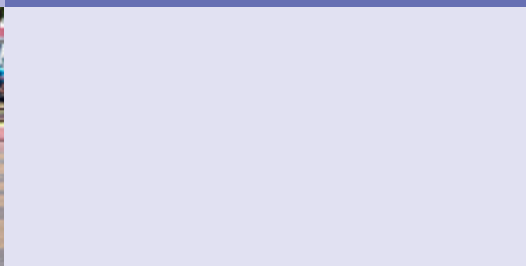


COMMUNITY-LED URBAN STRATEGIES IN HISTORIC TOWNS (COMUS)



Funded
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GEORGIA

"THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA"

ARMENIA

AZERBAIJAN

GREECE

TURKEY

AZER.

IRAN *

Map for illustrative purposes



CHIATURA ► Market Place

■ The Council of Europe/European Union joint project “Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns” (COMUS) has been carefully designed to introduce innovative approaches that use urban rehabilitation as a means of contributing to wider objectives, such as the celebration of diversity, the development of constructive dialogue and the promotion of mutual respect between people of different cultures and religions, greater well-being and better quality of life.



PRYLUKY ► Theatre Square, the popular cultural heart of the town

■ The project is part of the second Eastern Partnership Culture Programme and seeks to stimulate social and economic development through enhancing cultural heritage in historic towns by:

- ▶ broadening the concept of heritage as a resource in the context of human rights and democracy;
- ▶ increasing the capacity of local and national authorities in the management of their heritage resources;
- ▶ empowering communities and citizens as the main actors in carrying out their heritage-led development processes.



LUTSK ► Old town



GORIS ► Traditional Dance Ensemble in the historic centre

■ The nine participating pilot towns are seeking specific responses to a number of issues related to sustainable local development, including:

- ▶ use of the diversity advantage in order to foster local and European citizenship;
- ▶ an integrated approach that links the living environment and the quality of life to new economic models based on local resources;
- ▶ promotion of local governance based on democratic participation.

■ The four-phase process covers seven fields of intervention identified as priorities in the pilot towns:

- ▶ enhancement of heritage and urban landscapes;
- ▶ housing improvement;
- ▶ tackling social concerns;
- ▶ traffic management;
- ▶ development of activities;
- ▶ reduction of urban wastelands;
- ▶ improvement of public spaces.



GYUMRI ► Abovyan Street, one of the historic pedestrianised streets in Gyumri



SOROCA ► Old urban houses on Decebal Street

COMUS focuses particularly on the active engagement of society at all levels: community-based engagement through the Project Implementation Unit and Local Stakeholders Group, as well as municipalities and central level engagement through the National Stakeholders Group.

The COMUS methodology is based on a set of conceptual guidelines which have been improved over the years thanks to the earlier Council of Europe/European Union Kyiv Initiative Regional Programme and other European projects such as Heritage as Opportunity (HerO).

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

■ **High-level commitment ensured** – Memoranda of Understanding with five COMUS Ministries of Culture.

■ **Human resources and infrastructure set up** – establishment of COMUS management structures in five COMUS countries and nine COMUS pilot towns.

- ▶ National stakeholder groups (based in capital cities)
- ▶ National co-ordinators (based in capital cities)
- ▶ Local stakeholder groups (based in each COMUS town)
- ▶ Project Implementation Units (based in each COMUS town)
- ▶ Project officers (based in capital cities with regular missions to COMUS towns)
- ▶ Project managers (based in each COMUS town)
- ▶ Local experts' pool (based in the country)

■ **Communication plans in place** – web page (www.coe.int/comus), town-based promotional videos and brochures being prepared.

■ **Tools available** – guidelines for the inception, planning and project phases.

■ **Key documents produced** – Reference Plans for nine towns have been finalised, and Preliminary Technical Assessments for five sites/initiatives and Feasibility Studies for two initiatives in each COMUS town are under way.

■ **Capacity development activities** – four regional workshops and a study visit, including visits to COMUS towns, country-based workshops with local and international experts, training sessions with the Culture and Creativity Programme.

■ **Awareness-raising initiatives** – community mobilisation through consultation processes, meetings, community-based activities and heritage walks in nine COMUS towns.

■ **COMUS methodology being integrated into policy and strategy making** – a workshop with nine mayors and a joint declaration of COMUS mayors are under way.

IMPACT TESTIMONIES

COMUS Armenia has consolidated the available capacities by bringing together community activists, business owners and local authorities around their own heritage. According to the COMUS team, the synergy and energy between these parties will influence decision-making processes in the long term, and this will improve urban development for sustainable heritage management.

In the Republic of Moldova, COMUS has mobilised community members to be actively involved in the process of urban strategy-making. Promotional and community-involvement activities have taken place in order to increase the impact of the technical steps. Conferences, public debates, local presentations, academic research and outdoor entertainment events have been organised, involving a wide range of stakeholders, who were mobilised at both local and national levels. The process has fostered more open dialogue and awareness about the importance of local heritage among communities. Specific activities have included heritage walks and creative competitions, organised to promote the value of heritage and local history among the younger generation.

The COMUS project in Georgia has been very productive and enriching throughout its implementation. The empowerment and increased motivation of local governments, the mobilisation and awareness raising of local communities, and the growing interest of national and international donors are the clear and positive trends created by COMUS. The small towns are gradually gaining recognition, attention and respect. Some of Chiatura's industrial heritage sites have already been listed as cultural heritage monuments, and preliminary agreements have been reached on the possible rehabilitation of these public assets with national government and donor organisations. The COMUS process has prompted the local government in Dusheti to compile concrete plans for setting up a conference, arts centre and other public facilities. COMUS acts as an engine for generating ideas and as a platform for bringing together partners from different levels and disciplines. It demonstrates that anyone can contribute to local development – we are opening up ways and means for this to happen.



MSTISLAV ► Traditional town house



CHIATURA ► Oldest preserved public cable car station, built in 1953, with murals added in 2015

PARTNER

Based in Quebec (Canada), the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) has grown since its foundation in 1993 into a community of more than 250 cities included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The seat of the regional secretariat for north-west Europe and North America is in Regensburg (Germany), and covers 20 cities from 12 different countries. With their international expertise, support is offered through study visits and counselling for COMUS partner towns. Specific rehabilitation projects are designed and promoted in each pilot town with the aim of mobilising public investment and attracting private investors. The results of the COMUS experience will be presented at a final conference encouraging national authorities to recognise heritage as a factor for development in national and local policies, in particular including urban regeneration and a heritage-led approach when developing economic policies and national priorities.

www.ovpm.org

FACTS AND FIGURES

Timeline: 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2017

Budget: €650 000

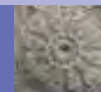
Participating towns: Goris and Gyumri, Armenia; Mstislav, Belarus; Chiatura and Dusheti, Georgia; Soroca, Republic of Moldova; Lutsk, Pryluky and Zhovka, Ukraine

Partners: European Union, Council of Europe, Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), Culture and Creativity Programme

Phases: I. Inception Phase; II. Planning Phase; III. Project Phase; IV. Consolidation Phase

The COMUS project “Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns” builds upon the policy priorities of the Council of Europe and European Union in the context of the Eastern Partnership Programme (2015-2020), targeting co-operation activities with Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. Based on community-led processes, COMUS provides each town with effective support to develop an integrated, sustainable and participative approach, by mobilising all relevant stakeholders and incorporating the protection, planning and management of heritage resources as a real component in urban renewal policies.

www.coe.int/comus



www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 democratic European countries. Its aims are peace, prosperity and freedom for its 500 million citizens – in a fairer, safer world. To make things happen, EU countries set up bodies to run the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe), the Council of the European Union (representing national governments) and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).

