



COUNCIL OF EUROPE PRESENTS UPDATED INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES OF RECONSTRUCTION IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION

The Council of Europe with the support of the European Commission and European Agency for Reconstruction hosted the official opening of an exhibition of the work of the Reconstruction Implementation Commission responsible for the reconstruction of 34 Serbian Orthodox sites damaged or destroyed in March 2004.

The exhibition aims to increase public awareness for the work being undertaken across Kosovo, and to promote support for the project which is being substantially financed by the Provisional Institutions for Self Government (approx. 6 million Euros) with the European Commission and EAR contributing 2.4million Euros.

It is expected that substantial works will finish by February 2008 giving the opportunity for priest's to return to their churches and with the support of the local community and municipality, reintegrate into normal everyday life.

The project has only been successful through the commitment and collaboration of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Institute for the Protection of Monuments in Belgrade and Pristina. Each institution is playing a critical role in the process and collectively their representation on the RIC, chaired by the Council of Europe, has generated a mechanism through which all cultural heritage in Kosovo could be rehabilitated whilst promoting multi-ethnic participation at all levels of the process from the management to the practical.

The RIC has many involved partners including UNMIK, local municipalities, local IPMs and NGOs and is supported by an international expert board comprising professionals in the field of architecture, archaeology, structural engineering and wall painting conservation from Spain, Greece, United Kingdom and Italy respectively.

The ultimate success of the RIC is dependent upon the will of the communities to accept the re-integration of the churches into society. They form part of the landscape, streetscape and represent a part of Kosovo's history, past and present, to be respected and accepted. Our common European heritage is as diverse as it is similar – we all have a duty to protect our cultural heritage and our cultural diversity and identity now and for future generations.

Pristina, 24.09.2007