

## Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)

Funded  
by the European Union  
and the Council of Europe



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Implemented  
by the Council of Europe

## Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historical Cities (COMUS)



REFERENCE PLAN

**Mscislaŭ, Belarus**



CONTENTS

FOREWORD

THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNIT

LOCAL STAKEHOLDER GROUP

ANALYSES

SHARED VISION AND OBJECTIVES

ACTIONS

### Abbreviations used in the document

COMUS	Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historical Cities
EU	European Union
CoE	Council of Europe
NSG	National Stakeholder Group
LSG	Local Stakeholder Group
PIU	Project Implementation Unit

## FOREWORD

In 2015, Belarus officially joined the Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS) which is a European Union and Council of Europe Joint Programme, part of the EU Eastern Partnership Culture Programme. Project activities began on 1 January 2015 in partnership with the Organization of World Heritage Cities (Regional secretariat, Regensburg, Germany) and Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

COMUS is a process designed to explore and test innovative planning models which respond to the practical problems in small- and medium-sized historic towns. It continues and develops a former project, titled 'Pilot Project on Rehabilitation of Historic Towns'.

The planning models proposed as part of the *COMUS process will develop five specific issues* opening up new opportunities for connecting pilot towns with European trends and requirements which include the better integration of heritage protection into urban (and regional) economic development policies and mainstreaming towards other sectorial policies (planning, tourism, environment):

- a. Raising the importance of heritage, particularly as a potential local resource for reinvestment and economic activity in towns;
- b. Fostering an integrated approach by setting up synergies between all levels of authorities in order to share responsibilities and combine their capacities in implementing common heritage-led urban projects;
- c. Managing existing urban constraints and pressures through the identification of priorities so that any dysfunctions can be confronted in time through relevant rehabilitation strategies based on the quality of social relations;
- d. Introducing public debate and direct participation of inhabitants on shared visions for the future development of historic towns and in the decision-making process;
- e. Making the best of the existing urban fabric to foster a new kind of modernity through the adaptation and recycling of old buildings with sustainable solutions.

The Reference Plan for the Belarusian Pilot town Mscislaŭ was drafted during COMUS Planning Phase. It is a strategic document which was developed as a result of co-operation between Mscislaŭ Municipality, the COMUS Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and Local stakeholder Group (LSG).

### Project Implementation Unit (PIU)

The Project Implementation Union (PIU) was established in order to operate as a management committee and support the COMUS project activity in each pilot town. During the Planning Phase, its activity has been focused on providing

guidance and co-ordination during the elaboration of the Reference Plan, working together with local specialists (municipal institutions, departments, practitioners, interest groups), in close interaction with the town Local Stakeholders group.

COMUS **Mscislaŭ** PIU consist of

1. Natalia Biskup, Project Manager

Head of Culture, Public and Youth Affairs Department of the Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee, Project Manager  
E-mail: okinchits.mst@tut.by

Sviatlana Zubrynovich, LSG coordinator  
Specialist of Culture, Public and Youth Affairs Department of the Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee  
E-mail: okinchits.mst@tut.by

Natallia Muryna, Local Expert

Architect - Restorer, Director of a private architectural restoration company,  
Expert in Mscislaŭ heritage  
E-mail: nm@csmart.by

Alla Stashkevich, Project Officer  
Head of the Department of Cultural Heritage Protection, Institute of Culture of Belarus  
E-mail: as.belicom@gmail.com

Natallia Khvir, National coordinator

Chief of the Division, Office for Historic and Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of Belarus  
COMUS National Co-ordinator  
E-mail: khvir\_ahr\_ang@rambler.ru

Local Stakeholder Group

Sviatlana Laurynovich, LSG co-ordinator  
Specialist of Culture, Public and Youth Affairs Department of the Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee

Biskup Natalia, Project Officer  
Head of Culture, Public and Youth Affairs Department of the Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee, Project Manager

Kosalapau Viktor  
Deputy Chairman of the Mstislaŭ District Executive Committee on Economy, Chairman of the regional organization of the Public Association "Belarusian Peace Foundation"

Melnikau Igor  
Deputy Chairman of the Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee on social issues and public relations

Harytonau Valery  
Head of Department for Education, Sports and Tourism of the Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee

Savitsky Igor  
Chief specialist of the Department for Architecture and Building of the Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee

Kusova Tatsiana  
Chairman of Mscislaŭ Regional Association of Trade Union

Dashkevich Viktor  
Chairman of Mscislaŭ Regional Division of the Public Organization "Belaya Rus"

Malinouskaya Tatsiana  
Chair of Mscislaŭ Division of the National Association "Belarusian Society of Knowledge"

Valadkova Olga  
Executive Secretary of Mscislaŭ District Division of the Public Association "Belarusian Youth Union"

Shakura Sviatlana  
Chief Specialist of the Department for Education, Sports and Tourism of Mscislaŭ District Executive Committee

Androsava Alena  
Director of the Mscislaŭ Regional Craft House

Kiryenka Ludmila  
Director of Mscislaŭ History and Archaeology District Museum

Timashkova Valiantsina  
Chief Curator of Mscislaŭ History and Archaeology District Museum

## ANALYSES

### 1. Level of Influence of the Pilot town

Historical and geographical landmarks of the **Mscislaŭ** cultural heritage

Mscislaŭ is one of the oldest cities in Belarus. Its name is associated with the most interesting pages of the history book of the Belarusian people's spiritual and cultural identity. According to written sources, its foundation dates back to 1135. Its architectural and planning structure has been shaped over the course of several centuries.

During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Mscislaŭ comprised only the castle and the city around it (*pasad*). The castle was located on the site of the ancient settlement called "Castle Hill", on the elevated right bank of the river Vichra, and was then fortified by the henge-circle with wide and deep moats. In the 12th-14th centuries, the surrounding city (*pasad*) occupied an area of about 4.5 hectares (11.1 acres), and together with the city-fort (*detsinets*) was approximately 6 hectares (14.8 acres).

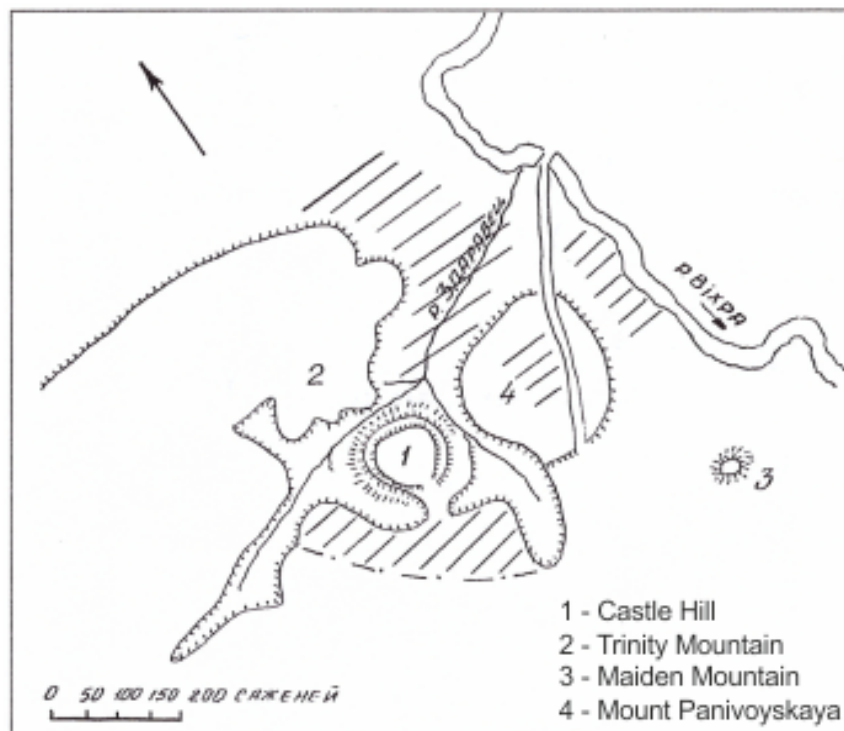


Image 1

Topographical plan

of ancient Mscislaŭ

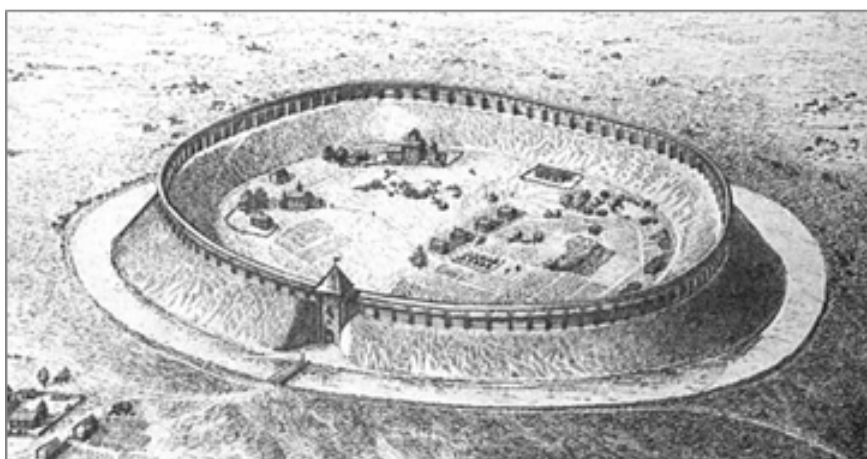
Image.2. Mscislaŭ in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (image by A. Chumachenvo)

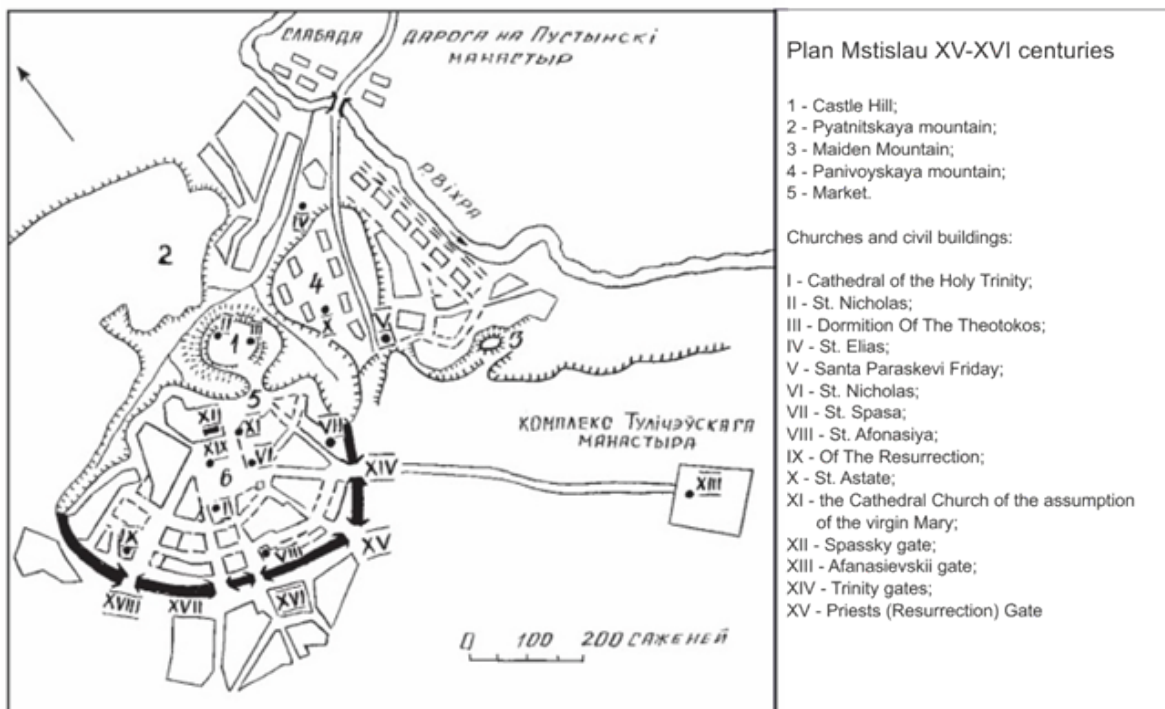




Image 3. Mscislaŭ Castle Hill today

Image 3. Mscislaŭ Castle Hill today

During the late-15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the city was invaded numerous times by troops from the Moscow Principality, haltering the development of the city. Therefore, the 15-16<sup>th</sup> century city actually remained within its boundaries of the 12th-13th centuries. During the late-16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the city flourished. In 1634 the city was granted Magdeburg rights and its coat of arms featured a hand armed with a sword in a gold box, also called "the Small Pahonia". Due to the subsequent period of peace, Mscislaŭ kept growing and developing socially and economically. Four monasteries and city fortifications were built, the market square, merchants' rows and city dwellings also developed further. The city was the centre of Mstislav Starostva (eldership), one of the richest and the most beautiful cities at the eastern border of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was the centre of the Belarusian book printing, tile and glass trades. Mscislaŭ was the place of birth, life and work of Pjotr Mscislavets, a student of Francysk Skaryna, the founder of Slavic book printing.

Image 4. Plan Mscislaŭ 15-16<sup>th</sup> centuries



In 1654, during the Russo-Polish War of 1654–1667, also called the Thirteen-Years War, Mscislaŭ was seized by Moscow's troops and almost completely destroyed. It was unable to recover its former glory over the following centuries. In 1772, the city became part of the Russian Empire as a centre of the province in the Mahilioŭ area. In 1781, it received a new coat of arms: a red fox against a silver background, which remains the city's coat of arms today.

In 1919 Mscislaŭ became a part of the Smolensk region of the Russian Federation; from July 17, 1924 it was returned to the BSSR, becoming the district centre of Mahileŭ region. Between July 1941 and late September, 1943 the city was occupied by German troops. On October 15, 1941, more than 1,300 Jews and Gypsies were killed in the Kahal moat. In 2005, a monument was placed at the scene.

Modern Mscislaŭ is the administrative centre of Mscislaŭ District in the Mahilioŭ region with 10,400 inhabitants. It is known for its outstanding archaeological and architectural heritage: ancient hill forts, churches and monasteries, historical buildings and the international medieval festival, which is held there annually.

Geographically, Mscislaŭ is located in the north-east of Mahileŭ region on the Orsha- Mahileŭ sublime plain. The town's relief is characterised by many small hills, cut by the Vikhra river valley and numerous streams. It is located in the zone of moderate continental climate. The average annual rainfall is 667 mm. The city covers an area of 15 km<sup>2</sup>. The predominant soils are soddy-pale-podzolic and loamy and it is surrounded by forests. About 17.6 % (23.4 hectares) of Mscislaŭ district is wooded. Not far from Mscislaŭ, there are mineral deposits, including as brick and tile raw materials, sand and chalk. The main deposits of brick-tile raw materials comprises the deposit "Saprynovichi" (includes 635,000 m<sup>3</sup> of clay, and the chalk deposit consisting of 1373,000 m<sup>3</sup>).



Image 5. Location of the city within Belarus

## Accessibility and connectivity to transport infrastructure

There is insufficient public transport in Mscislaŭ; locals describe it as one of the most important urban issues they face. The city is located on the far eastern border of Belarus, 13 km from the frontier with Russia and 95 km from the regional centre; the city of Mahilioŭ.

Mscislaŭ is not connected to the rail network, the nearest railway station is 15 km to the west of the city. It is a highway junction on the route from Mahilioŭ to Khislavichi (Russia). The nearest active airport is in Mahilioŭ, however, it does not operate regularly, and is mainly used for special purpose aircraft. The nearest international airport in Minsk, 400 km from Mscislaŭ. However, the roads around the city are in a good condition, although they are not important routes. The nearest international route is 90 km away from the city.

Public transport routes mainly connect modern residential neighbourhoods, where most of the population is concentrated, to the central area of Mscislaŭ, which is also the city's administrative centre. The historical part of the city is a pedestrian zone, and locals living there use bicycles to move between the suburbs and the centre. Cycling tourism may prove to be a very promising direction for the development of the territory; the routes would be attractive, as the city's relief is uneven, hilly, and very beautiful, making the journey engaging.

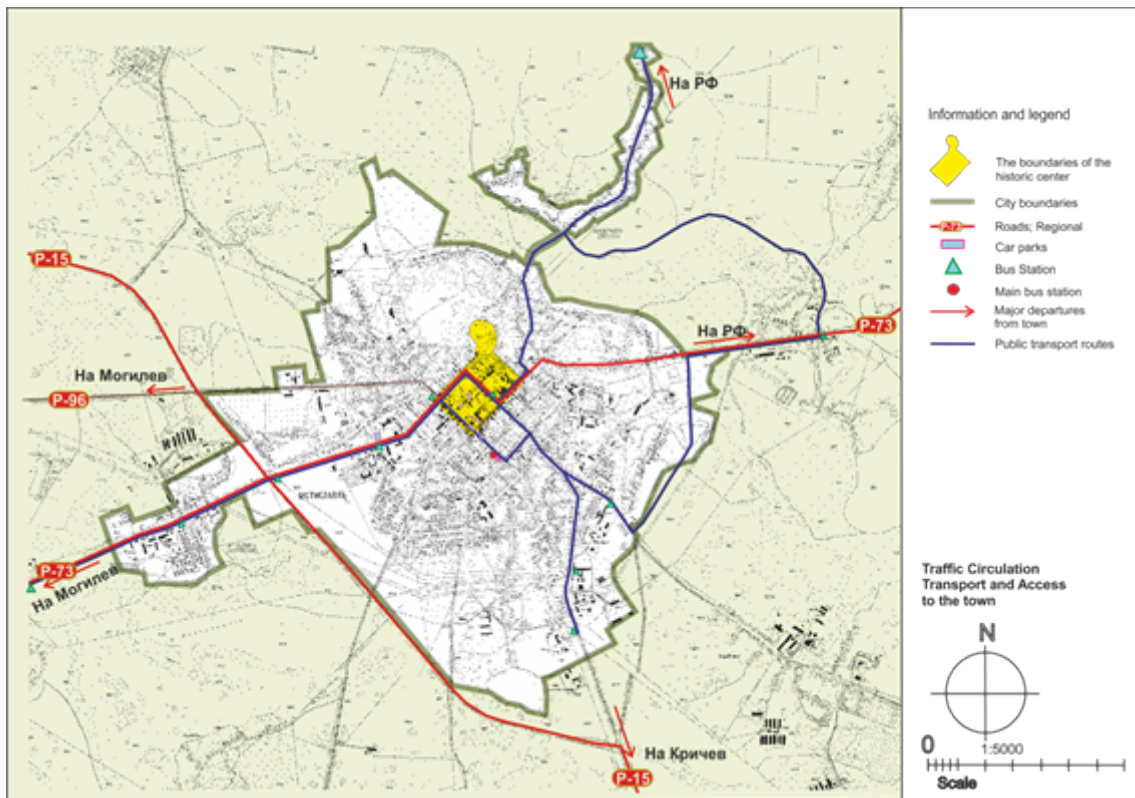


Image 6. Traffic circulation, transport and access to the city

## Demographic situation

Mscislaŭ's population is 11,700 inhabitants, 58% of working age, 60% women (2015). Ethnic groups comprise: 90.7% Belarusians, 7.7 % Russian, 0.7% Ukrainians. Before the Second World War the Jewish community in Mscislaŭ was very large, about 70%, but they were massacred by the fascists and their survivors had emigrated by the 1970s.

Migration data provided by the local administration shows that for the first 9 months of 2016, the number of immigrants arriving in Mscislaŭ was 247 people, meanwhile about 500 people left. Migration loss is 233 people / year. However, there is also a so-called hidden migration; a number of residents leave the city for work, their main destination: Russia. These are people who work in the construction sphere and agriculture. The majority of young people leave Mscislaŭ for

university or study at other educational institutions, but only few return. They do not consider Mscislaŭ the promising city for life. According to this group, there are no opportunities for gaining skills in their home city.

#### Cultural, archaeological and natural heritage

The historic centre of Mscislaŭ is characterised by low-rise buildings, which together with several architectural landmarks, shape the city's skyline. There are two archaeological sites: Maiden's Mount (a 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE settlement), Castle Hill (12<sup>th</sup> century), as well as the building of the Assumption (Carmelite) and the Jesuit Monasteries (both 17<sup>th</sup> century), Alexander Nevsky's Church (18<sup>th</sup> century), and the urban stone dwellings of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-centuries.



Image 7. Maiden's Mount



Image 8. Castle Hill

The natural monument "Lute - Dubrava" is located near the settlement of Lute, Mstislav district. The forest, whose total area is 784,000 m<sup>2</sup>, is ancient, composed mostly of pine, its north-eastern side is bordered by the meandering river. The highest point (239 m) of the Mahilieu region, a hill known as "Dark forest", is located here, topped with a geodesic mark (coordinates: 54° 05,407' N, 31° 17,128' E).





Image 9. The natural value "Lute - Dubrava"

The historical and cultural heritage of the city is registered and protected by the state, according to the Belarusian Law on the Protection of the Historical and Cultural heritage and the Decree of the Ministry of Culture of Belarus adopted in April 28, 2010 № 12 "On approval of the protected zones for historical and cultural values located in the historic centre of Mscislaŭ". The Decree defined the protected zones of the historic centre, as well as the procedure for action by all economic entities in carrying out construction and installation work at the facilities, located in a protected area. Urban street layout is also subject to protection. Industry, transport and storage buildings are not permitted in the protected zone, nor can uses that pollute air and water, or which have a fire hazard be introduced.

The majority of Mscislaŭ's sites of cultural value have been inscribed in the Belarusian State List of Historical and Cultural Values, including: one monument of international value; the Ensemble of the Assumption (Carmelite) Monastery, 1614, 1746-1750 (Number in the State List: 511Г000504);



Image 10. Ensemble of the Assumption (Carmelite) Monastery

four monuments of national value:

- 1) The ensemble of the former Jesuit College, 1745-1750 (512Г000510);
- 2) Church of Alexander Nevsky, 1870 (512Г000507);

- 3) Pustynki Holy Assumption Orthodox Monastery, a monument of the 14-17<sup>th</sup> centuries (512Г000516), located 10km from the city;
- 4) Mountain Zamkavaya, the archaeological object, 12<sup>th</sup> century;



Image 11. Ensemble of the former Jesuit College

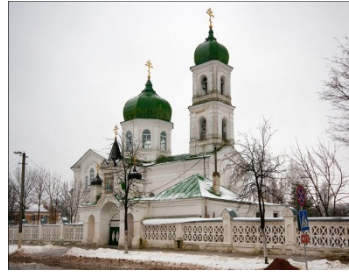


Image 12. Church of Alexander Nevsky



Image 13. Pustynki Holy Assumption Orthodox Monastery



Image 14. Mountain Zamkavaya (Castle Hill)

10 monuments of regional value:

- Trade rows, the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century (513Г000503);
- Building of the former rural council, 19<sup>th</sup> century (513Г000506);
- Building of the former gymnasium, 19<sup>th</sup> century (513Г000509);
- Building of the former military council, 19<sup>th</sup> century (513Г000511);
- Building of the former Treasury, the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century (513Г000512);
- Fire tower, the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century (513Г001060);
- The building of the former hotel "London", the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century (513Г001063);
- The former house of the moneylender Vilenkin, the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century (513Г001065).
- The buildings of the former hotels "Paris" and "Hermitage", the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century (513Г000510)
- The steam mill, end of 19<sup>th</sup> century (513Г000508)



Image 15. Trade Rows



Image 16. Building of the former gymnasium





Image 17. Building of the former rural council



Image 18. Building of the former military council



Image 19. Building of the former Treasury



Image 20. Fire tower



Image 21. The building of the former hotel "London"



Image 22. The former house of the moneylender Vilenkin



Image 23. The building of the former hotel "Paris"



Image 24. The steam mill



Mscislaŭ is distinguished by its wooden one-storey housings (more than 30) of 19-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the historic part of the city. They are a highlight in the cultural landscape of the city.



Image 25. Traditional wooden houses in Mscislaŭ

Mscislaŭ's artistic and historical values are famous outside of Belarus. The local museum collections hold extremely interesting artefacts, among them; two birchbark manuscripts, samples of the ancient Slavic writing from the 12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, found by archaeologists on Castle Hill. Mscislaŭ Carmelites' Church contains some preserved mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Baroque-style frescoes: "The Seizure of Mscislaŭ by Moscow's troops in 1654" and "The Beating of the Ksjondzs" (Roman Catholic priests), which tell the tragic history of the city.



Image 26. Some mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Baroque-style frescoes in Mscislaŭ Carmelites' Church

The city's landscape includes some very beautiful natural areas: forests; hills; beautiful valleys and numerous springs. In 2 km from the city on the East there is a relict forest, natural value of national significance.



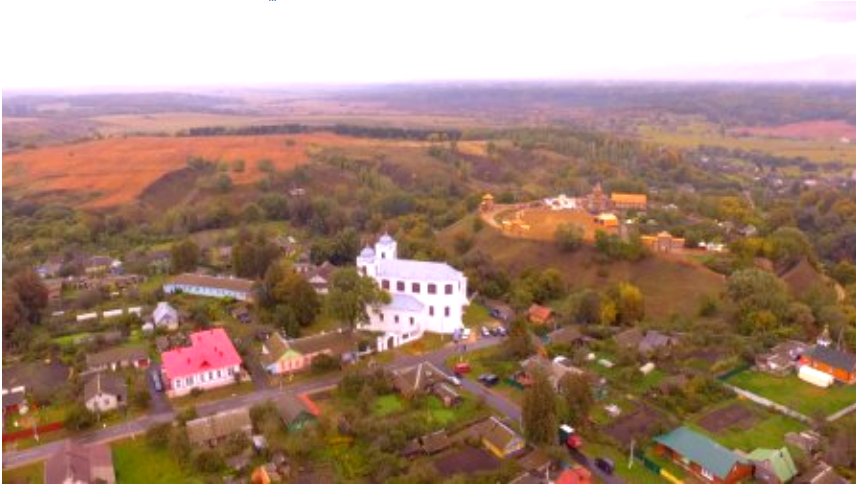


Image 27. Cultural landscape of the city

*The historical and cultural potential of the city and its beautiful landscapes are great, and certainly provide a very good basis for the development of cultural tourism.*

*However, if the development of tourism in this area is to be successful, a number of priority issues must be addressed, including:*

- *develop and implement an urban route (orientation system / outdoor road signage), placement of information on cultural and natural heritage, and tourist infrastructure, in at least in three languages (Belarusian, Russian and English);*
- *open a visitor centre, located conveniently for tourists;*
- *create a series of city guides in different languages;*
- *develop the necessary infrastructure (in terms of catering and hotels);*
- *increase the on-line visibility presence of Mscislaŭ , including on popular social media.*

#### Economic structure

There is a lack of enterprise in Mscislaŭ, with agriculture the region's largest employer. Its economy is 80% subsidized by the regional and the national budget. The industry of Mscislaŭ district consists of five industrial enterprises:

- Bakery and Confectionery Company "Damochay" (branch);
- "Mscislaŭky Butter and Cheese Factory" (branch);
- Open Joint Stock Company " Mscislaŭ Flax";
- Mscislaŭ Housing and Utilities;
- Mscislaŭ Water Channel.

The agricultural sector is represented by eight agricultural production co-operatives. The construction sector consists of five companies.

In the Mscislaŭ area there are 45 small and medium-sized enterprises. However, in the city's commerce is quite limited, mostly consisting of retail trade. There are about 14 shops, mostly food stores, and one large supermarket in the modern part of the city. There is a hardware store (selling computers, kettles, mobile phones etc., trade credit), some points of sale for bicycles and scooters. The majority of stores have racks for parking bicycles outside.

The majority of state and community services are located in the historic centre (notary, registry, the building of local administration, employment and social security offices, one restaurant and a café, two hotels). Streets in the historic centre are asphalted and the coverage of street lighting is almost complete. A total of 85% of people living in this area have access to natural gas supply (the service is provided on the basis of demand).

The old market place is also in the centre, and is a source of local pride, with locals claiming that it is the largest in the region. Various goods are sold at the market: from clothes to food. Traders come from all over the east of Belarus: the market is not only a place for trade, but also for making contact, meeting friends, exchanging local news.



Image 27-28. The market in Mscislaŭ: then



and now

*Although it has great potential, tourism has not had a significant impact on the local economy. Poor infrastructure (at present there are only two hotels, with a capacity of 128 beds, and only two restaurants, clearly not enough to accommodate significant numbers of visitors), a lack of urban tourist routes, its remoteness from famous tourist destinations, a lack of advertising and marketing strategies have hindered the city's tourist development.*

#### Culture and education

Official statistical data shows that there are high levels of education. A total of 1,504 people are in higher education (15.5%); 3,122 participate in secondary education (32.2%); 1259 in vocational education (13.0%). Education and the children's services provision is strong. The city has two colleges, two secondary schools, including a gymnasium, an arts school, a cultural centre, a sports school, special school for children with hearing disabilities, children's creativity centre, crafts centre, two libraries and the local history and archaeological museum.

A local newspaper "Swiatlo Kastychnika" also has offices in the city. Since 2001, the Belarusian Chamber Music Festival has taken place annually. Since 2003 an annual celebration of the Belarusian Written Language has taken place, and since 2010, an annual International Knight Festival takes place.





### Green areas and public spaces

Mscislaŭ has large green areas and public spaces throughout the historic centre, with high new use potential including services, leisure, culture and commerce, all associated with positive impacts on the local community. Several of them are in good condition (central city park), some require renovation and the development of related infrastructure (shores of the River Vikhra would benefit from beach areas, streets should be paved on the outskirts of the historic centre).

The space around private homes and office buildings gives the city a predominantly well-maintained, very clean appearance, with beautiful front gardens filled with flowers. Indeed, flower gardens which change their appearance seasonally, characterise the city.

However, local residents have noted that the city has practically no playgrounds and public places for families. This is regarded as one of the most important urban issues.



Image 33 –35. Green zones of Mscislaŭ

### Housing

Dwellings in the historical area of Mscislaŭ are mostly individual or collective wooden one or two-storey houses with the main facades located on the street. The majority of these dwellings date from the 19<sup>th</sup> early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries and are typical of this area. They are a highlight of the cultural landscape of the city. Some of these houses are listed as historic monuments. Their physical condition varies according to the owners and their ability to intervene. The most common problems include: poor physical conditions, poor quality construction works; and, the use of cheap materials.

A common repair is that of covering houses with siding, removing the traditional decoration of windows and portals, and replacing them with modern standard materials. Such changes are detrimental and threaten the values of the traditional wooden architecture of Mscislaŭ, requiring immediate intervention and solutions.



Image 36 –38. Traditional housing

## 2. Identification of the COMUS project area, its relationship with other urban area

The project area comprises the historic centre of Mscislaŭ. This is a regular planning structure in the form of a rectangular network of streets forming blocks of the public and residential buildings. The historic centre covers an area of 33.5 hectares (135,200 m<sup>2</sup>). The main building-type in the historic centre is wooden single-storey, mainly detached housing. The majority are from the 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Residential buildings occupy 13.52 hectares, or 40% of the area of the historic centre, or 9.3% of the entire city.

In terms of land use and building stock, the historic centre is also the public centre of the city, where most of the city's administrative, educational and cultural buildings are concentrated, including the headquarters of the local public administration. The main commercial and industrial enterprises are located in the modern part of the city.

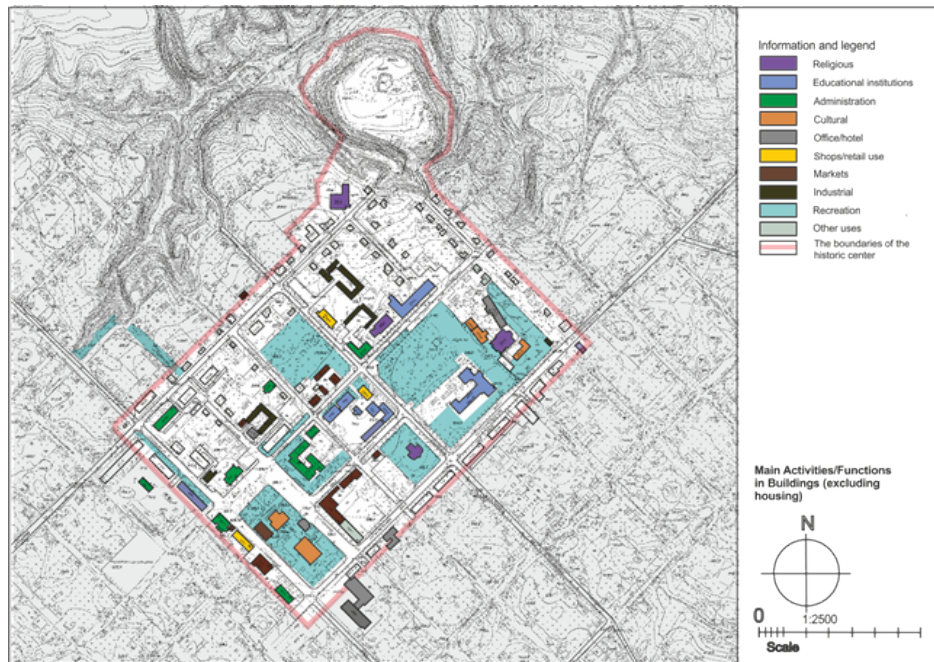


Image 39. Main Activities/ Functions in Buildings of the of Mscislaŭ

In terms of its historic evolution, both the quality and the configuration of the historic centre of Mscislaŭ have been determined by decisive geographical factors and urban policies linked to the different regimes present in the area:

1) *Development of the ancient city (12<sup>th</sup> century) around a single defensive centre in the East.* Mscislaŭ was established on the high right bank of the River Vikhra (right tributary of the Sozh) in 1135 by the Smolensk Prince Roman Rostislavich and named in honour of his son Mscislaŭ who inherited in 1180. The first mention of the city is in the Ipatiev Chronicle of 1156. The territory covered by the ancient Principality of Mscislaŭ included not only the current Mscislaŭ district, but Cherikov and Chausy districts with Radomlje and Ryasno.

The ancient town of Mscislaŭ consisted of the Princely wooden castle with a moat and earthen wall and a nearby settlement. The ancient settlement was also strengthened by ring ditches and wooden palisades which were more than 20m high. The castle was built on the natural mountain (now known as Castle Hill). At present, this is an archaeological site on which the reconstructed ancient towers and the archaeological museum are located. Castle Hill has become the venue for the annual festival of medieval culture known as "Knight's fest."

There are defensive structures on three sides of the castle grounds. The most imposing defences are on the south-eastern side. The only entrance to is to the south. The castle, separated from its surroundings by wide and deep ditches, benefited from nature's natural protection, which were supplemented by artificial fortifications with circular earthen ramparts with wooden structures. Its ancient builders made successfully use of the site's natural landscape.



Image 40. Mscislaŭ on the engraving of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: view on the castle

*2) Development of the medieval city in 16<sup>th</sup>-early 17<sup>th</sup> century.*

During this period, considered the heyday of Mscislaŭ, the city plan was laid out, and was mainly baroque in character. The urban planning of Mscislaŭ in 18th century combined architecture with a rich natural landscape.





Image 41. Urban plan of Mscislaŭ: 1770 (modern reconstruction): 1) Castle Hill, 2) Trinity Hill, 3) Podol (the settlement), 4) The Afanasiev Monastery Street, 5) Carmelite Church, 6) Wooden Trinity Hill, 7) Bernardine Monastery, 8) Jesuit Monastery

3) *The development of the regular modern city post-annexation to the Russian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.* By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when urban plans were developed, the city expanded northwards and the street network was partially modified as a result. The medieval road network was modified, while the old city, near Castle Hill, was totally rebuilt.

Mscislaŭ had been largely destroyed following numerous wars and fires and had lost its former glory. During this period, a new town with a classical planning structure developed. Many stone buildings were built, the main streets became straight and the square was rebuilt in a rectangle shape. During the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century the city's Jewish population had grown to more than 60%, living mainly in the Eastern part of the settlement (Zarechcha area) where there were two synagogues and other Jewish sacred places.

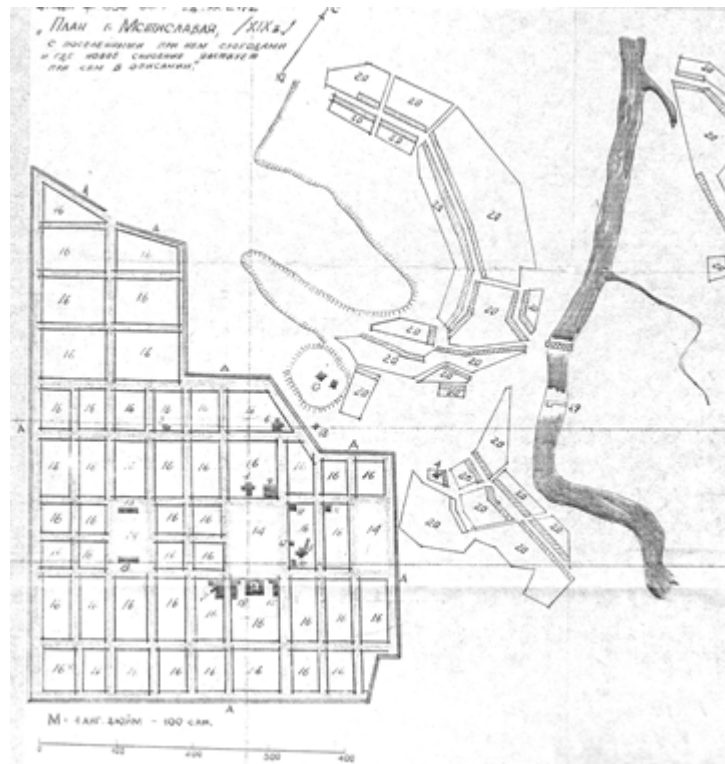


Image 42. 19<sup>th</sup> century plan of Mscislaŭ



Image 43. 19<sup>th</sup> century panorama of Mscislaŭ

#### 4) *The evolution of the urban environment from the inter-war to present day*

During Soviet times modern buildings of various scale and typology had a negative impact on the historic character of the city. Many of the original buildings were demolished and replaced by apartment blocks or high trees that blocked the view towards the centre. Also during this period, large residential and industrial complexes were built all over the city. The Master Plans of 1961 and 1977 isolated the central core, including the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century monuments part of the historic zone.

In 1985, the first regeneration project for the historic centre of Mscislaŭ was developed (by experts of BelNIIP gradostroitelstva (Belarusian State Institute of Urban Planning; Architects: V. Smirnov, M Shumyacher). It included a number of measures which aimed to conserve the regularly planned-layout of the central part of the city and preserve the historic continuity of its architectural and spatial organization. However, this project was not implemented due to lack of funding.

The modern project designed to regenerate Mscislaŭ historic centre began in 2015 and led by the same Belarusian State Institute of Urban Planning. It focuses on combining the historic, architectural and natural environment of the city, especially those architectural values that enhance and characterise the appearance of Mscislaŭ. Places such as the historic centre, Castle Hill, the Trinity and Maiden Mountains, the monasteries and the rich natural landscape all occupy a significant place in the architectural composition of the city.

In 2016 the main square of the settlement and some streets were renamed. The central area of the city was named in honour of Peter Mstislavets, the first Belarusian book-printer (who was born in the city). Uritskogo Street regained its former name; Pirogovskaya and as pedestrianized. A street from the Carmelite Church to the "Paris" hotel was renamed 'Carmelite'.



Image 44. Project for the main square of Mscislaŭ in 3D



## SWOT analysis

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Heritage enhancement	<p>Large cultural and touristic potential; Rich cultural, natural and archaeological heritage; Good climate; Picturesque natural landscape; Existence of educational and cultural institution and events; Extensive cultural connections; Existence of proper infrastructure; Historic area is officially established.</p>	<p>Lack of integrated heritage rehabilitation policies; Lack of investments in cultural sphere; Weak sense of ownership among inhabitants and authorities; Lack of institutional and professional capacity; Lack of employment opportunities; Insufficiently-developed economy; Scarce budgetary resources; Lack of business; Lack of professionals in creative industries and marketing; Undeveloped civil sector; Undeveloped tourist infrastructure; Lack of urban routeways and information in the historic centre; Lack of heritage management structure.</p>	<p>Potential of becoming a regional centre for tourism; Development of tourist infrastructure; Opening up new employment opportunities; Development of cultural industries Development of crafts; Organization of different cultural events; Development of small businesses; Integration of cultural heritage in urban planning and development; Development of urban routeways; Creating an administrative substructure within the city hall to manage cultural heritage rehabilitation and conservation; Strengthening capacities of local experts and public administration staff in the area of heritage management; Creating local financial tools for sustaining private rehabilitation initiatives; Promoting the concept of sustainable and integrated conservation among citizen through visibility and awareness campaigns; International funding / grants; Visibility of local heritage by different approach.</p>	<p>The political and economic crisis and consequently the low purchasing power of people; Lack of investments in cultural sphere; Inadequate restoration of historic buildings by adapting them to current needs without considering their architectural value (covering early 20<sup>th</sup> century private residential houses with siding); Commercial buildings in the historical territory.</p>
Housing	<p>Varied and sufficient housing stock; Specific wooden private housing of 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century; Clean green area; Many natural water recourses; Picturesque gardens; Friendly hospitable people.</p>	<p>Aging housing stock in the historic centre; Lack of necessary infrastructure in some neighbourhoods; Migration of the population to the capital or to other countries; Unauthorized interventions on buildings (carpentry, roofing, extensions, painting of the facades, siding, etc.) Poor physical condition of private historic buildings Poor management, no tenants associations.</p>	<p>Creating local policies for housing enhancement; Creating tenants associations; Raising funds for the restoration of wooden architecture; Educational activities among the local population, increasing knowledge about heritage; Development of urban routeways.</p>	<p>Lack of ownership of tenants in collective buildings; Financial issues.</p>
Social concerns	<p>No religious, social and ethnic conflicts or discrimination.</p>	<p>Lack of employment opportunities for the young people, migration; Poverty of the population; Lack of civic engagement.</p>	<p>Developing educational and informational programmes and campaigns for raising public awareness and participation.</p>	<p>The political and economic crisis; Lack of national policy to build jobs and a policy for the development of small cities.</p>
Traffic management	<p>Good conditions for bicycling; Existence of pedestrian streets and cycling infrastructure; Existence of traffic infrastructure; Strategic geographical location (on border with Russia).</p>	<p>Distance from major international routes; Lack of the railway in the city; Lack of parking in city central; No policy to favour "soft" traffic and public transportation; Poor quality of public transportation.</p>	<p>Redirecting car traffic from the city centre; Developing the pedestrian infrastructure; Enhancing street design (pedestrian crossings, traffic markings, location of stops of public transportation).</p>	<p>Poor street design and quality of construction; No integrated policy for traffic management for the entire city centre.</p>

Commercial and services activities	Fair supply of commercial and services facilities; Accessible, with development potential of commercial and service activities.	Lack of major entertainment centres; No affordable and quality accommodation facilities, underdeveloped rural tourism; No programmes for sustaining small and medium business and tourism activities; Lack of diverse and quality services; Poor quality of infrastructure; Unattractive environment for investment.	Developing sustainable tourism policies; Programmes for sustaining small business and services sector; Ensuring necessary infrastructure and urban navigation.	Uncontrolled tourism development and economic activities may damage the sensitive urban heritage.
Green areas and public spaces	Large green areas and parks in the city centre; Beautiful landscape and rich natural resources close to the historic centre.	Car parking in squares and on pavements; Lack of public places for children and families; Lack of sport facilities for young people; Lack of infrastructure in the central park; Lack of equipped beach locations on the river; Lack of business in this sphere.	Enhancing public spaces can create comfort and security for local communities; Promoting civic engagement and high standards of behaviour in public spaces; Promoting open-door activities; Building of the public places for families with children and for youth.	Failure to secure funds for the enhancement of public spaces; Failure to co-operate with the private sector (for example when demolishing kiosks from squares); Lack of civic spirit of inhabitants.

## SHARED VISION

Mscislaŭ's shared vision was drafted as a result of numerous discussions within the PIU and SHG. It was based also on the material input of local residents i.e. survey and the interactive activities with local children and young people.

***Mscislaŭ is a Modern Cultural And Touristic Centre in the eastern territory of Belarus***

*New features in old borders*

*"In 2025, **Mscislaŭ** is a modern city with a rich history, a developed tourist infrastructure, it innovates, and manages its cultural diversity. This is a city with a sustainable economy, taking care of its citizens, providing a myriad of cultural experiences and clean, healthy environment. Resident have many opportunities living here, both in terms of study and work. The city will continue to grow and thrive by co-operating with its neighbours and partners.*

Thus, Mscislaŭ's development strategy focuses on four areas: the conservation and promotion of heritage; environmental protection; economic stability; and, social justice. Indicators of progress in these areas will determine the ultimate success or failure of the entire strategy.

To achieve the desired vision, the following specific objectives will be met:

- 1) Conservation, revitalization and promotion of cultural and natural heritage

The cultural and natural heritage of Mscislaŭ is the city's hallmark, the basis of its identity, reflecting all the vicissitudes of its history, and provides a visual area code. Despite some positive changes in the conservation and restoration of the urban area, there is still a number of issues to be resolved, among which are: 1) low-quality restoration of a number of heritage sites and a weak monitoring of compliance with protective legislation; 2) a lack of funding for conservation and restoration of objects of high cultural value (Carmelite and Jesuit Monastery, the former gymnasium building, etc.); 3) an insufficient emphasis on the reuse of cultural property in the city's urban policy; 4) an insufficient promotion of the cultural potential of the city. These are some of the problems that the Reference Plan process aims to tackle.

The authority of Mscislaŭ, in co-operation with relevant stakeholders and partners, should develop and implement effective instruments to protect and enhance the architectural heritage and ensure its restoration is carried out to the

highest levels. The city's administrative capacity must be strengthened with this task in mind. New architecture must be integrated with the historic environment and be strictly regulated.

The sustainable use of architectural heritage should be of the highest priority. Only compatible uses will be permitted in historic buildings, uses which do not damage their integrity but which highlight their identity value.

Close attention must be paid to establishing the necessary conditions to safeguard the traditional urban wooden buildings in the historic area of the city, for example by helping to attract investments for their preservation and restoration.

Of utmost importance to achieve the above; a system for heritage management, one that is both official and public, must be established.

Necessary funds for restorations will be secured through innovative *financial instruments*. The city will research various financing resources, developing co-financing policies in support of small, private heritage-led initiatives.

## 2) Strengthening the role of the city as cultural and touristic regional centre

Mscislaŭ has great potential for developing cultural and heritage tourism, but a series of problems must be solved if these opportunities are to be used to the full, including:

- improving the tourism infrastructure – strengthening the city's tourist profile and boosting local economic activities. The accommodation offer will be increased, particularly in terms of providing larger capacity and higher quality. Tourism facilities will be diversified by promoting affordable room charges and alternative types of accommodation e.g. converting and adapting historic buildings. Urban routeways and signage will be developed in the historic area, and a Visitor and Information centre for tourists will be set up.
- develop tourist services promoting sound management and modern quality standards. New tourist routes will be created to connect cultural sites and activities. The visitors' duration of stay should be increased by providing additional high quality commercial and leisure services.
- promote the development of cultural and artistic activities and events, particularly for young people, in order to strengthen the local sense of identity and attract visitors.

## 3) Improvement of environmental conditions

Integrated cross-sectorial programmes must be implemented to safeguard and develop green areas and riversides. Beach locations should be set up on the River Vikhra and pavements constructed in pedestrian zones. Ecological tourist routes and recreation sites should also be developed. This work should be carried out with full respect of the environment.

## 4) Economic stability and social justice

Economic stability and social justice is one of the main ambitions for developing the city sustainably. The city would prefer to support local start-ups and new small businesses, especially in the area of cultural industries. The economy will be sustained through owner-run businesses which promote local values: gastronomy; culture; traditional customs; crafts; etc. Special facilities will be provided, especially for activities related to the urban and architectural heritage. Working together to produce goods and services that will strengthen the local brand at home and further afield is of high priority. Public-private partnerships and innovative co-operation should be encouraged. The city will look for and implement alternative funding methods for restoring cultural heritage and will involve the private sector and civil society in the rehabilitation process. Additional external funding will be attracted for rehabilitation projects, with the help of the city administration, which will implement special policies to secure funding for these projects.

## 5) Development of public sector and strengthening civic participation

The focus will be on raising awareness of the locals about their city's values and strengthening civic participation. These are key factors for an inclusive and sustainable urban development. The city should ensure public participation in the decision-making process. People will be informed in advance about urban development issues and will be given the

opportunity to contribute to the city's future. Participation of all social and ethnic groups will be a priority. Public, private and civil society actors will decide together about local issues in order to come up with the best solutions. A new management structure – Community Committee for Management of the Historic and Cultural Heritage – will be established. Special activities and educational programmes will be designed for children and students, aiming to communicate and promote cultural values to young people using modern interactive tools. Researchers and academic institutions will be involved in making Mscislaū's revitalization programmes a reality. Information about local cultural heritage will be digitized and constantly updated. The city will create a database and Internet-portal listing information sources which will be available to the wider public and used for various purposes.

#### List of Reference Plan Actions corresponding to the specific objectives

##### 1) Conservation, revitalization and promotion of cultural and natural heritage

- A 1.1 Restoration of Carmelite church and the unique frescoes of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, landscaping
- A 1.2 Restoration of buildings of the former Jesuit College, followed by an effective use for urban development
- A 1.3 Development of the colour code of the city and the design project for the urban environment change
- A 1.4 Creating a Visit and Resource centre for the promotion of the city
- A 1.5 Creating a legacy management system for local heritage area
- A 1.6 Creating and promoting the heritage database and internet portal for the promotion of cultural and tourism potential of the city
- A 1.7 Rehabilitation and technical modernization of Mscislaū Museum of Local History and Culture
- A 1.8 Organization of promotional campaigns for Mscislaū

##### 2) Strengthening the role of the city as cultural and touristic regional centre

- A 2.1 Developing the brand book and the tourist case of Mscislaū
- A 2.2. Development of the urban routeways and creation of information boards in the historic area
- A 2.3 Restoration of the "Hermitage" hotel and the opening of a modern hotel
- A 2.4. Development of tourist routes around the city in order to promote walking, cycling and eco-tourism
- A. 2.5. Development of event management, organization of three new festivals in the city

##### 3) Improvement of environmental conditions

- A 3.1 Creation of beach locations on the River Vikhra
- A 3.2. Construction of pavements in pedestrian zones, in full respect of the environment
- A 3.3. Development of ecological tourist routes and recreation sites
- A 3.4. Improvement of public green area, taking into account local traditions and best practices

##### 4) Economic stability and social justice

- A 4.1. Elaboration of a local policy for supporting owner-run business and development of creative industries
- A 4.2. Rehabilitation local Print House activity
- A 4.3. Stimulating fundraising for the rehabilitation of heritage
- A 4.4. Rehabilitation activities of the stud farm in Luytnia (5 km from Mscislaū)
- A 4.5. Encouraging the development of agro-tourism in the region

##### 5) Development of public sector and strengthening civic participation

- A 5.1. Restoration of the former men's gymnasium building and establishing the Folklore (Public) School
- A 5.2. Establishment of a Community Committee to act as a public advisory body for the management of the historic centre
- A 5.3. Elaboration of a local housing policy
- A 5.4 Rehabilitation of local market as a public space
- A 5.5 Rehabilitation of sites dedicated to children and families in the historic part of the city