

Newsletter from Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization

Issue [2] [17], April / June 2011

1. Cultural Heritage – A Motor for Economic Development and Maintaining Knowledge -workshop in Metsovo, Greece



In late May, our first seminar for the European EVAH project was held in Metsovo, with GCDO implementing in cooperation with three partners from that region. The seminar “Cultural Heritage – A Motor for Economic Development and Maintaining Knowledge”, attracted among others, 38 specialists and employees of many important institutions, as well as,

central and local executives in cultural heritage of the four participating countries: Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Greece. Ten representatives from Albania from Tirana, Gjirokastra and Berat participated in this seminar. The seminar included a roundtable discussion, where participants managed concrete conclusions about the role of financing and investment in cultural heritage, handicraft, tourism and information technology. The seminar was organized by Egnatia Epirus Foundation, one of the three GCDO partners in the EVAH project. For more about the 18-month EVAH project (European Values in the Cultural Heritage) funded by the European Union, please visit their website: <https://sites.google.com/site/ipa129799/>

2. The active role of citizens in defense of the Built Heritage

"The Key Role of Citizens in the Revival of Monuments" is a project that implemented by GCDO implemented over the past few months in Berat and Gjirokastra, two cities with about 1000 cultural monuments, mostly privately owned.

The project was supported by the UN Joint Programme for Culture Heritage and Social and Economic Development, and was funded by the Spanish Fund for the Millennium Development Goals - (MDG-F). Two surveys were



conducted to test the perception of citizens about the role and cooperation of business entities in the maintenance, restoration and revival of the built heritage monuments. In addition, two public discussions were held for citizens of these communities, to facilitate a multilateral dialogue on this topic. Through the survey and public discussions, GCDO is creating a guide, which aims to inform and help improve democracy and the role of citizens in the restoration and revival of cultural heritage.

This is the first project that brings together citizens of the two Albanian cities that are included in the list of World Heritage by UNESCO and share the same place on this list (and consequently the same fate). Project activities were widely covered in two documentaries that were broadcast by local media.

3. "Tender voices from the Stone City" - the first professional CD with iso-polyphonic songs performed by children

A concert of traditional iso-polyphonic songs performed by children was followed by tremendous interest recently in Gjirokastra. The inaugural concert of the "Obelisk" group and their first album "Tender voices from the Stone City", marked the successful conclusion of the comprehensive project "Reconnecting Youth with Heritage through Iso-polyphonoc singing"



The project implemented by the popular master Roland Çenko with the support of GCDO and funding of Vodafone Albania Foundation, trained 14 middle school children for nine months, in the interpretation of the iso-polyphonic song, a tradition that has existed for centuries in Gjirokastra and in other regions of Albania. The project brought for the first time a professional interpretation of the children and the creation of a studio



album which showcases the children's ability and adds to the range of souvenirs available in Gjirokastra. Albanian iso polyphonic was declared by UNESCO "Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" in 2005. The efforts to continue the activity group continue, and under Roland Cenko tutelage, iso-polyphonic music, once considered lost and forgotten, will be popularized by a new generation of young Gjirokastrit.

4. "Revival of Crafts and Craft Traditions in Gjirokaster"



GCDO successfully completed the project "Strengthening Craftsmanship in Gjirokastra". Ten young people from Gjirokastra were trained in stone and wood working, which are the basic skills in traditional building construction and restoration featured in Gjirokastra. This project aimed to bring further qualification to the growing demands of the local labor market for

master restorers and for souvenir manufacturers. The young people trained feel enthusiastic about the knowledge gained and the opportunities they seek to work in Gjirokastra. Some of them will soon continue their training at international camp restorations. An additional leaflet and a website of GCDO (www.gjirokastra.org) mark the completion of the project.

A practical laboratory was completed during the project near to the vocational training school of Gjirokastra, which will be used for future GCDO trainings. The project was funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Tirana.

5. Promotion of Gjirokastra and the challenge to save her

In addition to her work in promoting efforts to save the historic center of Gjirokastra, GCDO has participated in several international events. As part of Southeast Europe Heritage Network our organization participated in the Europa Nostra Congress, held in Amsterdam in June. Europa Nostra is a pan European organization of cultural heritage organizations from across the European continent. Every year they organize a competition for the best projects for the protection of cultural heritage. This year first prize was won from the Albanian organization "The Future of the Past of Albania" with a restoration project in Korça area.

GCDO was invited to the summer camp that University of Pennsylvania organized in Kotor in Montenegro and delivered two lectures for the challenge in defense of Gjirokastra, while other staff members attended training for restoration crafts organized in Romania by Transylvania Trust. Finally, GCDO was invited to present its innovative scheme in cooperation with owners of historic buildings for their use or revival in the conference organized by ICCROM in Rome titled "Participation in decisions about restoration." If you want to know more about GCDO experience in this regard please write to us at info@gjirokastra.org.

6. The Agency for the Support of Civil Society (AMSHC) supports the Fifth

The AMSHC responded positively to the GCDO's application for partial funding of this year's artisan and cultural heritage fair which will be held in Gjirokastra in late September. GCDO now has focused its efforts on finding local resources, especially from businesses, with the aim to make this year's event sustainable. Artisans from all over Albania already expressed their willingness to participate.



This year the fair will be combined with another project related to craft traditions. German Cooperation Office in Albania, GIZ, will support GCDO's application for a project to develop models of modern clothing, relying on the traditions of folk costumes. The project includes the training of ten local artisans, as well as designing new craft shop, which GCDO had administered in the Gjirokastra Bazaar, since 2007. This project is financed by GIZ through the Program for Creative Industries Network.

7. New Peace Corps Voluntary in Gjirokastra



Brandi Lockett – is our newest Peace Corps Volunteer. She arrived last month in Gjirokastra. She will work at GCDO and Antigonea Park for the next two years. Brandi is from Los Angeles, California and worked for five years as a graphic artist with architects and urban planners. "I am very enthusiastic for being in Gjirokastra and I will work to maintain and develop the traditions of its architecture. I feel honored to be in Albania, and I look forward to cooperate with the community and specialists in this field." says Brandi. Year after year

GCDO has established a tradition of good cooperation with Peace Corps volunteers, and beyond its efforts to bring diverse international experience in Gjirokastra. Brandi is the fifth volunteer working with GCDO in recent years.

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 or telephone 00355 6920 78767.*