



# BESA MUSEUM

RESTORATION  
AND  
MUSEALISATION  
OF THE  
MUSEUM' S SEAT

LOCATION: TIRANA, ALBANIA

INTERNATIONAL  
CONCEPT DESIGN  
COMPETITION



# Table of Contents

<b>1 Overview of the Competition</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>3 Required Services and Documents</b>	<b>25</b>
1.1 Promoters	06	3.1 Required Services	25
1.2 Manifesto	06	3.2 Application Documents	25
1.3 Beneficiaries	07	3.3 Evaluation Criteria	29
1.4 Organizing Authority	08	3.4 Copyright	29
1.5 Competition Site	08		
1.6 Scope of the Competition / Questions about the Competition	10	<b>4 Eligibility and Team Composition</b>	<b>30</b>
1.7 Competition Objective	12	4.1 Eligibility and Expert Requirements	30
1.8 Competition Process	12	4.2 Expert profiles	30
1.9 Working Methodology	13		
1.10 Eligibility	14	<b>5 Timeline and Submissions</b>	<b>33</b>
1.11 Competition Jury Composition	14	5.1 Competition duration	33
1.12 Competition Base Material - Figures and Drawings	14	5.2 Submission guidelines	33
		5.3 Competition Language	33
<b>2 Design Brief</b>	<b>16</b>	5.4 Competition Calendar	34
2.1 Rationale and Significance of the Site/ History and existing situation	16		
2.2 Site Plan	18		
2.3 Site Definition and Specifications	20		
2.4 Design Specification	21		



## MINISTER'S LETTER OF INVITATION

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania is pleased to announce the international competition for the design, restoration and musealisation of the **International Competition for the new "National Museum-Besa Museum"**.

This building, which held the status of a cultural heritage monument, will be the seat of the museum of a very important cultural precept of the Albanian people which takes the name of **BESA**.

This Competition it's the first step of the process that aims to establish a national museum who tells, first of all, a way of being - precisely that of being Albanian - and of a phenomenon that has shaped the Albanian for millennia. Because this is BESA. A code of honour among the Albanians, which knows no limits in time.

It is very difficult to try to trace the genesis of the BESA phenomenon over time, since its roots merge with those of the Albanian lineage. BESA is decidedly the most famous institute drawn from the corpus of customary law of the mountains of the rest of the Albanian soil, which much preceded

the establishment of the other existing regulations in force in the country, but more than that, is a call that comes from within the Albanian spirit.

BESA is an announcement, a performative act since once pronounced, what's being said, comes into being, the most important among the Albanians and probably the most binding one. When an Albanian the BESA, gives a solemn promise pledging to respect this precept which can mean: to host, to defend, or even, *...to slaughter its own child (Shqiptari kur jep fjalën, thër djalin)* as evidenced by an old Albanian saying which recalls biblical scenarios.

Any researchers who might approach the study of this typical Albanian phenomenon, such as BESA, will not find it difficult to find writings or memories from chroniclers and visitors, friends or even conquerors throughout the years of Albanian history.

In the 2010s, the cultural institution of besa featured in an international exhibition named *Besa: A Code of Honour* by photographer Norman H. Gershman and in an award-winning documentary film *Besa: The Promise*



on the survival of Jews in Albania during the Holocaust. BESA is also a key theme in the novel *Doruntine* as abbreviated in English of The Albanian novelist Ismail Kadare which refers to an old Albanian Legend. An 2016 article appeared in BBC.com *What can Albania teach us about trust* could also be guiding in this matter.

The **BESA Museum** will be a “home” and a “temple” of BESA itself and will set a new standard for spaces of this kind in Albania, particularly in terms of its mission statement, concept, architecture, management, direction, exhibition creation, storytelling, education, and community engagement. It couldn't be enough for BESA to be only part of the National Historical Museum - currently subject to re-conceptualization and reconstruction, damaged by the 2019 earthquake - or of any other ethnographic museum of the country, nor simply be mentioned, in the Jewish Museum of Valona, also on the eve of the start of the works, because BESA is very important and deserves to be treated as such, separately.

The museum will be therefore conceived as a continuation of the Jewish Museum in

Valona because without BESA the precious help given to the Jews in Albania would also have been unlikely as they were being chased and persecuted almost in most of Europe.

**BESA MUSEUM**, the “Former House of Toptani Family” building is representative of the vernacular architecture of the 19th Century and home to one of the most prominent families of the Albanian noblesse of the last two centuries, is located in the very centre of Tirana, precisely in an area that contains the beating heart of the city, i.e. the set of government bodies, representative offices, shopping centres, theatres, art galleries and preserved and protected historic museums and ensembles, in turn engaging in the complex cultural layering, typical of the current moment of development that the country is undergoing.

The museum should take the visitor by the hand and accompany him on a journey through the history of the people who lived according to BESA, because BESA is always there, among the Albanians. This is what the BESA Museum project should remind the young Albanian visitor and especially the

foreigner who knows little about the BESA of the Albanian people.

Besa should be more than just a museum as it will serve as a meeting point, a centre of dialogue and events for cultural exchange and beyond.

It's very interesting for us, that the concept of the project comes from a foreign studio which, after having known of BESA their selves, as part of Albanian tradition and customs, should be able to skilfully reveal it to the general public by introducing them to the BESA phenomenon.

I would like to heartily encourage you to take part in this competition and embrace this challenge, with a unique object of exhibition, and to reveal your creativity by accepting the challenge of showing the intangible and the ubiquitous BESA, offering a passionate and authentic choice.

Sincerely  
Elva Margariti

# 1 OVERVIEW ON THE COMPETITION

## 1.1 Promoters

The Ministry of Culture is announcing an open design competition for architecture design proposals, through which it is searching for the best design solution for the establishment of a contemporary museum in the city of Tirana.

*(This document is based on the approved Terms of Reference for the preparation of the detailed design of the Besa museum-decision of National Council of Material Cultural Heritage, no 08, date 18/01/2023-and on the STDs documents of tender).*

## 1.2 Manifesto

The Ministry of Culture, in the capacity of the contracting and promoting authority, with the support of the donor, is pleased to announce the international competition for the design of the "Besa Museum". Through this open call, the Ministry of Culture aims to attract international teams of designers, architects, restorers, landscapers, curators, etc., supporting the creation of a contemporary historical museum, unique in its kind, related to heritage, subject, mission, concept and architecture.

The goal is to obtain contemporary and visionary concepts for interventions of an architectural and restorative character for the rehabilitation and adaptation of the existing building with the status of Cultural Monument, as well as revitalization interventions, which aim to add a new cultural space to the capital, harmonized and in strong relations with the environment and the surrounding historical area.

The concepts should be based on principles generated by identifying architectural characteristics, heritage, cultural, historical

and archaeological values of the area and its surrounding buildings, as well as on the best international experiences, prioritizing its architectural value, as well as a high-quality design.

Architecture is the realest indicator of the manner and level of functioning of a society and a state. It is the best proof of cultural values and emancipation that this society stands for, particularly in relation to the public buildings.

This drives us to expand and base the product of this competition on international practices, encouraging the generation of a wide range of new ideas and approaches in museum design, in strengthening the credibility of this competition, in attracting the attention of the interested and general public with regards to the addressed need, as well as through expanding the discourse and public awareness-raising.

The "Besa Museum" project shall be developed on a small-scale surface area, assessing the location, context and the existing historical building, which will be adapted pursuant to these ToRs.

“Besa Museum” will represent an added tourist landmark in Tirana, in its central part. The museum’s seat is a representative object of vernacular architecture of the XIX century, containing authentic architectural elements with little interventions throughout time. It represents one of the most developed examples of Tirana dwellings, incorporating the most perfect achievements of the time. Such an element adds to the importance of protection, conservation, restoration and revitalization of the building. Hence, the most perfect solution would be to revitalize it, by creating a museum dedicated to one of the most identifying aspects of the Albanian people such as the “besa” phenomenon.

The establishment of a museum dedicated to the concept of “Besa” takes into account the impact of representative values in the society, culture, activities in the Albanian museum sector.

“Besa” will be not simply a museum - it will serve as a meeting point, a centre of dialogue for cultural exchange and so on.

### 1.3 Beneficiaries

Following the previous initiative on the construction of the Albanian Jewish Museum in Vlora, the establishment of which was supported by the Albanian-American Development Foundation, the focus is to create a new museum as a linear narrative of the Albanian history and addressing new museum destinations. These initiatives are considered necessary to identify the unique Albanian cultural values and our heritage as one of the greatest assets of this country, of what we have been and what we are.

The communication of written and documented history with regards to musealization is irreplaceable, because by building a physical relation with the culture and history the community feels closer, more approachable and engaged, it identifies and touches the actual history through a more absorbing and direct way, it communicates the country’s historical values, particularly to the youth and foreign visitors who are not familiar with our cultural heritage and let alone on its potential and existence.

*Museums are temples of memory, narrative cults of history, and as such are pivotal in the focus of visitors.*

The “Besa Museum” augments one of the most important values of the identity and heritage of the Albanian nation’s creation. This unwritten code has guided society towards progress ever since its earliest stages. The given word (Besa) is a code which has guided the life of Albanians, dictating their social and moral compass. Today, this word portrays a nation of firm believers in the power of the given word, who assign an almost divine significance to it.

Referring once again to the Albanian Jewish Museum, “besa” comprises the essence of the help provided to the Jews, which is a recent story, but based on this code of honour.

*Besa, or the cult of the given word, is originally associated with the biblical myth of the Word: “In the beginning there was the Word!”*

*Before writing, contracts, agreements, notaries, trials, states, nations, men and the world itself even existed, there was only the Word.*

*This magnificent cult, which gradually took the form of a religious ecclesiastical idiom for Western-European peoples, preserved its original sacral and non-canonical traces among Albanians.*

.....

*Let me cite for you  
a sermon so great  
As it was taught to us  
by the holy faith.*

The direct beneficiaries of this projects the Ministry of Culture but also the City of Tirana, their residents and visitors.

#### 1.4 Organizing Authority

The Ministry of Culture is the organizing authority of the competition process, on behalf of the Albanian Government.

The contracting authority for the design execution process will be the Ministry of Culture.

#### 1.5 Competition Site

The museum's seat is located in the heart of the city, within the walls of the Tirana Castle and its archaeological area, positioned in its south-eastern part.

In 1604, the Albanian-Ottoman functionary, Sulejman Pashë Bargjini, built a mosque, a baking shop and a hammam, which were the main requirements for the center of a town of that time. This is regarded as the date when the foundations of a new city, Tirana, today's capital of Albania, were laid.

About three decades later, the Bargjini family built a castle, where their palaces were located. According to the studies, the time of construction of the castle in the center of Tirana is thought to be between 1633 and the second half of the XVIII century.

The Planimetric form of Tirana castle is rectangular, measuring 160 x 120 m. The walls of the first period were built with large stone blocks, hewn into rectangular shapes. The castle functioned until 1832 and was then destroyed by the Ottoman General, Mehmet Rushit Pasha, during the measures

taken against the uprising of the great local feudal leaders.

The museum's seat is located inside the castle wall, in the protected area of the city.

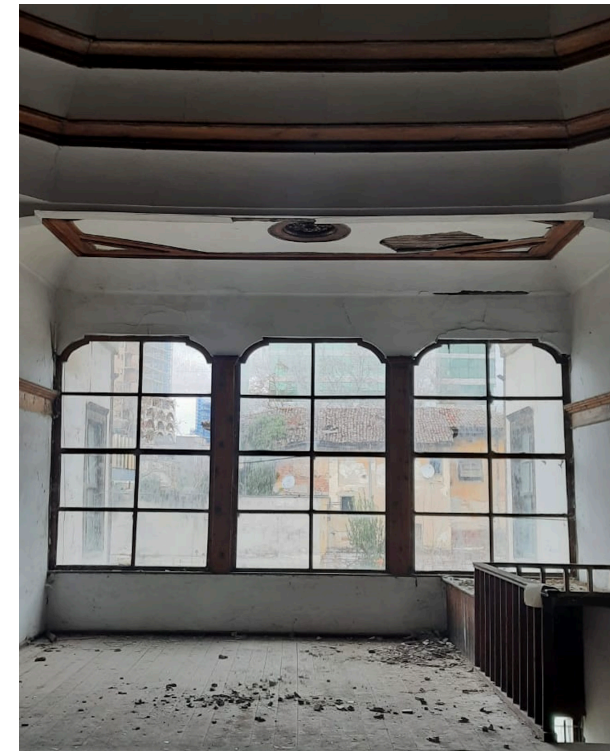


Fig. 1: Interior photo of the windows



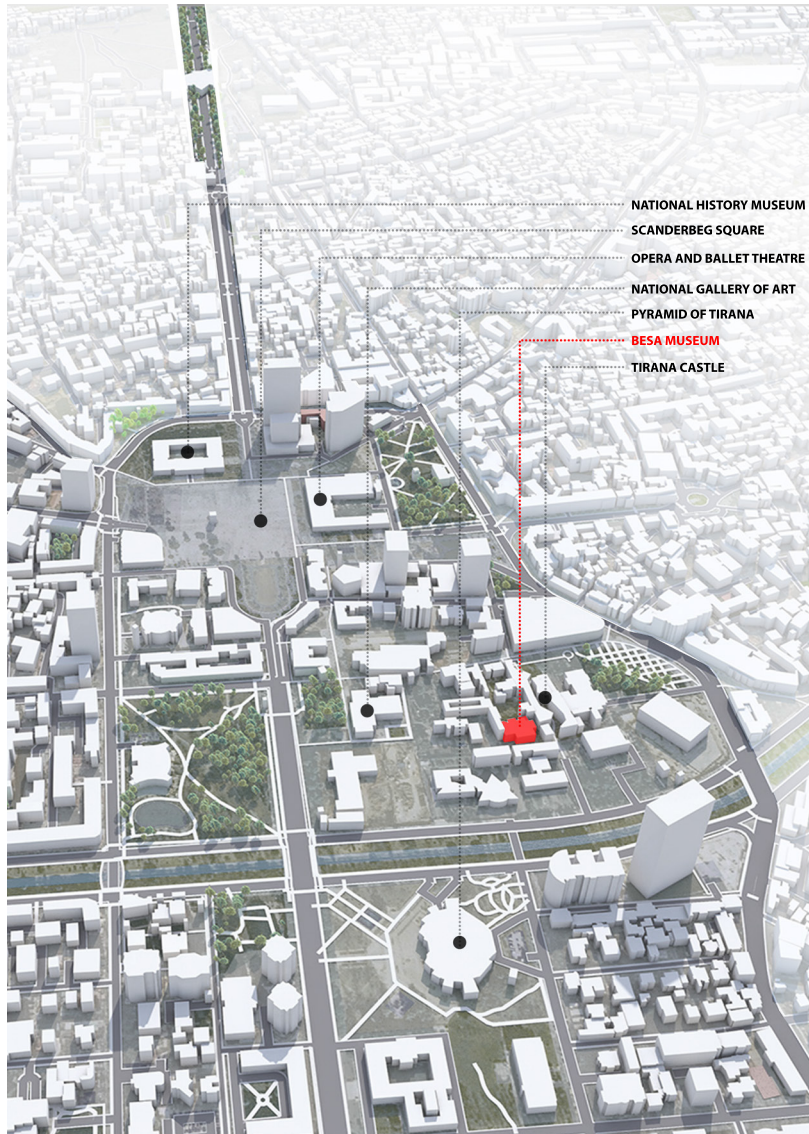


Fig. 2: 3D image of the city center

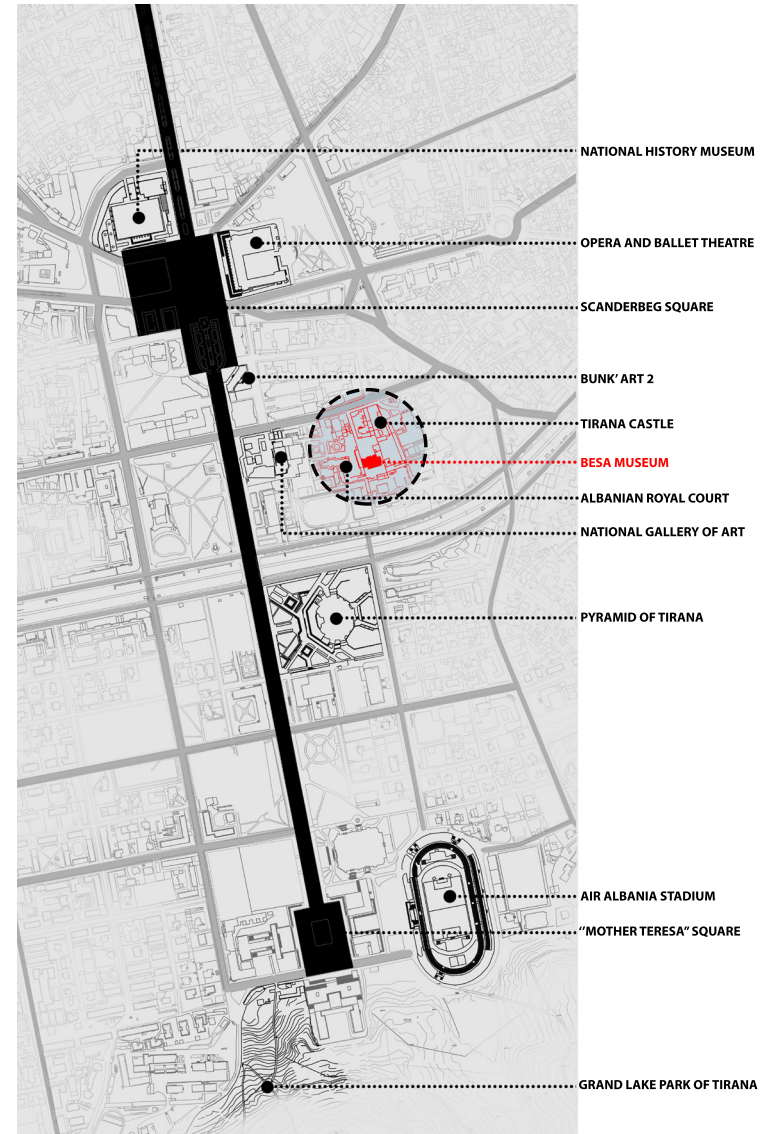


Fig. 3: Museum location and main point of interest in Tirana

### 1.6 Scope of the Competition / Questions about the Competition

The competition will be focused on these four tasks:

1. The site plan and landscape design proposal for a new reconceptualized courtyard;
  - Ideas can occupy larger areas than the actual boundary of the property, based on the overall reconceptualization of the site.
2. Architecture concept design proposal for the restoration interventions of the house- first category cultural monument;
3. Architecture concept design proposal for the revitalisation interventions through new functions at the service of the new museum;
  - Ideas can occupy larger areas than the actual surface of the house, based on the overall reconceptualization of the design (new structure in the front courtyard, etc);

4. Architecture concept design proposal for the musealisation;

*The proposal must take into consideration the protection status of the monument, which according to Law 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums" cites:*

#### *Article 5*

*36. "Cultural monument" is a object or building with historical-cultural value, that is protected by the state. In terms of this law, based on the intensity of the intervention in the cultural assets, the latter are categorized into:*

*a) "Cultural monument of the category I" is the building with prominent values and with special importance for the cultural heritage, which is preserved entirely with its architectural and technical components. The composition of the volumes, the architectural treatment of the external and internal views, as well as the planimetric and functional solution of these monuments cannot be changed.*

A successful proposal responds well to the following questions:

- How can we propose a redevelopment that bolsters the identity of the area, and reflects its heritage?
- How can we design spaces that allow visitors to become part of the experience in and around the facilities?
- How can we ensure successful a design under consideration to develop a holistic and outstanding concept for the future museum, fit for modern exhibition standards?
- How can we ensure a modern museum in an old house, considering the use of the digital technologies in the exhibitions?
- How can we improve the quality and the aesthetics of the nearby context through design proposals?

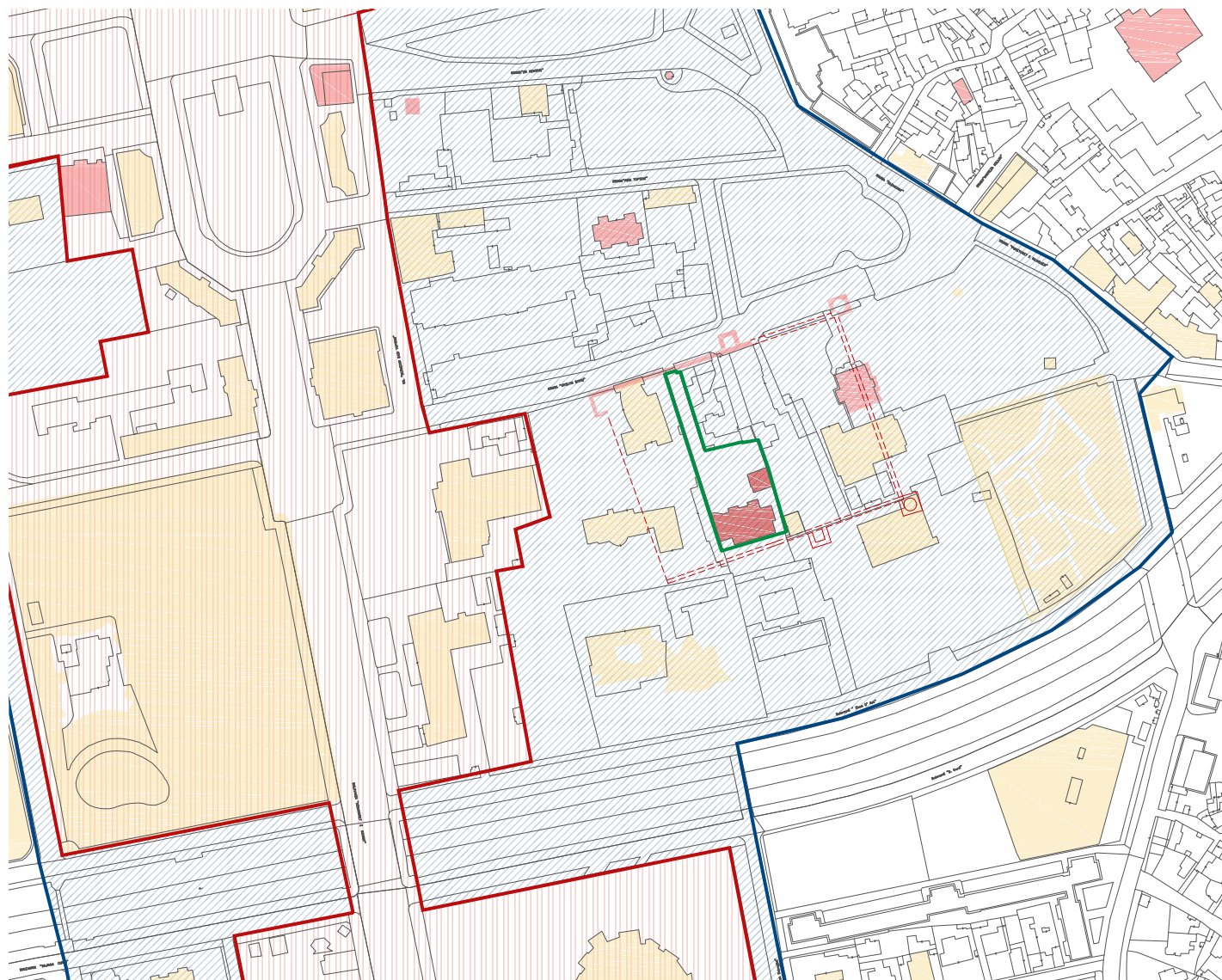


Fig. 4: Cultural monuments map (I and II category) in Tirana

### LEGEND

- MONUMENTS I CATEGORY
- MONUMENTS II CATEGORY
- HISTORIC CENTER
- PROTECTED AREA
- BESA MUSEUM



### 1.7 Competition Objective

The outcome of the competition will be the design solutions for the restoration, revitalisation and musealisation of the House, courtyard and its surrounding.

Each competitor will be required to work to achieve the following:

- Study the area of the competition and its surroundings. Provide an in-depth analysis of the proposal area, upon desk research, meetings with experts and site visits, to reflect the current conditions and justify the proposal;
- Provide the architecture concept design proposals
- Search for mutual programs and activities of the museum;
- Study how extensions (if needed) in the courtyard could be designed as harmoniously as possible respecting the old house and its unique façade.
- Search for ways of integrating the open space of the competition sites with the surrounding areas;
- Search for “green concepts” to be implemented in the restoration, musealisation and revitalisation;

- Any solution should aim for high creativity, high design standards, cost-efficiency, and compliance with the Albanian legislation in force and Law 27/2018 “On Cultural Heritage and Museums”;
- Prepare and submit the proposal file, as specified in this Document and the Standard Tender Documents (STDs);
- Present the proposal to the Jury (short-listed teams only), on the date that will be announced by the organizers;

In case of selection as the winner (short-listed teams only), to be willing and have the capacity to comply with the other stages of development. The international studio shall conclude a contract with a local Albanian studio equipped with the necessary licenses according to the Albanian law.

The detailed design brief that will guide competitors during Phase 2 of the competition will be provided only to short-listed competitors. To discuss the design brief and its requirements, an online workshop will be organized with the participation of involved stakeholders. The workshop date will be announced later.

### 1.8 Competition Process

#### Phase 1: Expression of interest, eligibility and shortlist

This is an open, international, concept design competition, organized in two phases.

**In Phase 1** of the application, the candidates will present their team composition, qualifications, work methodology, and their vision statement for the site, including a preliminary concept. Candidates shall submit requests for expression of interest and the documentation required by this Brief and the STDs.

The Contracting Authority will examine the candidate’s submitted documentation and report to the Competition Jury. The candidates, who do not meet the qualification criteria stated in the Tender Documents, shall be disqualified and shall be immediately notified accordingly.

The Jury will evaluate the qualified candidates based on their profile, group composition, relevant experiences, project understanding and initial response/approach to the

project, preliminary concept drawings and illustrations.

At the end of this phase, the Jury will select the best five teams and concepts, which will be short-listed to continue working for the next phase.

### **Phase 2: Submission of concept design proposals**

In **Phase 2**, the Jury will carefully review the short-listed teams' proposals, and based on the Phase 2 criteria, will select the winning proposal.

At the beginning of this phase, the Contracting Authority will send an invitation to each of the short-listed teams to submit concept design proposals.

After receiving the final concept design proposals, the Contracting Authority will examine them to make sure they meet the requirements stipulated in this Brief and the STDs.

The qualified proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by the Competition Jury based on the criteria stated in this Brief. The Jury will

announce the winning team, based on the careful and thorough selection of the best design proposal.

The winning team, will be awarded the execution design contracts by the respective authority, after bi-party negotiations on fee, timeframe and deliverables.

### **Concept design proposal reward for short-listed teams**

Five short-listed team will be rewarded the amount of € 40,000, for the preparation of the documents of the second phase of the concept design proposal.

## **1.9. Working Methodology**

### **Ministry of Culture**

Albania's Ministry of Culture is responsible for the implementation of government art, culture and cultural heritage policies. A network of 28 national and regional institutions under the Ministry implements and supports projects, programs and activities related to preservation, restoration,

management, valorisation and promotion of culture and cultural heritage in Albania.

[kultura.gov.al](http://kultura.gov.al)

### **Teams of local and foreign professionals**

Every international team is encouraged by the organizers to partner with a local team and each local team is encouraged to partner with an international counterpart. The organizing authority believes that such cooperation can increase the impact of the proposal and improve implementation feasibility. This is not a pre-selection criterion, however, having a partnership at this stage is massively useful and can help create a more coherent and contextualized vision, which of course might boost the teams' chances to be selected.

Link:

<https://kultura.gov.al/en/muzeu-besa-konkurs/>  
<https://kultura.gov.al/al/muzeu-besa-konkurs/>

### 1.10. Eligibility

The competition is open to all professional teams, who are able to meet the following requirements:

1. be registered or recognized by an official accreditation body in the country of origin of the applicant; or
2. where recognition or registration law does not apply, the applicant is a member of a professional institution in the country of practice.

Each team of Phase 1 should be composed of, at least, a lead architect, restorer, landscape architect, artist, curator, museum exhibition designer, multimedia specialist, structural engineer, and cost estimator. All team members must be identified in the Declaration of Team Composition.

All applicants and their team members must be clearly identified and they should declare the validity of professional registration, recognition, or membership in the Team Composition Declaration.

### 1.11. Competition Jury Composition

The Competition Jury will have seven members, all experienced professionals in the relevant fields. The composition of the Competition Jury is structured to include local (3 members) and international design experts (4 members), members with artistic experience and local community members.

The members of the Competition Jury will be announced not later than one week before the date of the evaluation – as declared in the competition calendar. It will be announced on the website of the competition. A short biography of each juror will also be provided in the competition site.

The Jurors will be assisted and supported throughout the span of this competition by the Technical Secretariat, composed of members of the Organizing Authority, who are experts in the relevant fields of study.

### 1.12. Competition Base Material - Figures and Drawings

All the necessary graphic documentation needed by the Applicants to work on the project, will be available for download at the competition's site and also on a shared Google Drive folder.

List of Document uploaded in GDrive folder:

- A copy of Terms of Reference (technical requirements on preparing the preliminary and detailed design)
- Plans (as autocad editable file format dwg)
- Satellite images
- Orthophoto
- Photos (inside and outside the building)
- Video (inside and outside the building)
- Report about the existing situation of the building (methodology of conservation/restoration)
- Report about the existing situation wood elements and mural paintings (methodology of intervention in woodwork and mural paintings)

**Competition website:**

English

<https://kultura.gov.al/en/muzeu-besa-konkurs/>

Albanian

<https://kultura.gov.al/al/muzeu-besa-konkurs/>

Link to the GDrive Folder:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/my-drive>



*Fig. 5: Image of the second floor facade*

## 2 DESIGN BRIEF

### 2.1 Rationale and Significance of the Site/ History and existing situation

The residential centre of Tirana, having always been the most preferred for living in since relatively ancient times, constitutes a valuable example of the gradual transition from a rural centre to an urban one. Furthermore, at the beginning of 20th century, due to special circumstances, it would also be the chosen capital of Albania.

The walls of the castle enclose Former Toptani building house, (the museum's seat), that is a representative of the enclosed buildings of the wealthy feudal class, built during the second half of the 19th century.

This house has been declared a cultural monument of the first category by the Rectorate of University of Tirana, by Decision No. 6, dated 15/01/1963. Ministry of Education and Culture, by Decision No. 1886, dated 10 June 1973 (According to the official list). It falls into the category of private buildings and pertains to the Albanian culture of the national Renaissance period of 1831-1912. This house is an architectural complex incorporating walls, courtyards,

wells, walkway, large gates, dwellings and secondary buildings. Surrounded by high large stone walls, this complex embodies a fortification, taking on the appearance of a small castle. These buildings, characteristic of the feudal class, started spreading from the second half of the 19th century in the region of Tirana. The complex is of interest from the construction point of view, both for its functional composition and the architectural-ornamental features, as well as for being part of a single ensemble comprising the surrounding buildings.

For the analysis of the conservation state of the cultural heritage monument, cultural monument of the 1-st category, the building has undergone an initial inspection based on the technical and photographic archival material deposited with the Technical Archive of National Institute of Cultural Heritage, followed by a comparative analysis and visual inspection on site.

The most substantial restoration this building has undergone was during 1977-1978, followed by a continuous maintenance cycle. Based on an analysis of the archival material, it was observed that during this

restoration the building saw interventions and transformations as regards both the main façade as well as its functional design, being adapted into laboratory premises on its ground floor and the geography institute on the first floor. Thus, the building was converted from a residence into office spaces plus a laboratory.

In consideration of all of the above, during the course of assessment and inspection of this cultural property, with a view of drafting an intervention project, it was observed that this structure was used in different historic periods to serve as a residence (initially) and further as a dedicated space for public institutions.



Fig. 6: The front yard



To this day, following an assessment of the spaces available within this structure and their adaptation over the years, we estimate that since the building no longer serves as a dwelling or as an Institute of Geography, and with a view of assigning it a contemporary function and purpose which can in turn lead to an optimal use or even enable funding as regards its restoration (cultural property of national value for the typology of vernacular architecture it falls into), it could be suitable to transform it into cultural museum spaces benefiting the city. Such estimation, that it may be of interest to convert it into cultural museum spaces (also engaging the youth and communities), turning it into one of the city's main attractions, while further refining the cultural offer in general is also based on its strategic position in the centre of Tirana, its proximity to several cultural or museum institutions and it being part of the touristic-cultural-historical itineraries.

Beginning of the XIX century

Year 1977

Year 2021



Fig. 7: The Former Toptani Family House in different periods of time

## 2.2 Site Plan

The former Toptanas Residence is located in the heart of the city, within the walls of the Tirana Castle and its archaeological area, positioned in its south-eastern part. Within the perimeter of the property located on a flat plot, there are currently two buildings, the main two-story residence facing south-east, and a two-story auxiliary residence

“Selamlleku” in a more degraded condition. To reach the residence, one passes through the longitudinal courtyard where one enters through a large gate located in the massive carved stone fortification wall that surrounds the complex from the northwest.



Fig. 8: The Former Toptani Family House is a first category cultural monument, aerial photograph, 2018



Fig. 9: Site accessibility and relation with main boulevard



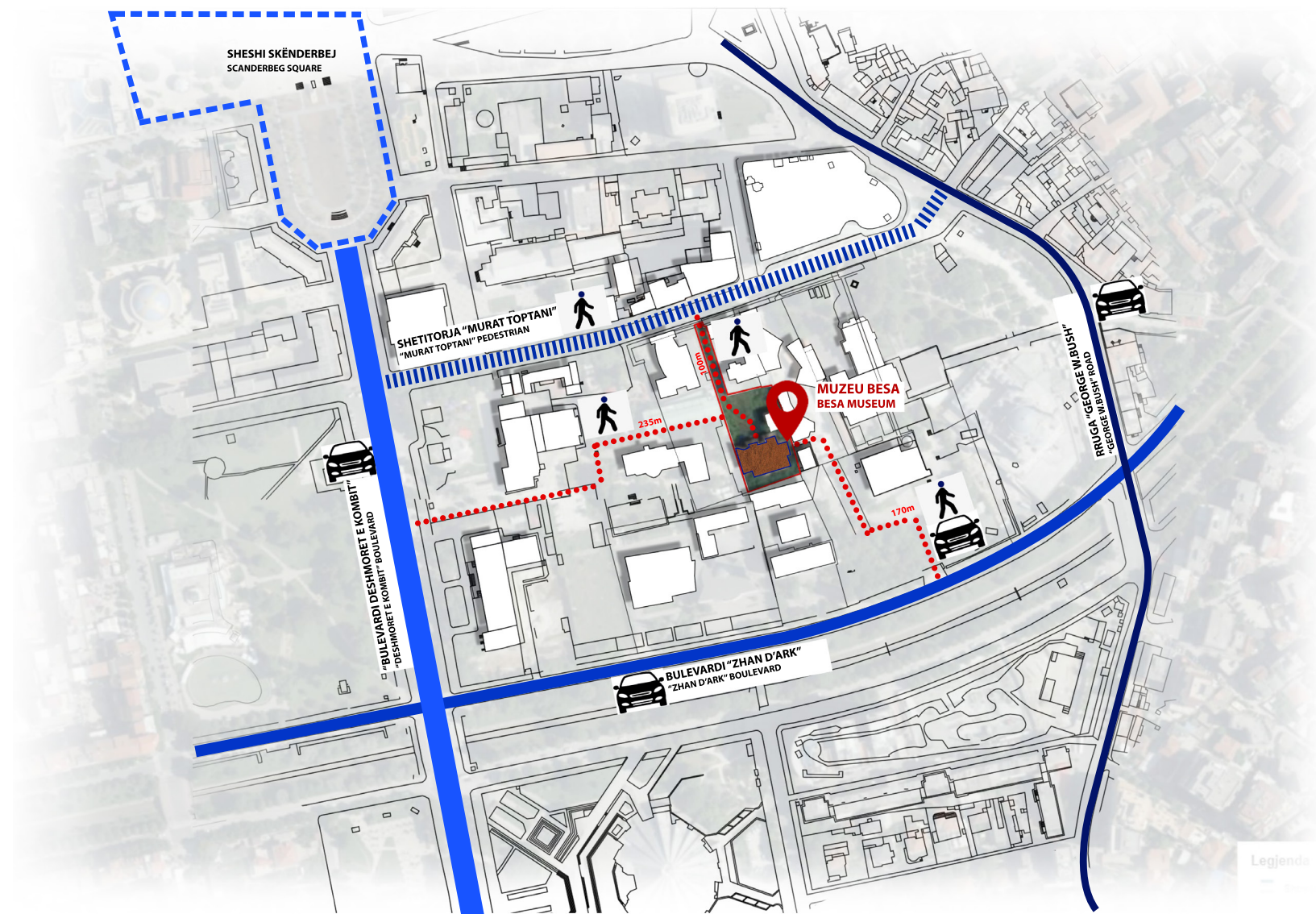


Fig. 10: Site accesibility

### 2.3 Site Definition and Specifications

- Name: Besa Museum
- Coordinates: 41°19'32"N 19°49'20"E
- Access: Through "Murat Toptani" pedestrian Street
- Site area: 2489 m<sup>2</sup>
- Building Area: 1622 m<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 11: Museum site

## 2.4 Design Specification

- Creation of a new civil space which attracts people's interest on cultural heritage and ensures their interactive participation;
- Communication improvement by remodelling transparency, volume and movement in order to increase transparency, eliminate barriers and re-evaluate internal/external communication with the courtyard and Tirana Castle;
- Communication improvement through activities. The museum should have harmony with the Tirana Castles, creating bilateral communication between the two.
- The transformation of the Museum as an attraction point for different activities that may be included in the programme (open bar, creative space, recreational space; workshop, education space);
- Rehabilitation and new designing of the courtyard around the museum;
- The museum should be accessible by everyone and have a special focus on persons with limited abilities, in order for them to have an easy access, to be part

of the itineraries;

- The exhibition areas should be projected in such a way that provides movement focused not on individuals, but on the group, therefore creating some free passing spaces along the way.

### New Functions

The functions that will be developed in the new museum, in the existing facility, are at least but not limited to be the following:

#### *Basic activities:*

- Activities related to permanent and temporary exhibitions:
- Space dedicated to Cultural Activities
- Dialogue Center Space
- Space dedicated to Permanent Exhibition
- Space dedicated to Temporary Exhibition
- Space for the development of institutional and public presentations (auditorium)
- Workshop - Educational Space

#### *Supporting activities:*

- Reception area
- Information Center/ Ticket Area
- Recreational space
- Reading space

- Museum Shop
- Coffee Shop
- Wardrobe
- Sanitary node
- Auxiliary Space
- Administrative space | cabinets, and their utilitarian functions
- Permanent collection archive
- Temporary archive
- Storage Space
- Technical Control Space
- Technical Space

### Restoration concept design

- The restoration concept design of the external part of the building should ensure the conservation and enhancement of cultural, historical, urban and environmental heritage values of the historical centre of the city of Tirana.
- The restoration concept design façade should be done to enhance its values in volume and external appearance.
- The restoration inside the house should be to enhance its values of mural paintings, wood elements and any other traditional ornaments.

### Courtyard and surrounding areas

- The courtyard should be treated in the entirety of its elements. The design team should consider a new concept for this area.
- Revitalization of the courtyard and the surrounding environment, the study of possible spaces and capacities to create a new structure in the context of the museum of Besa, as an interactive structure within the limits of the development. This structure should absolutely respect the value of the "old house", the visibility of the façade of the house.
- Proposal for the creation of communicating capillaries, and direct urban servitudes, between the Museum and the pedestrian space in the north, the pedestrian space of the Tirana Castle, in the east, as well as Jean D'Arc Boulevard in the south of the area under study.
- To be considered that all the area is in a possible archaeological area.
- Restoration of the perimetral stone walls; Restoration of cobblestone paving; Restoration of the entrance gate or reproduction according to the original.

- F.V. structure for the access of persons with limited abilities.

### Musealization

Completing the Physical Exhibition with an Interactive Virtual Experience  
Today, in the 21st century, our world is greatly influenced by technological developments such as the internet, social media, and virtual reality. Time and space can unfold thanks to the internet, which allows us to be present in different places at the same time, meeting different people through video conferences. Technology allows us to physically stay in the museum exhibit and, at the same time, to virtually visit historic sites such as the ruins of Apollonia. Technology can also enable us to time travel by taking us in Illyrian or Roman times.

### New dimensions thanks to new technologies

The traditional history museum mainly collects artefacts, which are presented to the public to represent different episodes of history. Contemporary museums are supported through new technologies in order to provide complementary

information on artefacts while allowing visitors to simultaneously experiment with other types of experiences. Some of the new technologies that can be used in the new national museum are:

- Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR);
- Comprehensive experience;
- Interactive devices.

### Multiple interpretation lines for different target groups

The Besa Museum must appeal to and be able to communicate with the largest audience possible. This audience is made up of individuals who have very different cultural backgrounds, different interests and respond to different types of stimuli. The potential audience can be grouped into several target groups that share a common interest. In order to reach all these different groups, the exhibition should not have only one interpretation system, but several intertwined mechanisms that promote attention, understanding and participation of different groups.



A preliminary list of the target groups is:

1. Age:
  - a. Children
  - b. Young people
  - c. Adults
  - d. The elderly
2. Special groups:
  - a. Visually impaired persons
  - b. Persons with limited abilities

### Time spent during the visit

Different visitors plan to spend different periods of time visiting the museum, based on many factors such as their cultural interest and the amount of free time they plan to spend in Tirana. The exhibition should provide everyone with a rich and interesting experience regardless of the time spent in the museum.

Therefore, exhibitions should be planned according to two visit durations: quick visit (about 1 hour), slow visit (about 2 hours or longer).

### Integrated Educational Program

The museum must have permanent educational spaces to develop educational programs. They should be designed as multifunctional spaces equipped with projectors for audio-visual materials and workshops for manual works. Regardless of the level of knowledge of each group, the educational program should be a place of reflection, meeting and debate. The new museum should become a cultural centre and meeting centre for Tirana.

Each solution must push the boundaries of creativity while adapting to the local context and setting high design standards.

The Besa Museum will serve as a space for communication, recreation, conservation, implementation and evaluation of ideas in terms of cultural, historical and national heritage, recalling that the very name of this museum holds the most important virtue of the Albanian people.



Fig. 12: Photos of the existing buildings





Fig. 13: The Former Toptani Family House main facade

## 3 REQUIRED SERVICES AND DOCUMENTS

### 3.1 Required Services

#### Phase 1: Expression of Interest and Eligibility (Shortlist)

In the first phase, teams are invited to submit legal and conceptual (non-design) documentation, detailing their team composition, relevant experience and initial project approach.

The application is open to anyone who is interested and meets the requirements.

1. Submit the preliminary concept idea;
2. Submit the supporting application documents;
3. Deliver the submission to the Competition Organisers address (soft copy and hard copy) within the given deadline.

#### Phase 2: Submission of Concept Design Proposals

1. Draft the concept design proposal;
2. Prepare the accompanying materials including:
  - a) the scale model,
  - b) the project report,

- c) the preliminary estimate for the proposal (implementation costs), and,
  - d) the estimated execution design proposal.
3. Deliver the submission to the Competition Organisers address (soft copy and hard copy) within the given deadline;
  4. Present the concept design proposal in front of the Jury, on-site (on a date to be announced).

#### Reward for Short-listed Applicants/ Bidders

Five short-listed Applicant/ Bidder will be rewarded the amount of 40,000 Euros, for the concept design proposal submission in the 2nd phase.

### 3.2 Application Documents

Competition applicants must submit a number of documents, in order to be in compliance with the requirements of the competition for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the contest. These documents are of legal, informative, and design character. Any details regarding the documentation that needs to be submitted in order to be eligible

(folder 2) for the competition will be given in addendum 9 of the STDs. The list below is only informative; please refer to the above-mentioned document for the full formal requirements and forms that need to be submitted.

#### Phase 1 Documents/ Deliverables

The Deliverables will be submitted in two folders. The first one will include Expression of interest and the second Prequalification documents.

Each document should be bound as separate PDF Documents, organized in Chapters ordered and titled following the same structure as listed below.

Well-organized Binders will help the Organizing Authority and the Jurors evaluate the compliance of each submission with the STDs requirements.

***Please, do follow these instructions!***



### **Folder 1: Expression of Interest**

#### **A. Competitor Profile**

A detailed overview of the design studio leading the design team, highlighting the competing studio's philosophy, skills and competencies, and awards won (if any).  
CV | Portfolio of the Primary designer | Organizational chart of the Design studio.

At least two similar works, realized, built or completed projects.

These should be projects in the context of museums buildings and/or cultural heritage, focused on the building and the public connection that the building creates as an important part of the contribution to the social and cultural life of the location.

At least one of the projects must be led by the company applying for the competition.

Your response should be highly illustrative, highlighting design quality and the particular relevance to the Besa museum project including covering the following points:

- What contribution has the project made to the location?
- How is the relationship between the needs and requirements of the client integrated with the complexity of the design conditions?
- How was the approach with the client, the process, the investor, etc.?
- How was the quality from the design of the object and the landscape, up to the total implementation of the project, through the selection of materials, colors and finishes?
- How does the project embrace the concept of sustainability in terms of design, construction and use?
- How have different disciplines collaborated in group work?

*Material no more than six pages.*

#### **B. Group Composition | design team**

Submission of relevant Portfolio and CV of group members.

The minimum required in the group of workers (but not limited), are: lead architect, restorer, landscape architect, artist, curator, museum exhibition designer, multimedia

specialist, structural engineer, and budget estimator.

#### **C. Project Understanding and Initial Response/Approach to the Project**

A description of the working group's understanding of the project, based on the material presented or individual research done, describing what your strategy would be for a project of this type and complexity. It can be presented in the form of a narrative, images or sketches.

*Material no more than three pages.*

#### **D. Preliminary concept drawings and illustrations**

Every Applicant/ Bidder will submit enough graphic material for the jurors to understand the concept. Clarity of presentation will support the communication of the idea to the Jury.

***Note: At this stage there is no expectation of presenting a detailed proposal. The jury wants an overview of your approach to the project and how it can be implemented.***

## Folder 2: Prequalification Documents

**E. Legal and financial documents or self-declaration statements** relevant for the application according to the STDs, addendum 9, which include:

### **1. General eligibility/qualification criteria:**

a) The Applicant/ Bidder must **declare** that he/she/they:

- i) is **registered in the commercial register** according to the legislation of the country where it carries out its activity, or according to special legislation in the case of a non-profit organization, has the object of procurement in the field of activity, and has an active status;
- ii) is **not in bankruptcy** process (active status);
- iii) has **not been convicted** of any criminal offense, in accordance with Article 76/1 of the Law of Public Procurement (LPP);
- iv) the person (persons) who act as a member of the administrative body, director or supervisor, shareholder or partner, or who has representative, decision-making or controlling power within the Economic Operator, is **not**

**convicted or has not been convicted** by a court decision of final form for any criminal offense, defined in article 76/1 of the LPP;

- v) has **not been convicted** by a final court decision regarding professional activity;
- vi) has **no outstanding payments** of taxes and social security contributions, or is in one of the conditions provided for in article 76/2 of the LPP;
- vii) has **paid for the electricity** and meets the requirements arising from the legislation in force. This information is required for Applicants/ Bidders, who operate in the territory of the Republic of Albania.
- viii) is **not in the conditions of a conflict of interest**, according to the legislation in force;
- ix) performs the **activity in accordance with the relevant environmental, social and labor legislation**;
- x) **submitted an Independent Application**, according to the requirements of the legislation in force;
- xi) performs the **activity in accordance with the requirements of the legislation in force**;
- xii) there are **no persons** who are/have been

in this capacity in a Bidder **exempted from the right to benefit from public funds**, by the decision of the Public Procurement Agency, while this decision is in force.

- *The above criteria shall be fulfilled with the submission of the Summary of the Self-Declaration Form of the Applicant/ Bidder, on the submission day, according to the Addendum nr. 10 of STDs.*
- *In the event of a Joint Venture of Bidders, each Bidder-member of the group must submit the aforementioned Self-Declaration.*
- *In the event that the Applicant/ Bidder will rely on the capacities of other entities, the aforementioned Self-Declaration must also be submitted by the supporting entity.*
- *The General Qualification Criteria must not be changed by the Organizing Authority.*
- *In any case, the Organizing Authority has the right to carry out the necessary verifications for the authenticity of the information declared by the Applicant/ Bidder, for the above.*

- If the application is presented by a **Joint Venture of Applicants/ Bidders**, the Applicants/ Bidders should provide:
  - A cooperation agreement between them, defining the representative, the percentage of participation in the joint venture, and the tasks/ responsibilities that each of the members of the joint venture will carry.
- If an Applicant/ Bidder wants to rely on the capacities of other entities, he/she proves to the contracting authority or entity that he/she will have the necessary resources available, submitting a written commitment of these entities for this purpose.

## 2. Specific Qualification Criteria

The Candidate/Bidder should submit:

- Summary Self-Declaration Form, according to Appendix 10
- Economic and financial capacity
  - To prove the financial and economic capacities, the economic operators must present a certificate for the annual turnover for the last financial years 2019, 2020, 2021, where the turnover value for at least one of the years of the

requested period must be no less than 4,800,000 Lek.

For foreign operators, in cases where the required documents are not issued in the country of origin to certify the balance sheets/financial statements or the annual turnover, they can submit a statement for their confirmation.

## Phase 2 Documents/ Deliverables

The required proposal for Detailed Concept Design for Phase 2 submission should contain but are not limited to:

- Materials visualizing the proposal (A0, foam-board panels - maximum 5 panels):
  - Plans, sections, elevations of the proposal;
  - Functional diagrams;
  - Concept diagrams and drawings (mobility/circulation, parking, structural);
  - Urban design concepts and plans;
  - Landscape design concepts and specifications;
  - Diagrams of key technical specifications;
  - Renders and visualizations.

- The proposal's booklet (A4 or A3 format), including:
  - Design approach and methodology;
  - Inspirations, precedents, references;
  - Context analysis;
  - Stakeholder needs identification;
  - Description and presentation of the proposal;
  - Work plan;
  - Spaces and capacity specifications (diagrams, text descriptions);
  - Elements and functional specifications (diagrams, text descriptions).
  - Preliminary estimate of the proposal (implementation costs).
- Scale site model (to be defined by the team)
- PowerPoint/ Keynote Presentation of the Proposals, including video animations (optional)

***Please note: The detailed design brief that will guide competitors during Phase 2 of the competition will be provided only to short-listed competitors.***

### 3.3 Evaluation Criteria

#### Qualifying Criteria of the first phase

Any competitor who fails to meet the minimum requirements as specified in the prequalification documents (according to the STDs, addendum 9) will be rejected.

Competitors who submit an Expression of Interest that meets the mandatory requirements as outlined in this document will be scored in accordance with the selection criteria set out below.

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Competitor Profile	(20 p)
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Group Composition   design team	(20 p)
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Project Understanding and Initial Response/Approach to the Project	(30 p)
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Preliminary concept drawings and illustrations	(30 p)
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#### Evaluation Criteria for the second phase

Each submission will be assessed against four main criteria and related weightings, as

detailed below.

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Architecture	(40 p)
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Technical Design	(20 p)
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Site Planning, Placemaking and Landscape	(20 p)
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Environment and Sustainability	(20 p)
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**Architecture (40 points):** Response to the requested program and fit with the context; Original design that engages with the place, landscape, environment and heritage; Architectural language and materials respecting the existing building; A unique visitor experience.

**Technical Design (20 points):** Alignment with requirements and objectives stated within the terms of reference, including those regarding the restoration; High-quality engineering strategies, including musealization, interpretation exhibition through new technology, and sustainability; Integration of the new structure with the old structure.

**Site Planning and Landscape (20 points):** A landscape visioning masterplan, including a connectivity plan; Integration of landscaping proposals which harmoniously integrate with the existing building.

**Environment and Sustainability (20 points):** A comprehensive sustainability strategy with exemplary practices for low-energy consumption, embodied carbon and minimizing carbon emissions; The integration of passive environmental design techniques that enable zero or low-energy ventilation, cooling and solar shading; The innovative environmental technologies and practices in construction in order to mitigate the impact of development.

### 3.4 Copyright

All competitors' drawings and submissions become the common property of the Organizing Authority, the Ministry of Culture and the city of Tirana. They gain the right of publishing, multiplying and using them for different institutional purposes. The copyright of each design submission remains with the author.

## 4 ELIGIBILITY AND TEAM COMPOSITION

### 4.1 Eligibility and Expert Requirements

The competition is open to teams of experts with experience in architecture projects that meet the requirements outlined in this document and STDs. The design team should consist of professionals with prior relevant experiences.

### 4.2 Expert profiles

The team working on the project of the Besa Museum must meet the requirements according to the addendum 9 of the STDs:

All Applicants/ Bidders and their team members must be identified and declare the validity of professional registration, recognition, or membership in the Team Composition Declaration.

The team working on the 2nd phase, after shortlisted must include at least:

#### **The team leader**

Degree in Architecture; minimum 20 years of international experience in museum design, project management and conservation

of historical structures; demonstrated experience in the design and conservation of museums of national and international importance. The team leader is expected to be present in Albania and to be the main interlocutor with the Contracting Authority, which will help in engaging central and local government officials (specified in the CV).

#### **Restorer**

Degree in Architecture/Engineering, minimum of 15 years of national/international experience in designing museums and conservation of historical structures. Demonstrated work experience in the designing and conserving of museums of national and international importance (specified in the CV).

#### **Restorer of art pieces** (painting, wood element)

Degree in Architecture/Art, minimum of 15 years of national/international experience in the conservation and restoration of mural works and wooden elements in historical structures. Demonstrated work experience in the designing and conserving of museums of national and international importance (specified in the CV).

#### **Landscape architect**

Degree in Architecture/Engineering or similar fields. Minimum 20 years of international experience in the design of landscapes, evaluating many landscapes in context with historical and archaeological values (specified in the CV).

#### **Structural engineer**

Degree in structural engineering, minimum of 20 years of national/international experience in structural design and restoring of historical structures. Demonstrated work experience in structural restoring for museums and complex historical structures (specified in the CV).

#### **Mechanical engineer**

Degree in mechanical engineering, minimum of 20 years of international experience in the design of multiple mechanical systems of historical structures. Demonstrated work experience in museums and complex historical structures (specified in the CV).

#### **Electrical engineer**

Degree in electrical engineering, minimum of 20 years of international experience in the design of multiple electrical systems in

historical structures. Demonstrated work experience in museums and complex historical structures (specified in the CV).

#### **Curator**

Degree in museum studies/history and similar fields. Minimum of 15 years of international experience in the reorganization and re-conceptualization of complex museums. Demonstrated work experience in the creation of multiple complex descriptions in museums of national and international importance (specified in the CV).

#### **Museum exhibition designer**

Degree in Architecture/Interior Design or similar fields. Minimum of 15 years of international experience in the reorganization and re-conceptualization of complex museums. Demonstrated work experience in the design of expositions for museums of national and international value (specified in the CV).

#### **Multimedia specialist**

Degree in Visual Arts/Electronics/Design and similar fields. Minimum of 15 years of international experience in the creation of permanent and temporary multimedia

content in a museum setting. Demonstrated work experience in implementing contemporary and non-invasive concepts that allow for innovative inclusion and learning (specified in the CV).

#### **Archivist**

Degree in Museum Studies/Art History and similar fields. Minimum of 15 years of work experience with archiving and cataloguing systems. Demonstrated experience in working with Complex Museums with different typologies of objects (specified in the CV).

#### **Marketing/brand specialist**

Degree in Business and Marketing/Tourism and similar fields. Minimum of 15 years of experience working with the development of marketing and brand strategies for cultural institutions (specified in the CV).

#### **Archaeologist**

Degree in Archaeology/Cultural Heritage/History, minimum 15 years of national/international experience in studies and projects in archaeological areas (specified in the CV).

#### Supporting team members

##### **Historian**

Degree in History and similar fields with a minimum experience of 10 years in historic research and historic interpretation. The team should gather historians with deep knowledge about Jewish history in Albania (specified in the CV).

##### **Albanologist**

Degree in History/Albanian Language and similar fields. Deep knowledge of the language, customs, literature, art, culture and history of Albanians and relations with the Jewish community. Minimum 10 years of work experience (specified in the CV).

##### **Artist**

Degree in arts and similar fields. Minimum 10 years of work experience in installations, sculptures in public spaces (specified in the CV).

##### **Sociologist**

Degree in Sociology/Psychology and similar fields. Deep knowledge in the group ages of children and the youth. Minimum 10 years of work experience (specified in the CV).



The consultant will be evaluated and selected based on the composition of the proposed team and the profile, qualifications and experience of the relevant members.

During the implementation of the task, changes will not be allowed in the composition of the team and team members.

The international consultant is obliged to collaborate with local studios equipped with the relevant licenses according to the Albanian law.



Fig. 14: Close-up details of the facade



## 5 TIMELINE AND SUBMISSIONS

### 5.1 Competition duration

Expected competition start date:  
February 13, 2023

Expected competition end date:  
April 30, 2023

### 5.2 Submission guidelines

The team will prepare and submit officially the required documents in the offices of the Organizing Authority – Ministry of Culture and also via competition e-mail.

#### Phase 1

The documents should be submitted in **1 (one) printed and signed copy** at the **post address** of the Organizing Authority, together with **a CD** of the digital material.

**1 (one) electronic copy** of the material should be sent to the competition **email address**.

#### Phase 2

The **panels** should be submitted in **A0 format, foam-boarded, in 1 (one) printed copy** while the **report/booklet** should be submitted in an **A4 or A3 paper format, in 5 (five) printed copies**. Some copies of the reports will be distributed to the Jurors and the rest will remain with the Organizing Authority.

The **printed copies** together with **1 (one) CD** of the digital material and **the scale model** should be submitted at the **post address** of the Ministry of Culture.

**1 (one) electronic copy** of the panels (original/ editable format and PDF), the report/booklet (editable format and PDF) and the presentation (editable format and PDF), should be sent to the **competition email address**.

Post Address:

*Ministria e Kulturës e Republikës së Shqipërisë  
(Ministry of Culture of Republic of Albania)  
Street "Aleksandër Moisiu" no. 76, ish-Kinostudio "Shqipëria e Re", Tirana, Albania  
Kodi Postar (P.O. Box) 1007, Kodi i MK 248*

Competition Email Address:

[BesaMuseum\\_Competition@kultura.gov.al](mailto:BesaMuseum_Competition@kultura.gov.al)

### 5.3 Competition Language

All required documents should be in English and Albanian.

#### 5.4 Competition Calendar

<b>Open call for expressions of interest</b>	<b>February 13</b>
First question period	February 14 - 20
<b>Deadline Phase 1</b>	<b>March 06 (12:00 CET)</b>
Shortlist	March 10
<b>Invitation for Submitting Concept Design Idea</b>	<b>March 20</b>
Second question period	March 21 - April 01
<b>Deadline Phase 2</b>	<b>April 28 (12:00 CET)</b>
Public Presentations	April 30
Evaluation of the Jury	April 30 - 03 May
<b>Announcement of Winners</b>	<b>April 30 - 03 May</b>
Organization of an exhibition / publication	TBD





# BESA MUSEUM

