

EAC 2018, SOFIA

ESZTER KREITER, MÁTÉ STIBRÁNYI

The annual conference of the EAC was held between the 22nd and 24th of March 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria, and took place in the Arena di Serdica Hotel that encompasses the imposing Roman amphitheater (fig. 1). The topic of the meeting was the European status of preventive excavations related to investments (Development-led Archaeology in Europe: Meeting the needs of archaeologists, developers and the public). Thus, the presenters examined the issue from three perspectives, from the side of the archaeological profession, that of the investors and that of society.

During the presentations we received a useful and comprehensive profile of the duties and heritage preservation conditions related to large investment projects in numerous European countries. In the majority of the countries the principle that “the defiler pays” is enforced, so just as in Hungary the archaeological excavations are financed from resources connected to the preparation of the project. We were able to get to know the archaeological tasks performed in the last ten years in Bulgaria and Albania, with particular attention to the oil pipeline projects. The Swedish, Finnish, Portuguese, Estonian, English and Dutch models were presented, and we were able to get a glimpse of Israel’s archaeological work as well. On the basis of what was heard at the symposium we were able to conclude that in the western half of Europe, in addition to museum and universities, today practically everywhere accredited private companies perform the preventive excavations within a tender system. The heritage preservation experts working in these places judged these systems to be successful, and the presence of private capital on the excavation market can be considered a general phenomenon. Another general phenomenon is the lack of professionally qualified experts.

The portion of the symposium dealing with society and the “socialization” of archaeology probed into very topical and important issues. How is it possible to examine the connections between public opinion and archaeological research, how is it possible to get people to be interested in and pay attention to the elements of archaeological heritage, how can they help in their surveying and preservation? We heard numerous thought-provoking presentations, with those introducing the situations in Scotland, Holland and the Czech Republic being particularly informative about the inclusion of the local communities and the national media. According to their experiences, conscious socialization placed in a structured system makes people much more interested, committed and responsive towards archaeology and the dialogue within the triangle of politics, the private realm and the profession becomes easier.



Fig. 1. The venue of the conference, Hotel Arena di Serdica, with the remains of the Roman Arena



Fig. 2. The presentation of Máté Stibrányi, PhD

The presentation of the Hungarian situation appeared quite prominently on the European palette. The two employees of the Buda Castle Property Development and Management Non-Profit Co., Eszter Kreiter and Dr. Máté Stibrányi, attempted to present the Hungarian system that is presently being transformed, pointing out in particular the activities linked to archaeological site diagnostics that are functioning quite well. The title of their presentation was *Half full or half empty? Current approaches in development led archaeology in Hungary*. The role of Preliminary Archaeological Documentation received unanimous recognition within our heritage preservation activities, and these integrated geophysical examinations are decidedly considered to be on the leading edge on a European level.

In summary, we consider the symposium to have been useful and successful, where we were able to both successfully introduce the Hungarian conditions to European professional public opinion and also to gather information first hand on the present European situation.

The introduction of the subsequent, 13th volume of the EAC conferences took place at the meeting, which contains the expanded abstracts from the presentations at the 2017 meeting in Athens and was published by the Archaeolingua Press. The full text of the presentations was published in issue 49 of *Internet Archaeology* (<http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue49/index.html>) in their entirety. There was the opportunity to purchase the previous volumes at the conference in Sofia, as well as other publications by the printing house.



Fig. 3. The exhibition stand of Archaeolingua at the conference