

VANDALISM TO MONUMENTS OF CULTURE – FACTOR FOR RESTRICTING THE ACCESS OF WOMEN TO PUBLIC SPACES

Team

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Description of the problem



Recently, acts of vandalism, especially graffiti drawing on monuments of culture, was identified as a problem both by the police and the Municipality of Veliko Turnovo – a tourist city with 865 monuments of culture of national significance.

The acts of vandalism influence negatively the image of the city and create the feeling that these places could be considered risky for the citizens and the tourists as the youth groups gathering there often have asocial behavior. These are groups of young people (mainly male) aged, 14-22 who are seeking for expression of their alternative arts or extreme sports. Their behaviour is often provoked by alcohol or drugs and results in separation of these public spaces and vandalism to the monuments. But how does this behavior influence men and women in the city?



Object of the survey

The survey focused on two of the most popular and most attacked with acts of vandalism monuments situated in the city center, in nice surroundings and equipped with panoramic illumination – the Monument of Mother Bulgaria (the picture on the left) and the Monument of Assenevtsi (the picture on the right), as well as the attitudes of the citizens towards the acts of vandalism, graffiti and youth problem groups.



Objectives of the survey

To explore the potential lack of access after dark to the areas of the monuments in Veliko Turnovo for the citizens and the tourists, especially for women, and to determine the level of social intolerance towards the acts of vandalism against the cultural and historic monuments.

Data (R1, R2)

With respect to R1 (representation) it is difficult to determine the exact number of men and women who avoid to visit the areas of the monuments. The police do not gather separate statistics about the people who inform about such acts. Based on the observations of the 24-hour guard of one of the monuments, very few people pass the area at night and almost no women.

70% of the respondents in a former survey on the night visits to the museums avoid visiting the monuments at night because of the presence of the graffiti drawing groups there.

Approximately 20 000 BGN annually are allocated (R2 – resources) for cleaning the monuments. Additional funds are budgeted by the Municipality for the creation of nice and safe areas around them – lighting, maintenance of the surrounding parks with flowers and benches.

The objective difficulty in gathering the qualitative data required the use of additional qualitative methods. Two focus groups were organized – the first with younger people at the age of the perpetrators (13-20 години) and the second with citizens (25-60 години) in order to identify the attitude of the participants towards the problem with vandalism, its effects on the citizens and the tourists and how it could be solved. Both groups included 8 persons, equal number of men and women.

Both groups (with the exception of one participant in the first group) consider graffiti drawing on the monuments as an act of vandalism, and such gatherings of groups could cause problems related to the public environment safety, especially for women and young people.

While the first group cannot give ideas how this problem could be overcome, the second one suggests that that only the joint efforts of the whole community can guarantee the rights of the citizens, the observance of public order and will not allow the separation of public spaces. Effect can be achieved only through strict measures and punishment of the perpetrators.

Analysis and conclusions (R3)

The funds spent annually are not enough as a measure and do not have a permanent result as very soon the monuments are again desecrated, accompanied by breach of public order and safety. Gathering of large informal groups of young people with asocial behavior leads practically to the separation of the public spaces around the monuments and makes the areas potentially risky for women and young people during after dark.

Action Plan

- To allocate financial resources for surveillance cameras in the areas of the monuments;
- To build an alternative youth territory with panels for drawing graffiti and practicing extreme sports;



- To organize information campaigns for the importance of historical heritage and encourage citizens to inform about acts of vandalism;



- To conduct a survey among school students regarding the reasons for aggressive behavior – already developed questionnaire.