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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Kortrijk Railway Station (Belgium) listed among**

**the 7 Most Endangered Heritage Sites in Europe**

The Hague / Brussels / Luxembourg, 13 April 2023

The list of the7 Most Endangered monuments and heritage sites in Europe for 2023 – which marks the 10th anniversary of this innovative programme – has been announced today by **Europa Nostra**, the European Voice of Civil Society Committed to Cultural and Natural Heritage, and the **European Investment Bank Institute (EIB)**.

**The 7 Most Endangered sites for 2023 are**

* [La Gare ferroviaire de Courtrai, Kortrijk, BELGIQUE](https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/kortrijk-railway-station-belgium/)
* [Le Cimetière commémoratif des Partisans, Mostar, BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE](https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/partisan-memorial-cemetery-mostar-bosnia-and-herzegovina/)
* [La Forteresse de Chakvinji, Zugdidi, GEORGIE](https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/tchakvinji-fortress-zugdidi-georgia/)
* [L’ensemble de la Maison des Soeurs, ancien établissement morave à Kleinwelka, ALLEMAGNE](https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/sisters-house-ensemble-former-moravian-settlement-in-kleinwelka-germany/)
* [Parc des statues (Memento Park), Budapest, HONGRIE](https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/memento-park-budapest-hungary/)
* [Paysage culturel de Sveti Stefan, Paštrovići, MONTENEGRO](https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/cultural-landscape-of-sveti-stefan-pastrovici-montenegro/)
* [Moulins à eau de Bistrica, Petrovac na Mlavi, SERBIE](https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/watermills-of-bistrica-petrovac-na-mlavi-serbia/)

***Detailed information about the Kortrijk Railway Station can be found below.***

The announcement was made at an online event featuring nominators and representatives of the selected sites, which attracted participants from across Europe and beyond.

The Executive Vice-President of Europa Nostra, **Guy Clausse**, stated: “*By putting these heritage sites on the 2023 list of 7 Most Endangered, we wish to convey a message of hope, solidarity and support to the local communities and activists who are resolutely determined to save them. Together with our partners (European and local), we will provide technical expertise, identify possible sources of funding and mobilise our wide network to support their cause and their efforts, which have now become also our cause and our shared responsibility. Let us use Europe’s cultural heritage as a vector for peace, social cohesion and sustainable development*.”

The Head of Programme for Climate and Heritage at the European Investment Bank Institute, **Bruno Rossignol**, added: *“Cultural heritage is a key resource for shaping our European identity, without which economic growth is meaningless. This cohesive power is recognised by the EIB which takes heritage preservation into account when reviewing new investment projects or when lending for urban renewal projects, often with a heritage component.*

*On the 10th anniversary of the programme, the sites selected today will once more testify to the cohesive power of cultural heritage and link with the Bank’s mission and activities.”*

Reacting to the announcement, **Hendrik Nelde**, Member of the Board of the Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology (VVIA), which nominated the Kortrijk Railway Station to the 7 Most Endangered programme, stated: “*By using the example of the Kortrijk Railway Station, VVIA wants to draw attention to the threats to railway and transport heritage and the lack of recognition and protection of recent and post-war heritage. The European Year of Rail (2021) had no results in terms of preserving and interpreting railway heritage, quite the contrary. Modernisation plans were launched across Europe, many of which involved replacement and destruction of heritage assets. The inclusion of the Kortrijk Railway Station on the list of The 7 Most Endangered 2023 can have an important effect in starting a discussion about how to deal with these categories of heritage - not only in Flanders but also elsewhere. VVIA stand ready to fully cooperate to achieve this*.”

The [Board of Europa Nostra](https://www.europanostra.org/about-us/governance/board/) selected the finalists from among the 11 monuments and heritage sites from eight countries previously [shortlisted](https://www.europanostra.org/11-european-heritage-sites-shortlisted-for-the-7-most-endangered-programme-2023/) by the [Advisory Panel](http://7mostendangered.eu/advisory-panel/) of the 7 Most Endangered programme. The nominations were put forward by member organisations, associate organisations or individual members of Europa Nostra, as well as by members of the European Heritage Alliance.

The selection was made on the basis of the outstanding heritage significance and cultural value of each of the sites, as well as the serious danger that they are facing today. The level of engagement of local communities and the commitment of public and private stakeholders to saving these sites were considered crucial added values. Another selection criterion was the potential of these sites to act as a catalyst for sustainable socio-economic development as well as a tool for promoting peace and dialogue within their localities and wider regions.

**The 7 selected sites are eligible for an EIB Heritage Grant of €10,000 per site to assist in implementing an agreed activity that will contribute to saving the threatened sites.**

Teams of experts representing Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank Institute, together with the organisations that nominated the 7 selected sites and other partners, will now gather information and meet with key stakeholders to assess the sites and issue a technical and financial report with recommendations for action.

**Kortrijk Railway Station, Kortrijk, Belgium**

Kortrijk, located on the western border of Belgium close to Lille, is a railway station with the value of an urban public space.

The first railway station was built in 1839, following the European trend of Neoclassicism. As a centre of exchange, the building gradually housed other public services, such as a telegraph office in 1851 and a post office between 1850 and 1905.

The station was erected at the periphery of the city of Kortrijk. However, the “new” connection affected the urban development and led to the creation of a new region in the city, with the Kortrijk Station at its core. Kortrijk became an important railway junction on the road to France. As a result, it was heavily bombed in 1944, after the invasion of Normandy. More than 1,800 buildings, including the station, were destroyed.

The Kortrijk Railway Station was rebuilt in 1951 to a new design by the architect Pierre Albert Pauwels, one of the most important figures in Belgian contemporary architecture. The rebuilding of the station followed the Expo 58 style, a “discussion” between neoclassical and contemporary elements.

The new building featured a bas-relief of an allegorical representation of travel and transport on its façade, which was made by the sculptor Maurits Witdouck; and an artwork depicting the river Lys and Kortrijk's industries in the central travellers' hall, which was made by the Bruges ceramicist Rogier Vandeweghe.

The iconic building is now threatened to be demolished for the development of a new station. The initial plan was unveiled in 2015 by SNCB and Infrabel, who are the owners of the station. The demolition would not only mean the loss of an architectural gem and symbol of post-War World II re-development, but also the loss of a public space for the citizens of Kortrijk.

The local community has been campaigning against the demolition through [petitions](https://secure.avaaz.org/community_petitions/nl/nmbs_save_the_kortrijk_railway_station_red_het_station_van_kortrijk/). The nomination to the 7 Most Endangered Programme 2023 was made by the [Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology](http://www.vvia.be/), with the endorsement of Europa Nostra Belgium, which advocates for the sustainable conservation and development of this architectural landmark.

The nominator submitted a request for the classification of the Kortrijk Railway Station as a Historic Monument to the Flemish Ministry of Finance and Budget, Housing and Immovable Heritage. In addition, a letter emphasising the architectural value of the Kortrijk Railway Station and advocating for its preservation was sent to the [Flemish Minister in charge of Immovable Heritage](https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-regering/matthias-diependaele), with the endorsement of many individuals and various organisations, such as Bond Heemschut based in The Netherlands and DoCoMoMo International.

The nominator suggests retaining the public use of the building and including the citizens even further, with the establishment of offices and co-working spaces. The sustainable conservation and development of Kortrijk Station could set an example for reused industrial heritage in Europe and beyond.

The [Advisory Panel](https://7mostendangered.eu/advisory-panel/) of the 7 Most Endangered Programme stated: “*The Kortrijk Railway Station is a unique architectural piece and a well-preserved example of Belgian railway heritage. The recent reconstructions of other Belgian railway stations demonstrate that saving the existing architecture combined with modern additions and functions, go perfectly well together*.”

**A decade safeguarding endangered heritage across Europe**

The [7 Most Endangered Programme](http://www.7mostendangered.eu) celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. Since its launch in 2013, 56 threatened monuments and heritage sites from 31 countries across Europe have been selected. In addition, in 2016, the [Venice Lagoon in Italy](http://www.europanostra.org/venice-lagoon-endangered-site-europe/) was declared as THE most endangered heritage site in Europe; and in 2022, the Board of Europa Nostra declared the [rich and diverse heritage in Ukraine](https://www.europanostra.org/europa-nostra-and-eib-institute-announce-europes-7-most-endangered-heritage-sites-2022/) as THE most endangered heritage in the whole of Europe.

The 7 Most Endangered Programme forms part of a civil society campaign to save Europe's endangered heritage. Both tangible and intangible heritage across Europe is eligible for the 7 Most Endangered programme, regardless of whether it is publicly or privately owned. Being on the list serves as a catalyst for action and as an incentive for mobilisation of the necessary public or private support. Ultimately, the programme helps raise awareness; it also embraces and fosters the sense of European identity and the feeling of belonging to a wider European community.

The 7 Most Endangered Programme is run by [Europa Nostra](http://www.europanostra.org) in partnership with the [European Investment Bank Institute](http://institute.eib.org) and also has the support of the [Creative Europe](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm) programme of the European Union.

**The Call for Nominations for the 7 Most Endangered Programme 2024 will open in May 2023.**

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**Background information**

**Europa Nostra**

[Europa Nostra](https://www.europanostra.org/) is the European voice of civil society committed to safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage. It is a pan-European federation of heritage NGOs, supported by a wide network of public bodies, private companies and individuals, covering over 40 countries. It is recognised as the largest and the most representative heritage network in Europe, maintaining close relations with the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international bodies. Founded in 1963, Europa Nostra celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

Europa Nostra campaigns to save Europe’s endangered monuments, sites and landscapes, in particular through the [7 Most Endangered Programme](http://7mostendangered.eu/about/). It celebrates excellence through the [European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards](http://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/). Europa Nostra actively contributes to the definition and implementation of European strategies and policies related to heritage, through a participatory dialogue with European Institutions and the coordination of the [European Heritage Alliance](http://europeanheritagealliance.eu/).

Europa Nostra is among the official partners of the [New European Bauhaus](https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en) initiative developed by the European Commission, and is the Regional Co-Chair of the [Climate Heritage Network](https://climateheritage.org/) for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

**European Investment Bank Institute**

The [European Investment Bank Institute](http://institute.eib.org/) (EIB-I) was set up within the EIB Group (European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund) to promote and support social, cultural, and academic initiatives with European stakeholders and the public at large. It is a key pillar of the EIB Group’s community and citizenship engagement. More information at [http://institute.eib.org](http://institute.eib.org/)

**Creative Europe**

[Creative Europe](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/index_en.htm) is the EU programme that supports the cultural and creative sectors, enabling them to increase their contribution to Europe’s society, economy and living environment. With a budget of €2.4 billion for 2021-2027, it supports organisations in the fields of heritage, performing arts, fine arts, interdisciplinary arts, publishing, film, TV, music, and video games as well as tens of thousands of artists, cultural and audiovisual professionals.