

## **Advocating for more crematoria in Serbia**

Following the stated needs, as well as examples of developed and richer countries and especially the advantages of cremation as a form of burial, the cremation organization "OGANJ" advocates the construction of more crematoria in Serbia, in addition to Serbia.

In addition to the existing crematoria in Belgrade, built in 1964, and in Novi Sad, built in 1964, the need to build crematoria in two other major Serbian cities, such as Nis and Kragujevac, was considered.

The offer to invest in crematoriums in Kragujevac-Central Serbia-Šumadija and Niš-Southern Serbia is rational for several reasons: given the number of inhabitants in Belgrade (1.7 million), Novi Sad (460 thousand), Niš (260 thousand people. )) and Kragujevac (120 thousand), as well as other quantitative and qualitative indicators, it is expected that this proposal will cause the appropriate attention and participation of several organizations.

In Serbia, after several so-called “years of lean cows” (a deeper and longer economic crisis, difficulty in supporting infrastructure and lack of investment), an investment cycle has been launched in the public sector infrastructure, roads and railways are being repaired, a metro will be built in Belgrade, etc. etc.

Crematorium are not yet a priority, but the need for them is becoming more evident every day. The circumstances of the pandemic and the rise in mortality due to COVID-19 are compelling evidence of this. The newly elected Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, PORFIRIJE (Porfiry, February 2021) is expected to further weaken the flexible (respect for the will of the deceased and the family and the performance of rituals) behavior of the clergy in Serbia and the approach of believers to cremation.

Demographic trends in Serbia are not rosy. Now there are about 900 thousand inhabitants over 75 years old with a life expectancy of about 76 years, while in Belgrade and Novi Sad it is 77 years, and in Nis and Kragujevac - 76 years. people, or 15 per 1000 inhabitants.

These data also point to a current and increasingly promising need for the construction of a crematorium, gardens of memory and other places that are closer and more accessible to citizens and reflect the desire and will of the dead.

In contrast to Belgrade and Novi Sad, in Niš and Kragujevac there is a great inertia of the old burial habits, and this is a double torment compared to the new cremation habit, which is acquired slowly and gradually.

However, little by little under these conditions, it will become less necessary to emphasize the environmental and other benefits of cremation, which are promoted by cremation organizations at both the national and multilateral levels, such as the International Cremation Federation and the European Crematorial Union.

The experience of the more developed and richer countries indicates patience and perseverance, provided that cities with a population of 50,000 have an appropriate crematorium. Proactive patience is confirmed by the development of crematoria in Belgrade and Novi Sad and current data. Thus, in 2020, 11,893 people were buried in Belgrade and 3,317 people were cremated, in 2019 10,341 deceased were buried and 2,857 people were cremated. Thus, for the first time, the dynamics of cremation (an increase of 16.1%) is more pronounced than the dynamics of burials. Also structurally analyzed, the share of cremations in burials increased from 27.5 to 27.8%.

The situation is similar in Novi Sad, where, compared to 2019, the number of cremations in 2020 is 12% higher, and the share of structural participation is 18.1%.

Needless to say, if they followed the example of Belgrade and Novi Sad, what all the advantages for the local self-government of Niš and Kragujevac would be the construction of two new modern crematoria.

It is assumed that due to the action of COVID-19, a previously prepared project for a new crematorium in Belgrade will be resumed.

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