



International Association
of Byzantine Studies

Commission for Byzantine Archaeology

Venizelos Metro Station, Thessaloniki

Several members of the *Association Internationale des Études Byzantines* (AIEB) have already stated their opposition to the Hellenic Government's decision to remove the Early Byzantine finds unearthed during construction works in the Thessaloniki Metro by signing, as individuals, the Citizens' Group online petitions calling for the archaeological remains to remain in place. However, the Bureau of the AIEB and its Commission for Byzantine Archaeology wish to express through this Press Release their deep concern and disappointment regarding the decision issued by the country's Central Archaeological Council (19/12/2019), authorising the transfer of the finds to another area.

As professionals and active researchers within the various fields of Byzantine Studies, we would like to emphasise, as previously stated by Europa Nostra and other non-governmental bodies and professionals, the emergent need to preserve the remains of the road-complex and its surrounding structures *in situ*. The removal from their original position will be destructive, while the preservation of this unique and priceless archaeological discovery will comprise a constant reminder of the city's glorious past in a subterranean museum.

Although the discovery has been called a "Byzantine Pompeii" in different occasions, we would stress that the remains in the city's Byzantine and modern centre are not just a Byzantine version of Roman Pompeii. They constitute much more, not just because of their remarkable state of preservation but most importantly because they provide an unparalleled screening of the concept of Byzantine urban space *in situ*. Thus, archaeological evidence must continue to be accessible, instructive and intact.

We are confident that the Hellenic authorities in charge, namely the Government, the Central Archaeological Council and Attic Metro SA, will reconsider the consequences of their recent decision and will manage, even at this stage, to find the most orthodox solution that will be both economically sustainable and will respect the remains and the irreplaceable notion of urban space in the 'second city' of a diverse and multi-ethnic Byzantine Empire.

Prof. A. Vionis, chair,

on behalf of the Commission for Byzantine Archaeology