

EIB, Europa Nostra concern over ravaged Greek orphanage on Prinkipo



The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage, Europa Nostra, this week again sounded warning bells over the fate of the closed and dilapidated ethnic Greek orphanage on the Princes Island of Prinkipo, known as Büyükada in Turkish.

The historic building, billed as the largest wooden structure in Europe, was seized from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1964 by the Turkish state. It was left to rot for nearly a half a century before successive European Court of Human Rights rulings forced the Turkish state to return the property to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but in a state of complete disrepair.

According to a recent article by the Turkish mass daily Hurriyet, more than 40 million euros are now necessary to preserve and renovate the building, with the weight of the financing now burdening the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The six-storey building was designed and constructed in 1898 by French-Ottoman architect Alexander Vallaury as a luxury hotel and casino, named Prinkipo Palace, for the European passenger train company that operated the Orient Express.

It was sold in 1903 when the Ottoman sultan refused to issue a permit for its operation, and subsequently bought by the wife of a prominent Greek banker, Eleni Zarifi, who donated it to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.





