

ICOMOS Heritage Alert Template

***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY- 2-4 paragraphs outlining heritage significance and threats, (suitable for media statement) and four copyright free, high quality digital images**

During the construction of the metro in Thessaloniki, Greece's second metropolis, a major archaeological site was found in 2013 at the location of the future "Venizelos Station". Within a vast area of approximately 1500m² the excavation brought to light part of the Roman marble paved avenue (*Decumanus Maximus*), its interaction with the *cardo*, the main road of the city, as well as workshops, and bazaar-style stalls on both sides of the road, organized in large building blocks, and parts of a monumental paved square surrounded by colonnades. The whole complex forms a remarkable architectural palimpsest that traces the layout and organization of the urban core of Thessaloniki from late antiquity up to the transitional period and the beginning of the Middle Byzantine times (4th - 9th century AD).

A Ministerial Decision issued in 2017 provided for the in situ preservation and enhancement of the whole archaeological complex, while, at the same time, the construction works for the Metro Station could proceed as scheduled. However, based on a new Ministerial Decision issued in March 2020, the monuments complex will be detached and temporarily removed and will be placed back when the station's construction works are completed. Recently (23/09/2020) the Central Archaeological Council approved the final technical study for the removal of the Venizelos Station antiquities and their repositioning after the completion of the metro construction works.

ICOMOS Hellenic and many heritage and scientific associations and organizations consider that this is an alarming situation since the implementation of the new Ministerial Decision will lead to the fragmentation of the monument, the cancellation of its cultural value and, finally, to the loss of its authenticity, thus causing an irreversible damage to this unique and singularly significant archaeological complex. The effort to prevent such an evolution is strongly supported by many local, national and international institutions, experts and authorities.

ICOMOS Hellenic appeals for the preservation and maintenance in situ of the Venizelos Station antiquities according to the 2017 Ministerial Decision, taking into consideration that this outstanding architectural ensemble constitutes an integral part of the history of the city of Thessaloniki and of the world cultural heritage. This solution aligns with the principles of the main global heritage conventions of UNESCO, the Venice Charter (1964), as well as the Conventions of Amsterdam (1975), of Granada (1987) and of Valetta (1994).

1-0 Identity of Building/Artefact/Object/Place

- 1-1 Current name and original name.*
Venizelos Station antiquities
- 1-2 Location Town, Country, Street
Venizelou and Egnatia St., Thessaloniki, Greece
- 1-3 Classification/ Type of place
Archaeological site
- 1-4 Current Heritage Protection Status
Archaeological Law 3028/2002 (Presidential Degree 153/A/28-06-20)

2-0 Statement of Significance and History

2-1 Statement of Significance

The significance of the Venizelos Station antiquities lies in the fact that this monumental ensemble demonstrates over a large area the public space structure of Thessaloniki -the second most important city of the Byzantine Empire- also known from other Byzantine cities but never revealed in such a large scale and a good state of preservation. So far there is no comparable complex in other Byzantine cities, not even in Constantinople, that features in such clarity the monumental urban planning and structure dating from late antiquity up to the transitional period and the beginning of the Middle Byzantine times (4th - 9th century AD).

Furthermore, the Venizelos Station archaeological complex is historically and culturally related with an ensemble of 15 monuments of Thessaloniki, which have been designated, in 1988, as World Heritage sites and were included in the UNESCO List. The inscribed religious monuments which are located along the *Decumanus Maximus* are the churches of Panagia Chalkeon (11th c.), Panagia Acheiropoietos (5th c.), the Transfiguration of the Saviour (14th c.) and Saint Panteleimon (late 13th/early 14th c.). All 15 inscribed monuments were included in the List for their outstanding design and major artistic value and because they constitute a diachronic typological series, which had considerable influence in the Byzantine world.

2-2 History of place

The excavation works within the framework of the Metropolitan Railway of Thessaloniki construction begun in July 2006. The largest part of the construction project is located in the historic center of Thessaloniki, where the antiquities of the Venizelos Station came to light, among others, in 2012. Among the finds of Venizelos Station area are included part of the *Decumanus maximus* and the *Cardo*, workshops and bazaar-style stalls on both sides of the road organized in large building blocks, as well as parts of a monumental paved square surrounded by colonnades. According to the Central Archaeological Council (session No2/15-01-2013) the Venizelos

Station antiquities are considered as a whole, forming an important archaeological site and a unique example of the Byzantine urban space preserved in situ and a solid testimony, at international level, to the function of Byzantine cities.

A Ministerial Decision issued in 2017 provided for the in situ preservation and enhancement of the whole archaeological complex, while, at the same time, the works of the constructing the Metro Station could proceed. However, based on a new consultation of the Central Archaeological Council (19/12/2019), it was decided (Prot. No 41484/24488/1402/162/10-2-2017) that the monuments complex will be detached and removed temporarily and will be placed back when the station's construction works are completed. This decision has brought about many reactions and protests from a wide range of scientific associations and institutions in Greece.

2-3 Date of project/ Date of construction/ Finishing of work

The monuments of the Venizelos Station archaeological site date from Late Antiquity (4th century AD) up to the transitional period and the beginning of the Middle Byzantine times (9th century AD).

2-4 Architect/Designers

2-5 Architect/Designers still living? Residence, country of birth, contact details

2-6 Original and current use of building/place

2-7 Changes, additions

2-8 Current condition and use

The antiquities revealed in the Venizelos Station area are generally preserved in a very good condition, especially the main marble-paved roads and the monuments and public spaces, shops and jewelers' workshops, which are authentic and easily read.

2-9 Original design intent and use

Since the findings came to light in 2012 there has been a coordinated effort to preserve them in situ and to have them displayed within the station. In this direction the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports issued in 2015 a Ministerial Decision (Prot. No 180615/107503/9126/533/6-10-2015) for the in situ preservation of the antiquities of Venizelos Station. In 2017 a Ministerial Decision was issued (Prot. No 41484/24488/1402/162/10-2-2017) approving the final proposal compiled in collaboration between the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and the Attiko Metro S.A. (the company responsible for the construction of the Thessaloniki metro), which made it possible for the station to be built and the antiquities to remain in situ. In autumn 2019, however, and while the implementation of the aforementioned

Decision had already begun, Attiko Metro S.A. changed its construction plan strategy (following a change in the management of the company) and refused to implement the initially approved plan. Instead, they requested that the antiquities shall be broken into pieces and be moved to another location; according to this new plan, whereas, some of them would be returned after the station is built, but placed at a different level within it. Based on a new consultation of the Central Archaeological Council, it was decided (Ministerial Decision 113578/77401/2386/139/4-3-2020) to accept the new proposition of the Attiko Metro S.A. and to remove the antiquities by breaking them into pieces. Recently (23/09/2020) the Central Archaeological Council approved the technical study for the removal and replacement of the Venizelos Station antiquities. The Hellenic Society of Environment and Cultural Heritage and the Christian Archaeological Society have submitted an appeal to the Council of State for the annulment of the above mentioned Decision (Ministerial Decision 113578/77401/2386/139/4-3-2020). The Council has scheduled to discuss the issue in November 6th 2020.

3-0 Description (history and technology)

3-1 Physical description

The Venizelos Station antiquities are laid along the east-west oriented *Decumanus Maximus* and the north-south oriented *cardo*. The *Decumanus Maximus* was paved with irregular marble slabs, bordered by marble kerbs and lined with colonnades. The carriageway is 4.60m. wide, while the width of the street in total, including the sidewalks and porticos, is 16m. wide. The excavations brought to light, in excellent condition, part of this road, 77m. long. The intersection *Decumanus Maximus* with the *cardo* is flanked by rows of piers creating covered passages on either side of the roadways, while above the intersection itself rose a *tetrapylon*, a monumental quadruple arch under which the two roads passed.

On either side of the *Decumanus Maximus* were large public and private building complexes, which were very likely official residences, as well as a marble paved square surrounded by colonnades. Their construction dates back at least to the beginning of the 4th century, and they were in use until the end of the 5th, with intermediate alterations. Between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century their floors seem to have been paved with mosaics and their walls decorated with marble revetments. In the third decade of the 7th century, many of these buildings were largely destroyed by a series of catastrophic earthquakes. The piazzas, however, were repaired and remained in use, while efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate the city immediately after the devastation apparently included the construction of new buildings as well as the re-building, repair and re-use of others. This is illustrated by the fine building from this time that was found beneath the

Venizelou Station, its façade punctuated by tall piers incorporating older marble elements in their construction.

3-2 Construction system used

The monumental ensemble is not a construction but a set of many dissimilar constructions. They are part of a city consisting of two intersecting roads, made of different materials, of the massive bases of high supports (of the quadruple), a paved square and adjacent buildings / "rooms" with walls of different heights and of different materials each, floors made of a variety of materials, entrance thresholds and rainwater and waste pipes and channels.

3-3 Physical context/setting

The Venizelos Station antiquities form part of the historic center of Thessaloniki and complement significantly its historic and cultural profile. Combined with the remains of the Ancient Agora and the Galerian palace complex, which are also arranged along the *Decumanus Maximus*, they form a unique monumental unit that entails a significant effect on the topography of the city with the potential, if properly preserved, to give the public urban space a new key position in the city's everyday life.

3-4 Social and cultural context and value

This imposing architectural landmark, situated in the heart of the historic center of Thessaloniki adds to the history of the city and unfolds fragments of its past that generate added cultural value for the wider area. The antiquities that came to light deploy the stratification of the city from late Antiquity to the middle ages.

In order for this cultural value to become a social one, it is crucial that the archaeological site of Venizelos Station is properly preserved and integrated into the contemporary urban planning and public space and to be bequeathed to the next generations. The implementation of the first Ministerial Decision (2017) for the in situ preservation of the antiquities does not prevent the continuation of the metro construction works, which are of great benefit for the city of Thessaloniki, and furthermore it secures the harmonious co-existence between the historic structures and the modern infrastructure.

3-5 Materials/fabric/form/function

3-6 Aesthetic value

4-0 Source of Alert

4-1 Proposer(s) of Heritage Alert, contact details

Athanasios Nakasis, ICOMOS Hellenic
 0030 6932448467, anakasis@gmail.com
 Sofia Avgerinou-Kolonias, ICOMOS Hellenic

0030 6977610235, sofia.kolonia@gmail.com

- 4-2 Groups supporting Heritage Alert and/or nomination, with contact details
- Association of Cypriot Archaeologists, www.cypriotarchaeologists.org.cy
 - Association of Employees of Ministry of Culture of Northern Greece silyppo@otenet.gr
 - Association of Temporary Archaeologists (SEKA), sekarchaeologists@gmail.com
 - Association "Friends of Thessaloniki Monuments" filoimnion@gmail.com
 - Association of Greek Archaeologists (SEA) sea@gmail.com
 - Association "Philologus", filologos1962@yahoo.gr
 - Association of Scuba Divers of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports
 - Association of University Graduate Architects - Panhellenic Union of Architects sadas-pea@tee.gr
 - Association of University Teachers, University of Thessaloniki, hfeidas@geo.auth.gr
 - Byzantinist Society of Cyprus info@byzantinistsociety.org.cy
 - Christian Archaeological Society (ChAE) Chael884@gmail.com
 - Department of History and Archaeology, University of Crete history-archaeology@ia.uoc.gr
 - Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology, University of Thessaly g-ha@uth.gr
 - European Centre for Byzantine and Post-byzantine Monuments (ECBMM) info@ekbmm.gr
 - Faculty of History and Archaeology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, dep-history@uoa.gr
 - Interdepartmental Program of Postgraduate Studies "Protection, Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Monuments", <http://prosynapo.web.auth.gr>
 - Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Environment and Culture Heritage sep@ellinikietairia.gr
 - ICOMOS Hellenic National Committee icomoshellenic@gmail.com
 - Monumenta. For the Protection of the Natural and Architectural Heritage in Greece and Cyprus info@monumenta.org
 - Panhellenic Association of Conservators of Antiquities (PACA)

pesagreek@gmail.com

–School of Civil Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

info@civil.auth.gr

–Society for the Research and Promotion of the Scientific Restoration of Monuments (ETEPAM) etepam/etepam@gmail.com

4-3 Groups potentially against Heritage Alert action

- Government of Greece
- The Mayor of Thessaloniki
- Central Macedonia Region
- Attiko Metro S.A.

4-4 Local, Regional, International significance citations about the place

- Byzantinology scholar Paolo Odorico, director of the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, visited the antiquities of Venizelos Station in 2013. He argued that the displacement of the Byzantine Middle Road would irreversibly destroy the structural authenticity of the antiquities of the monumental set, a value protected by international and Greek law.

"...What the metro construction procedures have brought to light is the Byzantine Pompeii! Do you understand? And do you plan to remove it and reattach it later? Are you crazy? Will you make your antiquities a Lego game? Are you planning to set up the Byzantine Disneyland? Tell us! And take on your responsibilities..."

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/01/06/byzantine-pompeii-archaeological-discovery-in-greece-will-be-moved-to-make-way-for-the-thessaloniki-subway/>

- AVAZ Petition "The unique antiquities at Thessaloniki's Venizelos Station should remain in situ - and the Metro project should proceed!"

There were lengthy consultations, in-depth technical studies and perfectly legal procedures from 2014 until the Ministry's decision of February 2017, which provided for the in situ preservation of the Mesi Odos (Midway) of the Roman and Christian periods of Thessaloniki, above the subway lines.

This decision allowed both the preservation of these exceptional antiquities in their true context instead of as a fake scenic reconstruction as well as the immediate advance of the metro's construction. Now the Ministry of Culture is putting these unique antiquities in grave danger by calling for a meeting of the Central Archeological Council's (KΑΣ) -whose members are appointed by

the Ministry itself - on Wednesday December 18th, to revise overnight the previous decision and to decide the immediate removal of the ancient urban fabric, promising that it will be reinstated on the completion of the Metro Station.

But the same assurance had been given before when detaching the Nymphaeum that had been discovered at the adjacent Station of Agia Sophia, an assurance which could not be and was not realised in practice. Even less convincing are the uncertain estimates of cost savings and project duration. On the contrary, according to the Greek Archaeological Law, the technically problematic dispatch of the ancient findings will necessarily be followed by:

- *long excavations of an unknown number of archaeological layers,*
- *subsequent delay and*
- *disturbance of the European Commission's financial support.*

We are raising our voices against this abrupt move by the Ministry's political leadership, particularly unexpected in view of the absence of any such pre-election commitment from any political party in the recent national elections. We urge that a unique experience of the historic Thessaloniki will not be lost forever and that the previous, serious and thorough, decision of the Central Archeological Council (KAΣ) be respected.

Until October 4th 2020, 56.888 people have signed for the unique antiquities at Thessaloniki's Venizelos Station to remain in situ - and the Metro project to proceed

https://secure.avaaz.org/community_petitions/el/prothypoyrgos_kos_kyriakos_mitsotakis_ypoyrgos_pol_metro_thessalonikis_na_diatirithoyn_in_situ_ta_arhaia_sto_stathmo_venizeloy/

- Dr. Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki, Former Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture and Sports

"...Thus, our set direction targets the functional integration of the antiquities, which complement the historical profile of the city center, into the daily life of both residents and visitors of the city. the metro stations shall act as the underground shells where the historical evidence of the city will be displayed, becoming engaged in a dialogue with the antiquities displayed on site. this will add historical content to such a modern technical project, which has already aroused the interest of the technical sector due to the special technical solutions selected for the protection and display of the antiquities. in addition, monuments within archaeological finds will be developed in un-built public areas of the city; together with the remaining monuments of the region, they will form an aesthetic and functional whole, unique worldwide, which will confer a

new identity to the public urban space of this modern city and transform Thessaloniki into an open museum..."

Source: The Metro-nome of Thessaloniki's history (2018), eds P.Adam-Veleni, Y.A.Mylonopoulos, Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Sports, Ephorate of Antiquities of Thessaloniki City, Attiko Metro S.A., Hellenic Ministry of Infrastructures & Transport (ISBN: 978-960-86610-9-7)

4-5 Letters of support for Heritage Alert action, newspaper articles, etc.

1. Europa Nostra

to the Members of the Central Archaeological Council (KAS)

The Hague, 16 December 2019

EUROPA NOSTRA APPEAL FOR THE

ANTIQUITIES OF VENIZELOS METRO STATION IN THESSALONIKI

EUROPA NOSTRA, representing on the European level civil society organisations that are committed to the safeguard of Europe’s cultural and natural heritage, expresses its concern and strong reservations in respect of proposed changes, already publicly announced, regarding the planned in situ preservation of the antiquities that have been discovered at the Venizelos Metro Station in Thessaloniki.

EUROPA NOSTRA underlines the European significance of the aforementioned archaeological remains, which constitute a unique find of an urban ensemble of monumental scale and in a very good state of preservation. It is the only one preserved in the whole area once occupied by the Eastern Roman Empire and dating to the relatively unknown Late Roman and Early Byzantine period (4th-9th century AD).

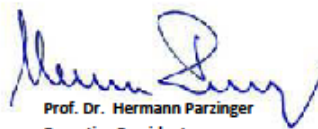
EUROPA NOSTRA is convinced that any alteration to the solution already agreed of in situ preservation and valorization of the antiquities will represent a very negative development; in particular the reinstatement of an earlier proposal to temporarily remove and later reinstall antiquities after the completion of the station’s construction will cause irreparable damage to the physical condition of the antiquities during their extraction and removal as well as a drastic reduction in the authenticity of the monumental ensemble. It will lead instead to the creation of a scenic setting within a contemporary metro station, while reducing radically the historical, cultural and educational value and significance of the archaeological remains. Furthermore, it is certain that the archaeological excavation, that compulsorily - in accordance with the Greek Archaeological Law - will follow the removal of the antiquities, will cause a further delay and probably unavoidable cost increases, in a much delayed but much expected public work, as is the metro of Thessaloniki, scheduled currently to be completed by 2023.

EUROPA NOSTRA considers the co-existence between antiquities and contemporary cities as an appropriate solution which is in accordance with contemporary conservation and development trends throughout Europe. These aim to upgrade and revitalize historic city centres through highlighting their monumental background, which constitutes a valuable resource and indeed investment of education and into historical memory and sense of belonging, generating economic growth and psychological well-being for European citizens, as well as increasing attractiveness of the city for tourism.

For these reasons, EUROPA NOSTRA appeals to the Greek government to continue the implementation of the already agreed conservation in situ of the archaeological remains at the Venizelos Metro Station in Thessaloniki. This would be consistent with the European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage signed in Valetta (1992), ratified by Greece in 2005, mandating signatories *“to make provision, when elements of the archaeological heritage have been found during development work, for their conservation in situ when feasible”* (Article 5, IV).

We remain confident that our appeal will be heard and followed by all bodies concerned.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Hermann Parzinger
Executive President



The Voice of
Cultural Heritage
in Europe

La Voix du
patrimoine culturel
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www.eurapanostra.org

International Secretariat
Secrétariat International
Lange Vlietstraat 35
NL - 2514 FF Den Haag
T +31 70 502 40 50
F +31 70 561 78 85
E info@eurapanostra.org

Brussels office
Bureau de Bruxelles
Rue de Tivoli 62
B - 1060 Bruxelles
T +32 2 490 77 00
F +32 2 454 30 00
E br@eurapanostra.org

ING Bank (NL) N° B3 48 850
IBAN: NL31ING00018501000
BIC: INGBNL2A

KvK (NL) N° 12081560



2. Association of Greek Archaeologists

**ASSOCIATION OF GREEK ARCHAEOLOGISTS**

Ermou 136, 10553, Athens. Tel-Fax.: +30 2103252214, E-mail:archaeol@otenet.gr,
www.sea.org.gr

Athens, 13/2/2020

Pr. Number: 58

Ms Mechtild Roessler
Director of the UNESCO
World Heritage Centre
7 Place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris CEDEX 07
France

Dear Ms Roessler,

During construction work on the Thessaloniki Metro, extremely important finds came to light at seven of the twelve stations (complete presentation in the attached book). The most significant of them all were at the 'Venizelou' station, where excavations revealed a monumental complex in exceptional condition. The site preserves a section of secular Byzantine Thessaloniki, the junction of the Decumanus maximus and the Cardo, along with multiple layers of the city's history (see the attached archaeological presentation by the excavator). The find constitutes an intact urban complex, and is an historical site of unique significance and importance.

Its significance lies in the fact that this is the first time that the Byzantine cityscape from the 4th to the 9th century has been revealed over such a large area (1500m²) and in such an excellent state of preservation. Authentic and easily read, the site includes the main marble-paved roads in their full width and the monuments and public spaces, shops and jewellers' workshops that marked their intersection. Of course, it also highlights the historical continuity of the city, which retains the same city plan in this area to this day, along with the same functions and uses. Beneath the present-day junction of Egnatia and Venizelou streets and the goldsmiths' workshops that stand here today, we see the Byzantine crossroads of Decumanus and Cardo streets, lined with shops where jewellery was made and sold.

The find may be unique: Thessaloniki was the second most important city in the empire after Constantinople over this period. Given that there is no comparable urban complex visible in modern-day Istanbul, the find made during the excavations at the Venizelou Metro station comprises the only such section of a Byzantine city in the world, with an urban structure, monumental form and unbroken presence from the first years of the Empire through to the transitional period between the 7th and 9th centuries, which are

also known as the 'dark centuries' due to the almost total absence of archaeological finds dating from them.

This find is linked directly to the important monuments in Thessaloniki which have been designated World Heritage sites and included on the UNESCO list: the Decumanus maximus, which survives in its full width over a length of 77 metres, is the road which ran through the walled city and around which the religious, social and commercial life of Byzantine Thessaloniki revolved down the centuries. The religious monuments along its length which are included on the UNESCO World Heritage list include the churches of Panagia Chalkeon (11th c.), Panagia Acheiropoietos (5th c.), the Transfiguration of the Saviour (14th c.) and Saint Panteleimon (late 13th/early 14th c.).

Since the find came to light in 2012, the Association of Greek Archaeologists and numerous other scientific and academic bodies have been fighting to conserve the find in situ and to have it displayed within the station. In 2015, the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sport (see the attached Ministerial Decision) decided that the antiquities would indeed remain in situ. In 2017 (see the attached Ministerial Decision), following a collaboration between the Ministry and Attiko Metro S.A. (a state company responsible for constructing the Metro), a solution was found which allowed the station to be built and the antiquities to remain in place. Work began on the initial stages of its implementation. In autumn 2019, a change in the management of the company was followed by a sudden change in the design of the Venizelou Metro station. Attiko Metro S.A. is now refusing to implement the plan which would allow the station to be built with the antiquities left in situ, and has requested that the remains be broken into pieces smaller than 7x5m so they can be moved to another location; according to this new plan, a section of the remains would be returned after the station is built, but placed at a different level within it. Following this new proposition from the Attiko Metro S.A., the Central Archaeological Council has also changed its position by dint of the opinion it issued on 18/12. A Ministerial Decision is now expected that will allow the antiquities to be broken up, resulting in irreversible damage to the authenticity and integrity of a unique and singularly significant archaeological complex.

A large number of scientific bodies and other organizations in Greece and abroad have already issued resolutions (see the attached list) which seek to avert this potential catastrophe.

We ask you to consider the issue and to help prevent a catastrophe.

Sincerely,

For The Board of the Association of Greek Archaeologists,

THE PRESIDENT THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Stamatia Marketou Eirini Skiadaresi

Attachments: 1. Book The Metro-nome of Thessaloniki History

2. Archaeological presentation

3. 2015 Ministerial Decision (in Greek)

4. 2017 Ministerial Decision (in Greek)

5. List of resolutions

3. Professor John Haldon, President, Association Internationale des etudes Byzantines



To:
Mr Kyriakos Mitsotakis,
Prime Minister, Hellenic Republic
cc. Dr Lina Mendoni, Ministry of Culture, Hellenic Republic
Tuesday April 21st, 2020

Dear Sir,

I write in my capacity as President of the International Association of Byzantine Studies (AIEB) and on behalf of all our members with regard to the current plans for construction of the Venizelou station in Thessaloniki. The AIEB is the representative organization for all scholars of Byzantine history, culture and civilization in some 40+ countries worldwide, and it is with deep concern that we have been observing the changing plans for the important antiquities and archaeological materials excavated in the course of preparing the construction of the metro station. After initial concerns that the antiquities and the priceless scientific information they contain would be damaged, we were delighted to see the ratification in 2015 of the alternative plans to develop the station while leaving the antiquities intact. It is, in consequence, with the greatest disappointment that we note the 2019 order from you, Prime Minister, to remove and then replace the material.

As specialists in the field of Byzantine Studies we wish to emphasise the high level of damage that will result from moving the antiquities, and to note that this is not simply a case of damage to the physical material itself, but also to the context in which it is located, which is in itself the source of a potentially vast amount of crucially important information, derived less by traditional 'archaeological' methods than by modern scientific processes of collecting and analyzing data.

As our archaeological colleagues note in the letter accompanying this appeal, this is not simply a question of the discovery of antiquities in a remarkable state of preservation; they and the context in which they are found constitute an unparalleled and unique example of Byzantine urban space in its original setting – a cultural as well as a scientific jewel. Greece has an outstanding reputation globally for the care and concern it has always invested in its archaeological and cultural heritage. It would be a tragedy to jeopardise this well-earned reputation by squandering the treasure of the Thessaloniki material and data through an unnecessarily hasty construction project. Given the existence of a viable plan that meets local and national infrastructure needs and that has met with approval both nationally and

internationally, it must appear peculiarly short-sighted of any government to ignore it, along with the costs to national and international heritage that this would entail.

In line with the position outlined by Europa Nostra and many other non-governmental bodies, professional agencies and individuals, I write therefore to urge you, Prime Minister, and through you the government of the Hellenic Republic, to reconsider this decision as a matter of urgency.

With respect, your sincerely,



*Prof. John F. Haldon
President, Association Internationale des Études Byzantines
History Department,
Dickinson Hall,
Princeton University,
Princeton NJ 08544
USA*

4. Prof. A. Vionis, chair, on behalf of the Commission for Byzantine Archaeology of the International Association of Byzantine Studies

Venizelos Metro Station, Thessaloniki

Several members of the Association Internationale des Études Byzantines (AIEB) have already stated their opposition to the Hellenic Government's decision to remove the Early Byzantine finds unearthed during construction works in the Thessaloniki Metro by signing, as individuals, the Citizens' Group online petitions calling for the archaeological remains to remain in place. However, the Bureau of the AIEB and its Commission for Byzantine Archaeology wish to express through this Press Release their deep concern and disappointment regarding the decision issued by the country's Central Archaeological Council (19/12/2019), authorising the transfer of the finds to another area.

As professionals and active researchers within the various fields of Byzantine Studies, we would like to emphasise, as previously stated by Europa Nostra and other nongovernmental bodies and professionals, the emergent need to preserve the remains of the road-complex and its surrounding structures in situ. The removal from their original position will be destructive, while the preservation of this unique and priceless archaeological discovery will comprise a constant reminder of the city's glorious past in a subterranean museum.

Although the discovery has been called a "Byzantine Pompeii" in different occasions, we would stress that the remains in the city's Byzantine and modern centre are not just a Byzantine version of Roman Pompeii. They constitute much more, not just because of their remarkable state of preservation but most importantly because they provide an unparalleled screening of the concept of Byzantine urban space in situ. Thus, archaeological evidence must continue to be accessible, instructive and intact. We are confident that the Hellenic authorities in charge, namely the Government, the Central Archaeological Council and Attic Metro SA, will reconsider the consequences of their recent decision and will manage, even at this stage, to find the most orthodox solution that will be both economically sustainable and will respect the remains and the irreplaceable notion of urban space in the 'second city' of a diverse and multi-ethnic Byzantine Empire. Prof. A. Vionis, chair, on behalf of the Commission for Byzantine Archaeology.

5. The Italian Federation of University Councils of Archeology

The Italian Federation of University Councils of Archeology is in favor of preserving in situ the Venizelos Station antiquities and, at the same time, proceeding with the metro construction works. The president of the Federation, Giuliano Volpe, states that "*...the removal and replacement of the archaeological remains imply elaborated and complicated works, which are also extremely intervening and damaging and inevitably lead to the creation of a copy, even though it consists of original pieces...*"



In qualità di Presidente della **Consulta Universitaria delle Archeologie Postclassiche**, alla quale sono iscritti i docenti di Archeologia tardoantica, cristiana e medievale, e della **Federazione delle Consulte Universitarie di Archeologia**, che rappresenta i docenti di archeologia (Preistoria e Protostoria, Archeologia classica, Archeologia cristiana e medievale, Archeologia orientale, Numismatica) delle università italiane, esprimo la preoccupazione degli archeologi italiani per i rischi che corre un contesto archeologico di straordinaria importanza e complessità quale quello della *Venizelos Metro Station di Thessaloniki*.

Non riteniamo opportuno offrire indicazioni alle Autorità greche, che certamente hanno a cuore le sorti di tale sito archeologico e sapranno trovare a soluzione migliore possibile, e in tal senso ci limitiamo ad auspicare che siano garantite tutte le migliori condizioni per la sua conoscenza, lo studio, la tutela, la valorizzazione e la fruizione pubblica.

Al tempo stesso, ci permettiamo di suggerire – perché, in linea di principio generale, rappresenta a nostro parere la migliore delle scelte possibili sotto il profilo scientifico e culturale - la conservazione *in situ* adottando tutte le misure per conciliare la salvaguardia dei resti archeologici e la realizzazione di una infrastruttura così importante come la stazione della Metropolitana, che potrà diventare anche uno dei più bei 'musei' archeologici al mondo, un luogo nel quale illustrare pagine importanti della storia della città, una testimonianza del profondo legame tra il passato, il presente e il futuro di Thessaloniki.

Lo smontaggio e il rimontaggio delle strutture archeologiche sono, infatti, non solo operazioni molto delicate e complesse ma anche fortemente invasive e 'distruttive', che portano inevitabilmente alla creazione di una sorta di 'copia' sia pur realizzata con pezzi originali. Le tecnologie attuali consentono certamente la possibilità di conservare *in situ* il contesto archeologico, pur con inevitabili 'sacrifici', compatibilmente con la realizzazione della stazione.

Auspichiamo pertanto che tutte le Autorità greche, nazionali e locali, vogliano riconsiderare il progetto e adottare una soluzione che porrebbe ancor di più la Grecia all'avanguardia nel mondo nel campo della ricerca archeologica urbana e delle strategie di convivenza di resti archeologici e infrastrutture tecnologiche moderne.

Nell'occasione si porgono i migliori saluti.

Roma, 25.4.2020

Il Presidente
Prof. Giuliano Volpe

6. Christian Archaeological Society



ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΑΙΧΑΡΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑ / CHRISTIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
 SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF BYZANTINE AND POST-BYZANTINE ARCHAEOLOGY AND ART,
 Byzantine and Christian Museum, 22, Vas. Sophias Ave., GR-106 75 Athens, tel + 30 213 213 9556 www.chae.gr
 e-mail: chae1884@gmail.com http://ejournal.s.publishing.ekt.gr/index.php/deltion http://eproc.eedin
 gs.publishing.ekt.gr/index.php/chaeh http://ebooks.publishing.ekt.gr/index.php/chaeh Athens, October 2, 2019

RESOLUTION FOR THE THESSALONIKI METRO *The*

Administrative Board of the Christian Archaeological Society has held an extraordinary meeting because of the announcement by the prime minister at the 2019 International Fair of Thessaloniki regarding the fate of a unique archaeological discovery, namely the Tetrapylon and the city's central streets, i.e. the Mese (decumanus maximus) and the intersecting cardo, which led to the port of the second city of the Byzantine empire, Thessaloniki. The Board decided to appeal to the country's prime minister and demand action to resolve the important issue of the Thessaloniki Metro, in order to help preserve this unique discovery in situ as an accessible archaeological site, in harmony with the transportation needs of the city.

As we had argued in an earlier resolution (2014), only the preservation of the medieval palimpsest in situ (in accordance to the resolution by the Central Archaeological Council since 2017), will allow the visitor to grasp the unique diachrony of Thessaloniki, with the modern streets of Egnatia and Venizelou superimposed over the medieval ones. The Hellenic State must continue the work already in progress and implement the remaining projects aiming at the preservation of the unique antiquities in situ as well as the construction of the metro station. The continuation of the scheduled works will ensure that the monumental ensemble that has been uncovered will maintain its authenticity, by remaining in place, without obstructing the functions of the modern city, in accordance with the possibilities offered by 21st-century technology. The realization of this goal will provide the residents of Thessaloniki with an invaluable monument attesting to their city's centuries-long history and all visitors, Greeks and foreigners, with a distinctive site.

It is reminded that this is the diachronic monumental center of Thessaloniki, a worldwide unique ensemble documenting the development of a medieval city, which we are lucky enough to have in Greece and which makes up, to a degree, for the loss of the urban fabric of the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople. In this case, our responsibility toward

the history of world civilization is enormous and we are obliged to rise to the occasion.

On behalf of the Administrative Board of the Christian Archaeological Society,

The President



*Professor Emerita
Maria Panayotidi-Kesisoglou
National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens*

The General Secretary



*Dr Ioanna Bitha
Research Centre for Byzantine
Byzantine Art | Academy of Athen*

- 7. Osterreichische Byzantinische Gesellschaft**
- 8. Societa degli Archaeologi Medievisti Italiani**

4-6 Publications that describe the work/place, bibliography, etc.

- *The Metro-nome of Thessaloniki's history* (2018), eds P.Adam-Veleni, Y.A.Mylonopoulos, Hellenic Ministry of Culture & Sports, Ephorate of Antiquities of Thessaloniki City, Attiko Metro S.A., Hellenic Ministry of Infrastructures & Transport (ISBN: 978-960-86610-9-7). See attachment.
- Κρ. Κωνσταντινίδου – Τ. Πρωτοψάλτη – Μ. Μίζα, «Ο μετασχηματισμός τουπολεοδομικού ιστού της Θεσσαλονίκης από τους ρωμαϊκούς χρόνους έως και την πυρκαγιά του 1917 μέσα από τα ευρήματα στον Σταθμό Βενιζέλου», Δημερίδα «Αρχαιότητες σε τροχιά» (Θεσσαλονίκη, 11-12 Απριλίου 2019) (υπό έκδοση)
- Μ. Παϊσίδου – Στ. Βασιλειάδου – Κ. Κωνσταντινίδου, «Μετρό Θεσσαλονίκης 2010. Το έργο της 9ης Εφορείας Βυζαντινών Αρχαιοτήτων», ΑΕΜΘ 24 (2010), Θεσσαλονίκη 2014, 223-234
- Δ. Μακροπούλου – Στ. Βασιλειάδου – Κ. Κωνσταντινίδου – Στ. Τζεβρένη, «Πολεοδομικές και χωροταξικές παρατηρήσεις για τη Θεσσαλονίκη από τους παλαιοχριστιανικούς έως τους νεότερους χρόνους στο πλαίσιο κατασκευής του Μετρό», ΑΕΜΘ 25 (2011), Θεσσαλονίκη 2015, 317-326
- Anagnostopoulos, C. , Sextos, A., Bikas, D., Stylianidis, K., Angelides, D., Avramidis, I., & Kyrkopoulou, K. (2017). Alternative Solutions to Preserve the Revealed Byzantine Antiquities at the Venizelou Metro Station of Thessaloniki. *International Journal of Architectural Heritage*, 11(4), 539-553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15583058.2016.1266415>
- Makropoulou, D., 2014. Findings of Byzantine Thessaloniki during the construction of the city Metropolitan Railway (in Greek). In: 34th Symposium on Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Archaeology and Art, Athens

4-7 Time constraints for advocacy (immediate action/delayed action)

Immediate action should be taken since it is a matter of time for the 2020 Ministerial Decision (Prot. No 113578/77401/2386/139/4-3-2020) to be implemented and the ancient remains at the Venizelos Station to be broken into pieces and moved to another location

5-0 Recommended action

5-1 Heritage Alert: international/national distribution via ICOMOS?
YES

5-2 Letter (s) to? (Provide names and full contact details)

- President of the Hellenic Republic
Vasileos Georgiou B', n.2, Athens P.C. 100 28
pr@presidency.gr
- Office of the Minister of State and Government Representative
Megaron Maximou, Irodou Attikou 19, 10674 Athens
ekprosopos@kyvernisi.gr
- Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports

Bouboulinas 20-22, 10681, Athens Greece

minoff@culture.gr

- UNESCO World Heritage Centre
7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris CEDEX 07, France

5-3 ICOMOS National or Scientific Committee, or international Website upload ?

- ICOMOS Hellenic National Committee

5-4 Affiliated organisation distribution?

- International committee on Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM)
- International committee on Historic Cities, Towns and Villages (CIVVIH)
- Docomomo International
- Europa Nostra

5-5 Other actions recommended?

Appeal for international letters of support, personal or institutional

6-0 Desired outcome

6-1 Legal protection or improved legal protection

ICOMOS Hellenic stresses the importance of implementing clear and transparent decision-making on in situ preservation and of creating creative strategies for on-site presentation according the ethical, constitutional and legal provisions. Under this perspective it is of crucial importance that the invaluable ancient ruins of Venizelos Station are preserved in situ in alignment with international principles and guidelines for the protection of cultural heritage and especially:

- The principles of the main global heritage conventions (UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris, 16 November 1972 / UNESCO Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations, 5 December 1956 / UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage, 17 October 2003), which require conservation and enhancement of the historical and aesthetic values of the monuments along with the preservation of authentic materials and structures.
- Article 7 of the Venice Charter (1965) "*A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interest of paramount importance*"
- The Convention of Amsterdam (1975) so that the intergraded conservation is firmly based not only on the protection of the monument but also on the

interacting function of the surroundings (in this case the nearby Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman cultural sites).

- Article 5 of the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985, Granada) "*.. Each Party undertakes to prohibit the removal, in whole or in part, of any protected monument, except where the material safeguarding of such monuments makes removal imperative. In these circumstances the competent authority shall take the necessary precautions for its dismantling, transfer and reinstatement at a suitable location...*"
- Article 6 of the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (1990): "*...The overall objective of archaeological heritage management should be the preservation of monuments and sites in situ, including proper long-term conservation and curation of all related records and collections etc. Any transfer of elements of the heritage to new locations represents a violation of the principle of preserving the heritage in its original context. This principle stresses the need for proper maintenance, conservation and management. It also asserts the principle that the archaeological heritage should not be exposed by excavation or left exposed after excavation if provision for its proper maintenance and management after excavation cannot be guaranteed...*"
- The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valetta 1992). "*...Article 4: "Each Party undertakes to implement measures for the physical protection of the archaeological heritage, making provision, as circumstances demand: ...[....] ii for the conservation and maintenance of the archaeological heritage, preferably in situ;..."*

6-2 Stopping of works that are/will alter the heritage

Not to proceed with the implementation of the recently (2020) approved catastrophic solution that involves the detachment of the antiquities in pieces and their repositioning. Such a project endangers the monument's integrity and authenticity, since its individual parts must be dismantled in order to be removed and then reassembled, a process with catastrophic consequences. Part of this historic urban unit consists of successive deposits of embankments that are inhomogeneous in composition, density, degree of preservation, as well as building materials. It is therefore, impossible for it to be shredded without causing irreparable damage to its material substance. Furthermore, its intangible integrity and authenticity will be completely destroyed. Only by protecting the tangible finds we will be able to safeguard the intangible elements that testify to the everyday life of those people who built and used the edifices and structures in the past and to the high quality of life both public and private at this particular period in Thessaloniki.

6-3 Stopping of permits that would result in irretrievable loss of the heritage

- To proceed to the annulment of the 2020 Ministerial Decision (Prot. No 113578/77401/2386/139/4-3-2020
- To adopt and implement the first (2017) Ministerial Decision (Prot. No 41484/24488/1402/162/10-2-2017) for the preservation and maintenance of the Venizelos Station archaeological findings in situ, which allowed the station to be built and the antiquities to remain in place. In that way the monumental complexes that came to light will be functionally integrated into the daily life of both residents and visitors of the city, while the authenticity of historic phases of the city of Thessaloniki will be also preserved.

6-4 Imposing minimum maintenance to stop further decay pending conservation/restoration work

6-5 Modifying the project so that it becomes respectful of the values for which the monument or site received legal protection,

6-6 Stopping demolition

6-7 Other, please specify