

Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)

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COMUS 5th Workshop: Mayors gathering

7-8 December 2016

Tbilisi, Georgia

Meeting report



Objectives of the meeting:

- To better conceptualize the importance of heritage as a resource for social and local economic development.
- To discuss the COMUS methodology; importance of community participation and active citizenship, working with stakeholders, capacity for sustainable development and improved quality of life.
- To examine future perspectives and generate strategic action points to integrate COMUS methodology and recommendations into local policies and strategies

Wednesday 7 December 2016

The meeting opened with a welcome and presentation by Walter Zampieri. He emphasised the role that heritage can play in regeneration and the need for an integrated approach. He explained the shift from a conservation led to a value led approach. It should be more about people than about stone. Integrated approach meant that the impact on other policy fields was important and acted as a multiplier of impact. The study 'Heritage counts for Europe'¹ had looked at upstream and downstream benefits.



Figure 1: Walter Zampieri addressing the meeting

¹ <http://blogs.encatc.org/culturalheritagecountsforeurope/outcomes/>

Session 1 State of play in the cities on using the COMUS method to engage local stakeholders

The meeting was introduced by Peter Ramsden who explained the way of working at tables and then ran an ice breaker based on 'hidden talents'.

Philip Stein provided a brief explanation of the COMUS methodology. He emphasised methods of participation and the work of the local group.

The first active session working in tables focused on issues about the local stakeholder groups.



Questions:

- How diverse is the stakeholder group? Who is missing?
- What issues have arisen in working with the stakeholder group? How have these been addressed?
- What obstacles are you facing in preparing to implement your strategy? (e.g. finance, consents, prioritisation) how are you addressing these obstacles?



Discussion focused on difficulties of engaging the private sector and on youth. In terms of obstacles there was still a lack of funding for projects in most of the towns.

Session 2 Sharpening the strategies for heritage as a resource

The presentation drew on the experience of the World Heritage core of Regensburg to illustrate how engaging with stakeholders and an integrated approach for heritage can stimulate the local economy and bring social and economic benefits.

Rusudan Mrzikashvili presented slides on Obtaining funding from non EU funders. Georgia had taken advantage of a visit by funders from the World Bank and had capitalised on these to arrange a presentation that has led to commitments on funding.

The group then focused on two questions: How can we use our plans to convince funders? And which funders for which projects?

This resulted in a number of questions being presented.

1. Write reference plan into local development plan
2. Dissemination activities in schools and in the community
3. Identify and approach local investors
4. Training in proposal writing and pitching to donors
5. Make a presentation of the reference plan
6. Plan and hold meetings with donors
7. Launch and Finalise feasibility studies
8. Integrate stakeholder group into mayor's advisory group
9. Capacity building on heritage management
10. Measuring results of implementation (and in other policy fields)

A site visit was organised to [Fabrika](#) which is an arts complex, retail location, restaurant café and large hostel. The building is a former textile clothing factory and some of the original garments are on sale in a boutique in the courtyard. The visit showed how once derelict buildings can be reclaimed for a successful blend of mixed uses.

Day 2 Thursday, 8 December

At the invitation of the Mayor, a visit was organized to Dusheti.



Figure 2: Heritage building in Dusheti



Figure 3 Governor of Dusheti explains the context of the heritage site

Session 3 focused on Strategic action points for the consolidation phase. The ten action points are based on those actions that had been listed as important the previous afternoon. These are presented in the table below for all nine towns. Each town was asked to respond to each of the ten steps that were seen as important to secure funding.



Figure 4: Discussions around follow-up actions in final session.

Signing of the declaration; The nine representatives signed the COMUS mayors declaration, pledging their financial and political support to the COMUS process in the consolidation phase and beyond the COMUS project. (

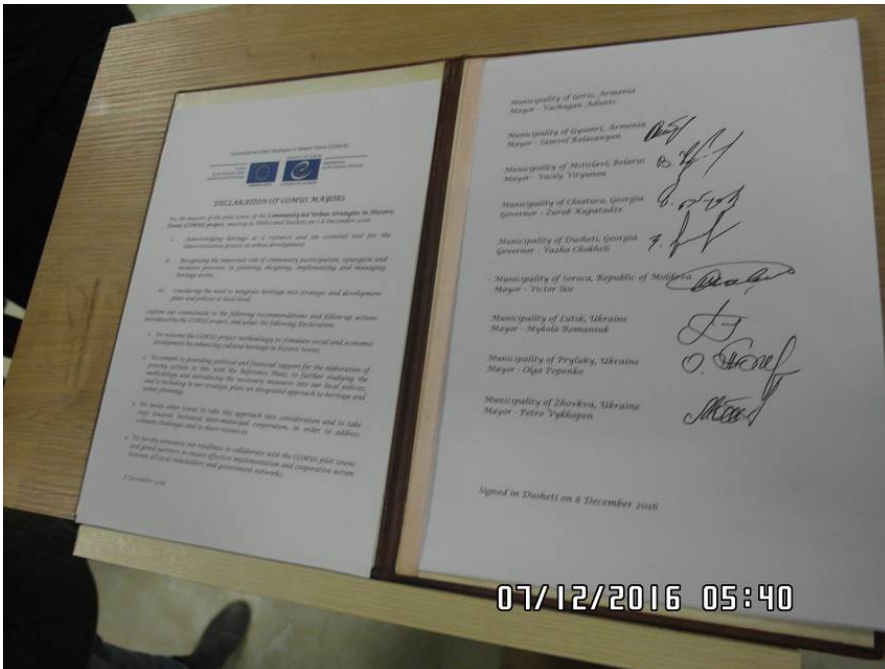


Figure 5 Signed declaration



Figure 6 Mayors photograph after signing the declaration

Hakan Shearer Demir closed the meeting thanking participants and summing up proceedings