

THE CONGRESS
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON “HERITAGE FOR THE FUTURE- REALISING
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POTENTIAL OF A KEY ASSET”**

Norwich (United Kingdom), 9-10 September 2004

FINAL DECLARATION

1. Approximately 100 participants from 30 member countries of the Council of Europe, gathered in Norwich on 9-10 September 2004 at the International Symposium on “Heritage for the future – realising the economic and social potential of a key asset”.

2. The Symposium was organised by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions and the City Council of Norwich.

3. The Symposium brought together representative of national, regional and local authorities, professional categories concerned by conservation of the heritage; academic institutions; civic and community groups, to discuss the main themes of the Symposium:-

Economic and social importance of cultural heritage;

Mechanisms to facilitate protection and enhancement of heritage;

Enhancing the potential of cultural routes;

Cultural heritage and technology;

Improving cooperation between international organisations and the public.

Following their debates, participants:-

4. Wish to thank the Council of Europe and particularly its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the City of Norwich and the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions for having conceived and organised a successful Symposium; and applaud the City of Norwich and its’ partners, in particular the Heritage and Economic Regeneration Trust (HEART) for its significant achievements in conserving and enhancing the heritage of the City;

5. Recall that the rich and varied historic and architectural heritage of Europe is a key component of European society, to be safeguarded and cherished for generations;

6. Consider that the conservation of this heritage is far more than the retention of monuments of recognised architectural quality; that most communities throughout Europe have a web of physical and accompanying social structures built up over decades, if not centuries, which constitute the collective endeavour of generations and act as an inspiration for contemporary and future achievements;

7. Believe that, far from being a brake on progress, the heritage is a vital ingredient in securing a high quality of life for European citizens;

8. Believe nevertheless that the conservation of the heritage in Europe cannot be seen in isolation; that it must be balanced with the requirements and challenges of contemporary society; and that current political and economic trends all have a direct impact on the heritage;

In respect of economic benefits, consider:-

9. That the investment in heritage can generate significant economic benefit, with the creation of jobs, the delivery of new work places, shops and homes; saves energy and raw materials; and that it gives economic vibrancy to a community;

10. That the financial and political support of the **public** and, in some cases the voluntary sectors for the conservation of the heritage can act as a catalyst for significant **private** investment; can give new viable uses and bring back prosperity and improvements to run-down and decayed buildings and areas; can strengthen the property market;

11. That heritage can be a major focus for the visitor economy and tourism development with consequent beneficial spin-offs for a community – but that the marketing of cultural and historic asset must be conducted in a sensitive and efficient manner in order to protect the heritage from damage and deterioration as a consequence of excessive tourism;

Concerning social, cultural and environmental benefits:

12. That the conservation of the heritage maintains cultural diversity and promotes the acceptance and peaceable co-existence of different cultures, that have left their distinctive mark on historic communities;

13. That heritage gives a distinctive character to communities; that it contributes to an enrichment of their social and spiritual life and fabric; promotes civic pride, a sense of identity and belonging; and gives an image of stability and tradition;

14. That it promotes an active and multi-purpose use of the built environment and gives added value to accompanying open spaces and public use of them;

15. That a focus on a heritage gives attractive and safer environments of quality, reducing the incidence of vandalism and crime;

In order for the above benefits to be achieved, it is essential that:

16. Towns and cities recognise and accept the potential role of the heritage in securing economic and social well-being, implying a better understanding of the value of the heritage and promoting an increased public perception of its value;

17. Public and particularly local authorities and as appropriate, private sector partners and relevant professional categories:-

a. strive to promote sensitive planning decisions; insert well-conceived parking schemes into the urban environment; find new uses for older areas rather than their demolition; have a coherent management of property;

b. develop a clear policy for urban transport, which promotes the balanced coexistence of different forms of mobility – public transport, the pedestrian, cycle paths, the private car;

c. promote a balance between the renovation of the old and construction of new building in a sensitive manner, being aware that the most inspiring of places can come from a blend of old and new;

d. devise and apply urban design guidelines on matters such as height, colour, facades and siting of buildings, residential, commercial and industrial areas; and on open spaces, pedestrian areas and other components of the public domain, recognising their importance for social, and cultural exchange;

e. develop mechanisms and partnerships between the private and public sectors and other relevant professional and academic categories and civic groups for harnessing financial support for the heritage in a management structure which has a valid business plan and clear leadership;

f. stimulate better coordination between donor agencies, with a unified vision for a heritage plan;

g. seek to secure partnerships with local authorities elsewhere, stimulating an exchange of experience and good practice;

h. develop more publicity and a determined marketing approach with signs, interpretation, didactic material and management of outdoor activities;

i. in cooperation with education authorities, develop community and heritage programmes which make a particular effort at targeting young people to increase their awareness of the heritage;

j. encourage the identification and mobilisation of support and publicity for cultural routes, which pass through their neighbouring territories, in the conviction that local communities possess an extraordinary, often unsuspected heritage, which may bring considerable benefits from the additional recognition given by cultural routes;

k. promote the application of new information technology, to the understanding and knowledge of the heritage;

18. In relation to the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions:

a. encourage associations and networks of historic towns throughout Europe; individual historic cities; and individuals to become members of the Association and welcome the revision of the Constitution of the Association on 10 September 2004 to widen its scope to this effect;

b. ask the Association to continue to encourage and strengthen partnerships between historic cities; develop information and disseminate information on outstanding achievements; promote cultural routes; seek better co-operation with other relevant organisations; and promote and award scheme;

c. make a particular effort to involve more closely in its work the historic communities of East and South-East Europe;

d. continue to organise regional seminars in different parts of Europe, if possible in the context of the periodic meetings of its Bureau;

19. Concerning the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and particularly its Chamber of Local Authorities:

a. organise a future Symposium of historic towns in 2006;

b. prepare a report on financial and funding mechanisms for the heritage;

c. promote better cooperation between different organisations in Europe concerned with the protection and enhancement of the heritage;

d. establish a clear, supportive, statutory relationship with the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions – particularly justifiable, given that the Association itself was created by the Congress.