

Activities of the Hellenic Society “Elliniki Eteiria” for the Environment and Cultural Heritage

Vassili Koniordos



The Thessaloniki Branch of the Elliniki Eteiria for the Environment and Cultural Heritage, was founded in 1991. The Branch operates with the same regulation as the Elliniki Eteiria for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage in Athens. The Society depends entirely on the voluntary contributions of the expertise, work and experience of its members and friends. Its activities cover the whole region of the North of Greece. The office of the Branch is allocated at 19, Epimenidou Street, in Ano Poli, in a historic building, which belongs to the Municipality of Thessaloniki. The Goals of the Elliniki Eteiria are the protection of the natural environment and purpose of our activities the protection, the nomination, the reservation, the informing, the encouragement. Way of acting: the interference and the coiling, while at the same time

1. we accost to the relevant authorities pointing problems and suggesting feasible solutions
2. we converse with the scientific community publishing the scientific magazine “Monument and Environment”, participating and organising conferences
3. we sensitize Greek citizens in the values of their cultural and natural heritage through brochures, seminars, excursions, sightseeing, mass media, programmes with the participation of the Community or schools.

International Cooperation of the Branch are:

EUROMED PROJECT "BYZANTIUM EARLY ISLAM"

The Elliniki Etairia's Thessaloniki Branch was the Coordinator of the Euromed Heritage III Project "Byzantium Early Islam", a Project aiming to bring to the fore the region's Byzantine and Islamic cultural heritage and to modernise its ability to manage it intelligently through co-operation. This project is a golden opportunity to create the highest standards of heritage conservation and promotion in the MEDA region. This aim coincides with the overall goal of the European Union, as outlined in the Barcelona Process (1995) to encourage political dialogue, trade and economic integration and social and cultural co-operation. In December 2004, the Euromed Heritage III Programme of the European Commission agreed to fund this project. In order for the project to reach its objective, it is divided into four distinct, but complementary sub-projects.

The Four sub-projects:

1. The further training of fifty heritage professional from Israel, Cyprus and the Palestinian Authority in diverse heritage sectors but also other economic activities to enhance the management and entrepreneurial skills.
2. Research activities to be carried out by the trainees relating to the safeguarding and preservation of heritage sites, monuments and objects and artefacts like sculptures, murals, ceramics and all kinds of historic objects of the Byzantine early Islamic period which are of historic and cultural importance.
3. Three distinct but interrelated groups of Inventories stemming from the research work comprising:
 - a. Experience in restoration and conservation practices in the region.
 - b. On government policies relating and effecting the heritage.
 - c. Inventory on Byzantine early Islamic culture and art.

In order for the trainees to develop their skills, carryout the research and create the inventories a case study has been chosen to act as a specific reference point upon which the work of the project will focus. This is the Kathisma archaeological site which is situated between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Kathisma was a Byzantine religious complex comprising a church and monastery that was decorated extensively with elaborate mosaics. The architectural style is very interesting as its shape seems to have been influenced by the Temple and to have itself influenced the architectural design of early Islam in their construction of the Dome of the Rock.

4. Awareness activities comprise the fourth and last sub-project. This comprises dissemination of the project's results over the Internet, a publication that will include the research results, inventories and good practices on heritage management and conservation, and a conference where the project's results will be discussed.

After the three years the partners will examine ways and means in which to continue working together and to exploit and implement the results of their work.

The project comprises of six organizations coming from five different countries:

1. Elliniki Etairia – Elliniki Etairia for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage (Thessaloniki Branch), GREECE.
2. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki - Byzantine Research Centre, GREECE
3. Palestinian Mosaic Workshop-Committee for the Promotion of Tourism, PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY.
4. Israeli Antiquities Authority, Conservation Branch, ISRAEL.
5. Technical Chamber of Cyprus (ETEK), CYPRUS.
6. Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, TURKEY

INTERREG III

The Branch made a proposal on the frame of the European Project INTERREG III Greece- FYROM for the reconstruction and modernization and the reuse of the abandoned Environmental Research Station at the lake of Prespes. At the end of October 2006 the proposal was approved and the activities are in progress.

TELL AMARNA PROJECT (Culture 2000)

Participated as a partner in activities of the European Project for the conservation of the mosaics of the excavation of Tell Amarna in Syria from 19th of June to 15th of August 2005.

*CHÂTEAUX ET FORTERESSES DE L'ÉPOQUE DES CROISADES
(Culture 2000)*

The Branch of Elliniki Etairia was a partner in this annual Project which aims to prove the existence of a common technical cultural heritage that was elaborated between East and West Medieval period and spread this information not only to scientists but to the European, Syrian and Euromediterranean public.

HABITATS ET COUPOLES (Culture 2000)

It is participating as a partner to this two years' programme, that was approved by the European Union and starts its activities on 1st of November 2007 concerning the valorisation of the common architectural cultural heritage between East and West and the development of an interdisciplinary scientific research for the vernacular architecture in Coupoles of Syria

LA ROTTA DEI FENICI

It participates as fundamental member to the Cultural Itinerary network, "La Rotta dei Fenici", which is adopted by the European Council in October 2007. The «Phoenicians' Route» is the network of the great nautical courses which Phoenicians used since the XII century B.C. as the main trade and cultural lines of communication in the Mediterranean Sea. Through these routes the Phoenicians gave rise to a great civilization contributing to the creation of a Mediterranean cultural koine` («community»). These routes became an integral and basic part of the Mediterranean culture. Nowadays these routes symbolize the intercultural model on which a Mediterranean Cultural Itinerary of the Council of Europe Plan, is based. This Itinerary passes through 15 countries of 3 continents and through over 70 towns of Phoenician origin.

LEARNING BY DIGGING

It cooperated with the Liceo Gimnasio Statale "Quinto Orazio Flacco" from 28th of August to 18th of September to an excavation

programme, that took place at the archaeological area of Pvdna. Elliniki Etairia was the Scientific Coordinator of this Project.

STAGE

It cooperated with the Scuola Superiore di Catania and two of the students of the University, Mrs Olga Terechshenko and Mr Omar Sami Al Alamat, completed their stage from 18th of June to 24th of August 2007.

ENNHO

The Branch is member of the Board of European Network of National Heritage of Organizations (ENNHO). ENNHO is an independent not-for-profit network of European heritage conservation organisations established in 1999. Its mission is to support permanent mutual exchange, learning and partnership building between heritage conservation organisations in European countries.

It offers its members the opportunity to:

- share experience and expertise
- pool resources and undertake joint actions with other network partners
- use the ENNHO Secretariat, and interactive website to network, learn and disseminate information.

In addition to this core activity, ENNHO also provides a forum for heritage practitioners on a European regional basis allowing its members and partners to strengthen intra-regional co-operation within different zones of the Community.



Communication

Elliniki Etairia for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage,
Thessaloniki Branch

19 Epimenidou Street, 546 33, Thessaloniki, Greece

Secretary of the Branch Early Islam”:

Giannopoulou Elena

Tel:2310 260-283, Fax: 2310-240665

e-mail: eethes@otenet.gr

web-site: www.ellet.gr

web-site: www.byzantiumearlyislam.net