

**Integrated Rehabilitation Project Plan  
Survey of the Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (IRPP/SAAH)**

**Plan pour la mise en œuvre de projets de réhabilitation intégrée  
Evaluation du patrimoine architectural et archéologique (IRPP/SAAH)**



## **Feasibility Study**

*Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe*

*Programme régional pour le patrimoine culturel et naturel dans le Sud-Est de l'Europe*

**FETIH MEHMED MOSQUE  
Kyustendil  
Bulgaria**



**INTEGRATED REHABILITATION PROJECT PLAN /  
SURVEY OF THE ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE  
(IRPP/SAAH)**

**Regional Programme  
for Cultural and Natural Heritage  
in South East Europe  
2003 - 2008**

**FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Document adopted by the  
Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria  
on 6 November 2007

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## **FOREWORD**

In the framework of the European Commission/Council of Europe Joint Programme on the Integrated Rehabilitation Project Plan / Survey of the Architectural and Archaeological Heritage (IRPP/SAAH), the present Feasibility Study (FS) was prepared by the following local experts: Mr Valentin Debochichki (Director of the Regional History Museum of Kyustendil), Ms Neviana Negrevska (Chief inspector, Dept. for Regional Development, Administration of the Kyustendil District), Mr Kiril Georgiev (civil engineer) headed by Dolya Yordanova, Project Co-ordinator, in co-operation with the Project Leader Dr John Bold and expert Dr Alkis Prepis.

The Feasibility Study (FS) was adopted on 6 November 2007 by the Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria.





Site map

Fetih Mehmed Mosque  
Kyustendil

The *Fetih Mehmed Mosque* in Kyustendil is a remarkable example of Islamic architecture which dates from 1531, the beginning of the period of classical Ottoman architecture in Bulgaria. The monument is a part of the rich architectural and archaeological heritage in the town and has important potential as a tourist attraction. The decline in the population of the Muslim community in the town led to the closure of the mosque in 1978. The importance of a new use which embraces the local community and the multicultural significance of the building has been identified. The main objectives in the design of the proposal are the protection of the mosque from further deterioration, and the transformation of this significant monument into a centre for cultural events integrated in regional and cross-border cultural and tourist itineraries: Kyustendil has a rich cultural and historical heritage and is a centre for national and international tourism, with a reputation as a thermal waters curative centre. The project will be managed by the Regional History Museum of Kyustendil and the district authorities, overseen by the National Institute for Monuments of Culture.

### 1. Title

Restoration of the *Fetih Mehmed Mosque*, adaptation of the monument for the needs of a centre for cultural events, and integration of the site in regional and cross-border cultural and tourist itineraries.

### 2. Location

The Fetih Mehmed mosque is situated on the main market street of Kyustendil, in the immediate vicinity of the architectural and archaeological reserve *Pautalia-Velbujd*. Kyustendil is a regional centre and a national balneological resort in south-western Bulgaria, 22 km from the border with the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

### 3. Site presentation

#### **Significance**

The Fetih Mehmed mosque is a cultural monument of national importance and an example of the Classical period of the Ottoman architecture in the country. The site also holds urban-planning significance and exemplifies an important period of the town’s stratification. The mosque consists of a square prayer hall, covered with a 15 metre high central dome, a three-domed *sofa* (narthex) on two

antique marble columns, and a single minaret. The remains of the interior painted ornaments and stylized geometrical *stucco* decoration originate from the 19th century. The mosque is one of the cultural symbols within the rich millenniums-old heritage of Kyustendil and represents the cultural period when the town was an important administrative and commercial centre within the Ottoman Empire. Although the building has not been in use since 1978 and despite its extremely poor condition, the monument has preserved its architectural and artistic values.

### **History/Site evolution**

As the inscription on the northern part of the dome's drum indicates, the mosque was built in 1531. The *sofa* is lying along the southern fortified walls of the Roman city *Pautalia* called *Velbujd* in the Middle Ages, close to the southern fortress gate and the late antique *cardo maximus* disclosed 3,20 metres under the present ground level. *Pautalia* was an important Roman centre where coins have been minted and gold and silver mined in the nearby mountains. The mosque was erected in one of the Kyustendil neighborhoods with the greatest concentration of hot mineral springs. Kyustendil is a millenniums-old town, which has been famous for its hot curative mineral water springs since antiquity. In 1641, an earthquake occurred and the minaret was partly destroyed. It was reconstructed later without repeating the original masonry. According to a recent geodetic survey the minaret was strongly inclined to the northern direction during the last forty years.

The mosque was abandoned after 1978 because of the decline in numbers of the Muslim community in the town. The religious significance of the mosque is higher for the non-resident Muslims who continue visiting the town on various occasions.

After some consolidation works carried out in 1977, the structural strengthening was interrupted due to the lack of funding and the gradual deterioration continued up to the end of 2006 when emergency stabilisation works started. The sum of about 170 000 euros for financing design and civil works was provided by the Regular Commission for disasters and accidents at the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria.

The following phased activities were carried out:

- Structural expertise / analysis;
- Geological survey;
- Structural design for solving all structural problems of the construction;
- Implementation of the structural design;

The emergency structural consolidation of the *Fetih Mehmed Mosque* is the basis for the implementation of further detailed architectural/artistic conservation and restoration activities, as well as for the adaptation of the building for a new social function.

### **Environment/ Access**

The Fetih Mehmed mosque is situated in the very centre of the contemporary town of Kyustendil, in the boundaries of the architectural and archaeological reserve *Pautalia-Velbujd*.

The site is not accessible for visitors as it is closed for rehabilitation works.

### **Management**

The Municipality and the Regional Historic Museum of Kyustendil are responsible for the management of the monument. If funding becomes available, the District of Kyustendil will be responsible for administering the funds and the National Institute for Monuments of Culture will oversee the conservation and restoration works. A board of representatives of the local and national authorities should be established, preparing a strategy and carrying out appropriate arrangements and other activities for the monument's preservation, revitalisation and management.

### **Viability & Sustainability**

The main objective of the proposal is to protect, restore and revitalise this important monument, and to determine a sustainable future use.



As the religious function could not be sustained due to the absence of the Muslim community, the adaptation of the monument for cultural purposes will expand its scientific significance and will guarantee its sustainable development.

The long term use for the building should embrace a multicultural dimension. The definition of the future use of the building should be a priority in planning the conservation strategy. The building's location, setting and significance give an opportunity for the development of this significant monument into a cultural and multifunctional centre.

#### 4. Degree of risk

##### Condition risk

There is no immediate risk of further structural deterioration of the architectural monument as emergency consolidation had been implemented. The overall reconstruction and restoration of the mosque will continue if funds become available.

There is a risk for the internal decoration. The interior painted ornaments and stylised geometrical stucco decoration are decaying and need conservation and restoration.

##### The following either directly or indirectly jeopardise the monument:

- Function – the building is not functioning as it was abandoned a long time ago;
- Lack of protective measures – Despite the recent emergency structural consolidation, this monument, located in the central area of Kyustendil, appears abandoned and dangerous rather than a significant 16th century monument;
- Lack of management – insufficient institutional support for the moment;
- Structural destabilisation – provisionally stopped;
- Resources – lack of finance for overall restoration and revitalisation.

#### 5. Aim and scope of the project

The vision for the future of this architectural masterpiece from the 16th century is to transform it into one of the most important historical sites in the central part of the city, with a living function corresponding to the cultural tradition and religion. Several basic cultural, historical and ecological routes have been established in the region of Kyustendil:

- Mediaeval churches and monasteries;
- A complex itinerary including museum exhibitions and sites from Prehistory, Antiquity, the Middle Ages, National Revival and Recent History;
- Ecological itineraries – trans-European (Portugal-Greece), national (protected territories of the region - National Park *Rila*, national itineraries - Natural Park *Rila Monastery*, Natural Reserve *Gabra*, *Stobski piramidi*, etc.) as well as new cross-border routes through the *Osogovo* mountain towards “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

The Fetih Mehmed Mosque is one of the most significant architectural monuments in Kyustendil. The realisation of this project proposal will convert this valuable site, which is neglected and deprived of social function, into a specialised museum centre, which would be an element of the cultural routes in the Kyustendil region with cross-border connections.

The opportunities for developing cultural and ecological tourism in the region are complemented with the excellent local conditions for traditional balneological therapy. The district town of Kyustendil is visited by people from Northern Europe and from the neighboring countries – Montenegro, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Most of the tourists are Muslims.

The proposed project is designed to achieve the following objectives:

##### Overall objectives:

- Preservation of the rich cultural heritage and development of cultural tourism in the region;

- Stimulating the economical development of the region through the exploitation of valuable architectural monuments, as elements of tourist infrastructure.

These objectives are relevant to the District strategy for development

Specific objectives:

- Finalisation of the reconstruction and restoration of *Fetih Mehmed Mosque* in Kyustendil – cultural monument of national significance;
- Elaboration of a complex programme for presentation of the monument with possibilities for functional adaptation and activities, which do not contradict the cult site. The centre will perform a museum function and hold contemporary cultural events.

Main activities for project implementation

- Reconstruction of the building – finishing the overall structural consolidation;
- Implementation of architectural and structural reconstruction for restoration of the authentic image of the monument;
- Elaboration of a programme for the functional adaptation of the monument, with basic museum activities connected to the tourist infrastructure;
- Elaboration of architectural and structural designs for adapting the site to modern functions, approved by the National Institute of Cultural Monuments;
- Implementation of the project for adaptation;
- The stewardship of the rehabilitated monument should be entrusted to the Regional Historical Museum of Kyustendil.

## 6. Project justification

*Strategic location, historic background, cultural potential, and key characteristics of Kyustendil and the region:*

- Natural and geographical facts –mild climate, luxuriant lands, curative hydrothermal resources;
- Administrative centre, international transport corridor № 8, important road and railway centre - 86 km from Sofia, 23 km from the border with “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, and 30 km from the Republic of Serbia.
- The town possesses rich seven millenniums-old cultural and historical heritage;
- The town is a national and international tourist and thermal waters curative centre;
- It is surrounded by beautiful natural landmarks;
- Good opportunities for accommodation and tourist service.

The Fetih Mehmed mosque is situated in the very centre of the contemporary town of Kyustendil, in the boundaries of the architectural and archaeological reserve *Pautalia-Velbujd*, covering the central city area and comprising numerous monuments from the Antiquity, the Mediaeval Age, the Bulgarian Revival, and up to the 19th century restored and exhibited antique thermes (2nd – 3rd century), the building of the former *Ahmed Bey* mosque (now exhibited as a museum hall), the mediaeval residential tower *Pirkova kula*, the old Turkish baths, orthodox churches and houses (18th -19th century).

## 7. Constraints to overcome

- All proposals for contemporary functions and activities for the national monument *Fetih Mehmed* mosque should be consistent and should not contradict the cult characteristics of the site, or the religious principles and culture;
- All the programme and design documentation for the conservation, restoration and development of the site should be approved by the National Institute for Cultural Monuments;
- The programme for the functional adaptation of the monument should be elaborated in partnership with representatives of the religious community.

The main limitations for the implementation of the project are:

- Outdated project documentation which needs revision and updating;

- The measures and activities for the priority development of cultural tourism are formulated in the regional development plan, however the financial sources are not provided. In this line the project represents an example, an attempt how to find a part of the necessary funding for restoration/rehabilitation and promotional measures.
- The cultural monument is not integrated in tourist product. The proposed extension of museum functions and cultural events (exhibitions, concerts, animation of historical events) will develop a model of integrated cultural itineraries at local, regional and international level.

The current project is designed towards overcoming the needs and constraints as described above.

## 8. Stages for the achievement of the project and preliminary costing

The project consists of activities, which can be grouped into two main components:

### Component 1 – Survey and Design works:

- Levels and phasing of intervention to be specified;
- Revision/updating of available design documentation or elaboration of new designs;
- Programmes for development;
- Management plan;
- Market research of tourist sector in the town / the region;
- Constitution of expert teams for management and implementation of the project, internal audit and reporting.

Total Component 1 – 30 000 euros

### Component 2 – Reconstruction, restoration, adaptation of the site

#### *Phase 1*

- Finalisation of structural restoration - 50 000 euros
- Integral architectural and artistic restoration – 400 000 euros

#### *Phase 2*

- Adaptation for contemporary functions – interior, technological equipment – 40 000 euros
- Opening of the site and organisation of thematic exhibition – 14 000 euros

Total Component 2 = 504 000 euros

Total Overall Estimate (Component 1 + Component 2) = **529 000 euros**

The restoration and renovation activities undertaken should maintain the authentic architecture and decoration of the cultural site

### Phases of implementation (results):

- Reconstruction of the building – overall implementation of structural consolidation;
- Implementation of architectural and structural reconstruction for restoration of the authentic image of the monument;
- Elaboration of a programme for the functional adaptation of the monument, with basic museum activities related to tourist infrastructure and activities;
- Elaboration of architectural and structural designs for adapting the site to modern functions, approved by the National Institute of Cultural Monuments;
- Implementation of the project for adaptation of the site for museum functions;
- The acting manager of the rehabilitated monument will be the Regional Historical Museum of Kyustendil;
- Integration of the site in a regional itinerary for cultural tourism “the Region of Kyustendil – centre of ancient cultures”.

## 9. Organisational structure for the fulfilment of the project

If funds become available, the project will be implemented in partnership between the representatives of stakeholders, managed by the District Governor of Kyustendil:

- Administration of District of Kyustendil;
- Regional History Museum of Kyustendil;
- Municipality of Kyustendil;
- NGO “Kubrat”, town of Kyustendil

The restoration works on the monument will be overseen by the National Institute for Monuments of Culture.

## 10. Long-term management of the monument

The management of the project will be the responsibility of the District administration (Kyustendil), the Regional History Museum of Kyustendil, and the Municipality of Kyustendil.

After the implementation of the programme for reconstruction, restoration and adaptation of the building, the site will start its new functioning: extended museum use – thematic museum exhibitions, art exhibitions, concerts, etc. The programme for the development of museum activities will be overseen by the Directorate for museums and galleries (within the Ministry of Culture).

The project management team will consist of a management board and an advisory board. With the help of the advisory board, the management board will create a management plan, which will be implemented prior to the securing of funding and continue once the funds are secured.

The project management team will be composed of representatives of the District administration in Kyustendil, the Regional History Museum of Kyustendil, and the Municipality of Kyustendil.

The Project Advisory Board will be composed of:

- experts from the National Institute of Monuments of Culture (conservation and restoration activities);
- an expert for museum activities;
- a consultant for tourism policy and tourist-targeted marketing.

The suggested project has been developed following discussions and consultations with Mr Valentin Debochichki - director of the Regional History Museum of Kyustendil and Ms Neviana Negrevska – Chief inspector, Dept. of Regional development, Administration of the Kyustendil District.

## 11. The required documentation of the site

Existing documentation:

- Architectural measured drawings, restoration design, scale 1:50 - 1977, 1984;
- Geological, hydro-geological survey – 2006;
- Structural consolidation design – 1993;
- Protocols of commissions (National Institute for cultural monuments) – 1992 – 2006;
- Structural expertise (analysis) – 2006;
- Design for structural strengthening – 2006.

New documentation required:

- All available designs should be revised and updated if necessary;
- Design for interior architectural adaptation;
- Market survey of the site’s tourist potential;
- Scheme of management structure and co-ordination with local authorities;
- Analysis of possibilities for job creation and employment.

The information was compiled and provided by Mr Valentin Debochichki - director of the Regional History Museum of Kyustendil and Ms Neviana Negrevska – Chief inspector, Dept. Regional development, Administration of the Kyustendil District, Mr Kiril Georgiev – civil engineer and designer of site structural projects.

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Une initiative conjointe de la Commission européenne  
et du Conseil de l'Europe



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