

**TO
Mr. BOYKO BORISOV
PRIME MINISTER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**Mr. KONSTANTIN PENCHEV
OMBUDSMAN OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**Ms. DANIEL PETROV
CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON CULTURE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**Ms. DIANA KOVACHEVA
MINISTER OF JUSTICE**

**Mr. VEZHDI RASHIDOV
MINISTER OF CULTURE**

**Mr. LILIA ULEVA
CHAIRMAN OF
THE COUNCIL ON ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

**Cc: Ms. VALIA AHCHIEVA
HOST OF "OPEN"
BULGARIAN NATIONAL TELEVISION**

BTA

OPEN LETTER

by the team of the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage (NIICH) - 16 "Kniaz Al. Dondukov" blvd. Sofia

DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

On 15.12.2011g. team of NIICH was unpleasantly surprised by the Order of the Minister of Culture Vezhdi Rashidov, which requires the dismissal of the Director of NIICH Dr. Arch. Yordanka Kandulkova.

The violations described as grounds for dismissal are unlawful and not truthful. As described, the first violation of the Director of NIICH is that arch. Kandulkova appeared in "Open", broadcasted on BNT on 23.11.2011g. and gave information stored in the National Documentary Archive of NIICH about intervention in a monument (immovable cultural value) without informing the Ministry of Culture. The National Documentary Archive is not secret, but public and provides access to information for everyone who requires it.

The second reason for the imposition of punishment on the Director is failure to comply

within one working day with the draft Rules of Organization and Operation of NIICH prepared by the Ministry of Culture, with entirely new from compared to the originally proposed by the Institute text. It is unacceptable to set a one-day deadline for the coordination of the compliance to such an important for the future operation of NIICH document. Still, the answer to the Ministry of Culture was sent by the Director of the Institute within that period, accompanied by a report by the NIICH General Assembly which has expressed the opinion of the NIICH staff on several discussion points regarding the future planning and activities of the Institute.

The third reason, subjective and untruthful as it is, of the order for punishment, is stated with the phrase "contradictory conclusions on the same issue" in expert evaluations of the Institute. The above mentioned "contradictory" statements refer to two different projects for the same immovable cultural property.

For the first time in the last 20-25 years in the face of Dr. Arch.Yordanka Kandulkova, NIICH has had a Managing Director with exceptional scientific, theoretical and practical professional expertise, with a clear, reasonable vision for the conservation of immovable cultural heritage of our country, a common strategy for the Institute's activities in the protection of cultural heritage in Bulgaria, with potential to apply it in practice. Over the two years that Arch. Kandulova has headed NIICH, despite all the objective and subjective obstacles and difficulties, she consolidated the team's forces in a creative atmosphere for the implementation of its activities, which is evident in:

- The successful completion of the extremely busy and with minimal deadlines campaigns in 2010 and 2011 on European projects of the Ministry of Regional Development and Welfare and Ministry of Agriculture and Foods to adequately support the public policy for effective acquisition of EU funds;
- Dealing with the massive increase in the demand for written expert evaluations issued by the Institute in connection with carrying out the coordination activities of the Ministry of Culture, and other specialized activities in accordance with the functions of NIICH (in this highly reduced staffing panel of experts - architects, engineers, archaeologists, historians, artists - restorers, art historians, archivists, all working for offensively low salaries, far below the official average wage rate in the country);
- Restoring the role of NIICH as an institution open to all professionals regarding matters of art, related to the conservation of immovable cultural heritage;

Under her leadership and with her active involvement as prime contractor for NIICH, she:

- prepared a comprehensive "concept for the conservation and sustainable development on the island of St. St. Kirik and Julita near Sozopol, where there are immovable values of high cultural significance;
- is currently developing the first Bulgarian "Plan for Conservation and Management of Ancient Nessebar" - immovable cultural property of global significance;
- participates in the international project "Atrium" - the architecture of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century in the management of urban environment" in which the institute works in partnership with 18 institutions from 11 countries in Southeast Europe.

The activities of the Institute for Protection of Immovable Cultural Heritage in the past two years, thanks to the architect Kandulkova, have received public relevance, transparency and resonance for the purposes of the application of the principles of protection, conservation and restoration, and eligible interventions in immovable cultural values. For the first time in decades the institute has managed to attract and keep young professionals motivated, despite the low payment, thus providing for the continuity in this area, requiring expertise and carried out by specialists with long experience, who are of retirement age .

With her integrity and desire to impose European criteria and working standards for this short period, Arch. Kandulkova has won the respect of the professional college.

The team of NIICH fully supports their Director and protests against her dismissal. As longstanding participants in the process of preservation of cultural heritage, we believe that the real reason for the dismissal of arch. Kandulkova is that she disagrees with the policy of unjustified restrictions to the Institute and its staff. The requirement for an increasing volume of work with increasingly miserable provisioning becomes a threat not so much for the Institute itself as for the future and destiny of the cultural heritage of Bulgaria. The dismissal of Ms. Kandulkova is an element of the unprincipled and irresponsible policy of the Ministry of Culture to the concerns of cultural heritage.

NIICH TEAM