

PRESS RELEASE

The Hague, 5 October 2009

Europa Nostra urges Sten Nordin, Mayor of the City of Stockholm, to save Stockholm's City Library - a European monument of Modern Movement architecture by Gunnar Asplund

Europa Nostra's Executive President, Denis de Kergorlay, wrote Stockholm's Mayor Sten Nordin urging the City of Stockholm to halt the current plan for extending Stockholm's City Library – an iconic masterpiece by architect Gunnar Asplund. The letter was distributed to relevant and interested parties, politicians and press.

The impending threat to this unique monument of Swedish and European cultural heritage was brought to our attention by a group of Europa Nostra's Swedish Member Organisations and concerned Individual Members. Europa Nostra has decided to pursue at a European level the campaign to help safeguard this important European architectural monument.

The Stockholm library complex is a unique masterpiece of early 20th century architecture and town planning, for which Stockholm and Sweden are famous throughout Europe and around the world. Stockholm's library features in architecture textbooks throughout the world as an icon of architectural history: it is of great interest as a forerunner of architecture of the Modern Movement, having been built during the transition period from modern classicism to modernism, and is also of great importance as the central feature of the surrounding architectural environment, built according to Gunnar Asplund's plan for the whole area of the city. This plan included the main library building, the annexes and landscaping around them and the park towards the Sveavägen, and was designed with the relation to the Observatory Hill and the wider surroundings in mind. The interest in Gunnar Asplund and his works is currently growing worldwide.

In the present "Delphinium" extension plan, proposed by the competition winner, Heike Hanada, the library annexes would be demolished. These annexes are very sophisticated in their simplicity, purity and fine detailing, and are an integral part of the total urban composition. Their simple volumes are coordinated with the lower part of the main library building and in their restrained expression, they very successfully highlight the main building as the jewel in the crown.

The proposed extension would, apart from demolishing important parts of the Asplund concept, also diminish the Asplund library building, crowding and drawing attention away from it. It would form a massive glass volume behind the library and irrevocably harm the main views towards the site. The library building would lose original functions and turn into an annex in relation to the new building; the original main entrance, which is a key to the understanding of Asplund's building, would become a side entrance.

In 2007, Europa Nostra convened its Annual Congress in Stockholm, holding its prestigious European Cultural Heritage Awards Ceremony in the impressive Blue Hall of the Stockholm City Hall. The **Europa Nostra Forum "Add Modernism!"**, held during the Annual Congress in cooperation with Docomomo International and the Swedish Association of Architects, and attended by HRH Princess Madeleine in her capacity as Patron of Europa Nostra Sweden, resulted in the **"Stockholm Declaration on Architecture of the Modern Movement as an Integral Part of Europe's Cultural Heritage"**, which states unequivocally that architecture of the Modern Movement must be given equal consideration and protection as Europe's older architectural heritage. A number of our members took the opportunity while being in Stockholm to visit the Asplund library and they were duly impressed. The Stockholm City Library is definitely European cultural heritage worthy of every possible safeguard and it should be added to the City and national lists of lawfully protected monuments.

Since 2007, Europa Nostra has realised the increasing need for Europe-wide action in campaigns to safeguard threatened monuments and sites. We are currently finalising the structure of a proper Heritage at Risk Programme, the beginnings of which can be seen on our website. **Our "heritageAlerts", ticker-tape style, flash across our Heritage at Risk webpage, drawing attention to current Europa Nostra campaigns, including the Stockholm City Library.**

Europa Nostra acknowledges the good intentions of the City of Stockholm to develop the public library facilities in Stockholm, and the thorough work that has been done to investigate the possibility to add new functions to the

present City Library. The result of the architectural competition, with over one thousand entries, however, clearly shows that it is impossible to add the wanted new floor space behind the main building, without seriously damaging the cultural values of the existing library.

Europa Nostra therefore urges the Stockholm authorities to stop the current plans for the extension of the library and demolition of the annexes. **Let the library remain the “book-temple” it is intended to be and restore it to its original splendour as one of the foremost library buildings of the world. We call for a reconsideration of alternative solutions and extension locations which leave the integrity of the Asplund library building and the surrounding planning unharmed.**

For more information, please contact:

Europa Nostra Heritage at Risk Officer, **Bruno Deslandes** (tel: +31 70 302 40 52 bd@europanostra.org) or Europa Nostra Swedish Council Member and Chairwoman of Europa Nostra Sweden, **Catherine von Arnold** (catherine@jordberga.se)

Europa Nostra, the Voice of cultural heritage in Europe, has as mission to raise awareness of the value of Europe’s unique and rich cultural heritage and to work to protect it for present and future generations.

Europa Nostra is the representative platform of over 400 heritage organisations active throughout Europe and the voice of this vast movement of European civil society active in the field towards international bodies concerned, in particular the European Union Institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Europa Nostra is dedicated to putting heritage and its benefits in the mainstream of public consciousness and to making heritage a priority for public policies both at European and national levels. Its specific objectives are to promote, at a European level, high standards of quality in the fields of heritage conservation, architecture, urban and rural planning and to advocate a balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural, built and natural environment.

Europa Nostra supports national and international campaigns for the preservation and rescue of Europe’s heritage at risk. It encourages exemplary initiatives in favour of the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage by recognising outstanding heritage achievements, in particular through the running of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. Through its various activities, Europa Nostra seeks to highlight the importance of cultural heritage as a building block of European identity and as a contribution to the strengthening of the sense of European citizenship.
www.europanostra.org