



Municipality of Soufli

180, Vas. Georgiou B Str., Soufli, P.C. 684 00 • Tel. +30 25545 50100

Mail: dim@0890.syzefxis.gov.gr • Site: www.soufli.gr



**ΔΗΜΟΣΥΝΕΤΑΙΡΙΣΤΙΚΗ
ΕΒΡΟΣ Α.Ε.**

Provatonas, Soufli, P.C. 680 03 • Tel.: 25540 20090/91

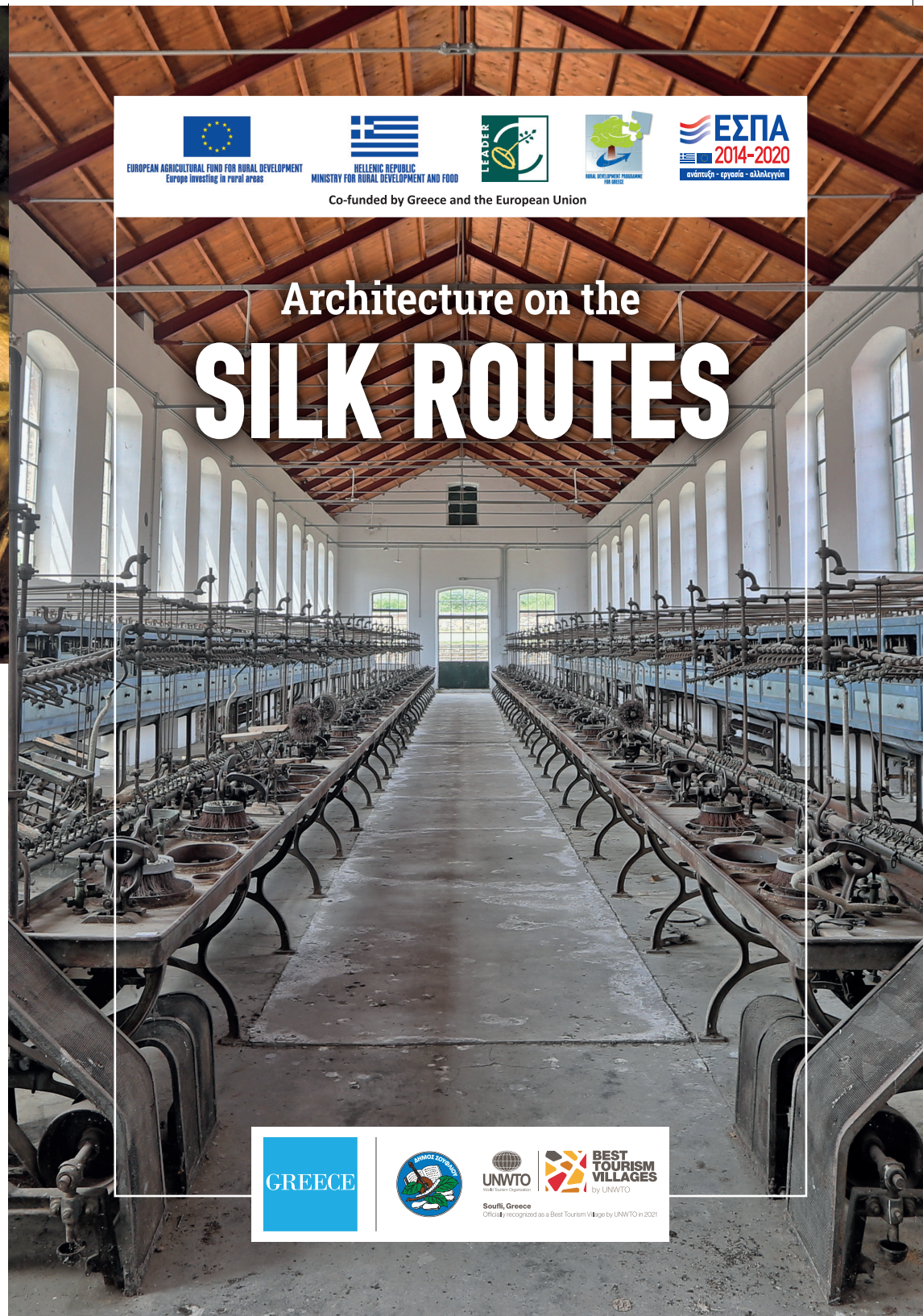
Mail: dimossin@dimossin.gr • Site: www.dimossin.gr

Cover: Interior of silk reeling machinery at the Tzivre compound • Back cover: Cocoons



Co-funded by Greece and the European Union

Architecture on the **SILK ROUTES**



Soufli, Greece
Officially recognized as a Best Tourism Village by UNWTO in 2021



Sericulture and silk production have had a direct impact to the architecture and housing of the settlements occupied with these activities and to Soufli above all. Domestic sericulture requires spacious buildings with large unified, dark and clean spaces – an element that we often come across at Soufli.

Following the third quarter of the 19th century, when Soufli flourished as the center of the silk economy, the "**bitsiklikia**" started to emerge; these were large, two-storey or even three-storey buildings made of brick, with connecting plaster, usually uncoated or with the use of yellow ocher and other elements borrowed from "industrial neoclassicism", such as the strict geometry of volumes, the symmetrical openings with projecting borders, the protruding cornices at each level and the commemorative inscriptions, displaying the name of the construction. The floor was intended for the breeding of silkworms, while accommodation was limited to one or two corner rooms, sometimes it was completely eradicated during the breeding season of silkworms. The roofs did not have closed ceilings, while wooden pillars bore the beams of the silkworm beds.

Many **cocoon houses** are preserved in Soufli. In the Kourtidis mansion, the current Museum of Silk of the Cultural Foundation of Piraeus Bank, the neoclassical building of 1883 was constructed next to the old, traditional building. Here the ground floor is dedicated to sericulture, while the floor

remained a residence. In the cocoon house of Kalesi, which today is a municipal hotel, the solid organization is impressive, where the stonework of the ground floor is followed in height by the over- and batiki (concave) brickwork, as well as the smooth rhythm of the openings and the discreet neoclassical elements. In the three-storey Brika mansion, which today houses the Municipal History Museum, the eclecticism of the "western suburban villa" is combined with the factory logic of brickwork and with neoclassical, "strict" elements.

The shape and aesthetics of the cocoon houses are also reflected in the **commercial buildings** of the city, while influences can be also seen in the urban residences-shops on the Vassileos Georgiou Str., which is the main shopping street. The prosperity of the time is reflected in the public, **mainly educational buildings** dating from the late 19th and early 20th century. The solid, "doric" neoclassical former 1st Primary School and the French Customs house, which then became the High School stand out, with a strong eclectic mood and the plastic management of the volumes, the use of decorative baroque patterns and at the same time the implementation of the lessons taught by neoclassicism.

Silk factories emerge in the early 20th century, the most important being the complex belonging to the Jewish brothers Givre, who, in 1920 bought the factory from the Milan trading house "Ceriano Fratelli" which had built it in 1909. The three-storey warehouse-dryer of cocoons stands out with a veritable forest of the "beds", the suffocation furnaces, the silk extraction unit, the weaving-spinning mill and the 28.70 meter high chimney.

The Municipality of Soufli has re-established the industrial complex as a cultural center, in order to connect it to the modern perspectives that silk economy has to offer.



4. Municipal Historical Museum, Former Brika Mansion.
5. "Chrysallida" collection of the museum.
6. Tzivre industrial complex



1. Silk Museum of the Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation,
2. Silk worms,
3. Old French Customs building-High school, current Public Library of Soufli.



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