

Thessaloniki, September 19, 2024

The Government House Redevelopment Begins with Local Community Participation

The redevelopment of the iconic Government House of Thessaloniki, also known as "Palataki," has officially begun. The project was announced on September 9, 2024, during a briefing held at the Amphitheater of the Museum of Modern Art, within the 88th Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF). The event, organized by HPPC (Hellenic Public Properties Co.) and Growthfund, with the participation of the Hellenic Parliament, aimed to provide insight into the steps forward. HPPC's CEO, Ms. Iro Chatzigeorgiou, emphasized that the development of the space and the specialization of its use will follow a participatory process involving the local community. She also confirmed that initial technical studies have already been commissioned to assess the current condition of the building and its surroundings. This marks a new strategic approach by HPPC in the redevelopment of cultural heritage assets, focusing on collaboration with local communities.

These initiatives are part of a Memorandum of Cooperation signed three months ago between HPPC, Growthfund, and the Hellenic Parliament. The Parliament has committed to funding the restoration of the site, following the necessary studies, and to utilizing it for hosting high-profile events, professional meetings, and cultural activities.

The meeting was welcomed by **Mr. Georgios Georgantas, Second Vice President of the Hellenic Parliament, and Mr. Stefanos Giourelis, Deputy CEO of Growthfund**. Key speakers included **Ms. Iro Hagdigeorgiou, CEO of HPPC, Mr. Tim Rusby, CEO and Founder of "The Visitor Attraction Company," and Ms. Eleni Sotiriou, Advisor at Thessaloniki Convention Bureau (TCB)**. The event was moderated by **journalist Ms. Maria Mathiopoulou**.

Participants included members of parliament, officials from the Region of Central Macedonia, representatives of the Kalamaria Municipality, civil society organizations, cultural associations, and Thessaloniki's creative community.

As part of the project, a strategic identity for the Government House will be developed, along with opportunities for content creation based on input from the participatory process. This input will inform the business plan and technical specifications for the site's restoration.

The **Thessaloniki Convention Bureau (TCB)**, an organization that promotes the city as a destination for major events, conferences, and cultural gatherings, will lead the project. They will collaborate with **Beetroot**, a leading creative design company known for its expertise in visual communication. Beetroot has already invested in the redevelopment of a historic monument in Thessaloniki's old commercial center, transforming it into a space for art, culture, and social engagement. The combined expertise of these teams will play a crucial role in shaping the identity and content for the Government House, engaging the local community and the Hellenic Parliament.

Statements from Speakers:

"I am confident that through the strong collaboration of all stakeholders, we will achieve the best possible outcome," said **Mr. Georgios Georgantas, Second Vice President of the Hellenic Parliament**, during his remarks at the event. He conveyed the support of both the Parliament and its President, Constantine Tassoulas, as well as Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's commitment to fast-tracking the process. Mr. Georgantas also thanked the Civil Society, emphasizing that with goodwill and cooperation, the desired results can be achieved. He expressed hope that "this will serve as a model for other initiatives in Thessaloniki."

Stefanos Giourelis, Deputy CEO of Growthfund, stated that "the preservation and redevelopment of the Government House are closely tied to the cultural identity of the region." He highlighted the significance of the ongoing process, noting that "a key focus is the collaboration with local stakeholders to co-create the proposals that will be submitted to the Hellenic Parliament."

Here's a more refined version to make the text sound more natural in English:

"I am confident that through the strong collaboration of all stakeholders, we will achieve the best possible outcome," said Mr. Georgios Georgantas, Second Vice President of the Hellenic Parliament, during his remarks at the event. He conveyed the support of both the Parliament and its President, Konstantinos Tasoulas, as well as Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's commitment to fast-tracking the process. Mr. Georgantas also thanked the Civil Society, emphasizing that with goodwill and cooperation, the desired results can be achieved. He expressed hope that "this will serve as a model for other initiatives in Thessaloniki."

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"Buildings need to come to life; they should be experienced by people and contribute to the development of the area," said **Ms. Iro Hadgigeorgiou, CEO of HPPC**. She elaborated on the reasoning behind holding the meeting in Thessaloniki: "The goal was to engage directly with the local community and stakeholders, to hear and record their views, concerns, and suggestions, and to work together to shape the framework that will be presented to the Parliament, which will finance the project." Ms. Hadgigeorgiou emphasized: "We don't just want to renovate a building; we want to create a new destination, a landmark for Thessaloniki. We welcome partnerships with other entities, as such collaborations are a key priority in HPPC's new strategy."

This new approach of co-creating content with the local community to boost visitor engagement has proven successful in other countries, as noted by **Tim Rusby, CEO and Founder of "The Visitor Attraction Company"** from the UK. He explained that the success of such projects depends on thoughtful planning that meets modern needs and enhances public spaces. He praised the consultation process led by ETAD and Growthfund, acknowledging that while not all ideas can be

implemented simultaneously, the public interest is best served through a well-coordinated, inclusive methodology.

Eleni Sotiriou, Advisor at the Thessaloniki Convention Bureau (TCB), added, "Our role is to explore potential uses for the space using placemaking methodology, so that 'Palataki' becomes a vibrant landmark on the city's map, with a strong identity that reflects its unique location, history, architecture, and future activities." She announced that meetings with content creators, potential users, civil society, and the creative community would soon take place to capture the needs and possibilities for the site's use. "The key word here is 'revival'," said Ms. Sotiriou, expressing hope that Palataki will become a permanent site for the Parliament's active presence in Thessaloniki.

Short remarks were also made by **Prodromos Monastiridis, President of the Thessaloniki Convention Bureau, and Gregory D. Dimitriadis, CEO of Growthfund**. Mr. Dimitriadis highlighted the importance of sustainability in the project, noting that this is part of Growthfund's philosophy for maximizing the value of public assets. He suggested that the Government House could serve a similar function to Zappeion in Athens, while stressing that "we certainly don't want the Government House to be disconnected from the wider area."

SOCIALDOO, Katerina Samartzi, Corporate Communication Manager, +30 6970 047335, ksamartzi@socialdoo.gr

Press and Parliamentary Information Office, +30 210 3707435-36-40, pressoffice@parliament.gr