse of urban wastes by handicraft processing



"From trashes to value" - is the newest project being implemented by the Gjirokastra Foundation, in the context of an environmental program supported by Partners Albania, Center for Change and Conflict Management. The project which aims to bring the reuse of urban waste in the production of handmade souvenirs was one of three selected applicants in the

national competition - Green Ideas 2013, held in April. Making use of its long experience in developing the handicraft, the Gjirokastra Foundation organized the trainings for 10 women and young ladies being in producing a souvenirs by reusing textile waste, plastics and painting in stone. The project also aims to raise public awareness on recycling process.

The results of the project will be introduced in the annual Forum on Development of Philanthropy in Western Balkans: Philanthropy for Green Ideas to be held in the end of July in Macedonia.





Through this initiative a number of souvenirs, handbags, small carpets, etc., with motifs from Gjirokastra are produced. Some of them are sold and commissioned in order to be produced again. The participation of the project in the fair organized on the occasion of the 8th anniversary of the inscription of Gjirokastra as a World Heritage site – UNESCO, was a success.

In parallel the Gjirokastra Foundation became part of the 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", funded by the Swedish Government. On this basis and relying on its experience in development of handicrafts, Gjirokastra Foundation plan to make use of Babameto 2 buildings as an important center for reuse of urban waste and handicraft production in Gjirokastra.



5 June 2013

On June 5, 2013, as part of World Environment Day, GF organized activities with school students in order to inform and educate them on environmental protection and recycling processes. Various similar activities were organized with students of several public school and Roma communities.

4. REVATO in the final stage

REVATO - the Project for the revitalization of historic centers of Berat and Gjirokastra, funded by the European Commission is going toward successful conclusion with the most important actions for preservation of historic buildings such as: restoration, real estate appraisal and registration.

The whole range of activities REVATO's (www.revato.info) aims to bring closer the cultural heritage with the market value with the active involvement of the citizens; all the numerous actions of REVATO are implemented through opened, transparent and participating approach.

-The Restoration of 12 roofs in Berat and Gjirokastra. Gjirokastra Foundation completed the tender procedures for the selection of the firm which will undertake the restoration of 12 roofs. Part of the funding will be covered by the citizens themselves, who are organized in their association, called REVATO.



They have been active and involved in all the process: roofs selection to be restored, tendering procedures and terms of reference definition, and even in the technical aspects of the restoration projects. Through this philosophy, REVATO aims to bring a new approach in the process of conservation and restoration of built heritage.

Real estate appraisal of the monumental houses. A massive campaign has started for the real estate appraisal of the privately owned historic houses in both cities. During June-July open public meetings were held in Tirana, Berat and Gjirokastra where the methodology and the



Meetings held in Tirana and Gjirokastra

aims of the process were explained. Involved in the process are two international companies known worldwide in the real estate business.

- The Registration of historic houses.

In progress is the work on the registration as real estate of historical buildings. A law firm is working for months in Berat and Gjirokastra engaged by REVATO.

Soon, a plan businesses plans agent that will assist several residents of Berat and Gjirokastra in preparing business plans for developing historic buildings in order to use them as small businesses for activities related to tourism.



Lately the REVATO project was presented in a conference that was held on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the assignment of Berat City as a UNESCO site.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of October this year, when a donor conference will take place.

5. 7th National Artisan Fair of Gjirokastra

GF continues the preparations for the Artisan and Heritage fair, in collaboration with other NGOs. Efforts are being made to increase the range of its presentation by further including women contribution from across the country, as an incentive and stimulus to strengthen their involvement in the economic life.



During the National Artisan Fair, Gjirokastra 2012

A new development this year is expected with the new experiences of the GF to the revival of craft traditions that are friendly with the environment.

This is the 7th fair to be organized by the Gjirokastra Foundation in the medieval bazaar of the city, on late September - during Heritage Days. Year after year this event is becoming the most important ongoing activity for the national handicraft and an important tourist event for the city.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

** If you would like more information about Gjirokastra Foundation and our efforts to help Gjirokastra, please contact the Director, Sadi Petrela on spetrela@gjirokastra.org or telephone 00355 6920 78767.*