



COMMUNITY-LED URBAN STRATEGIES IN HISTORIC TOWNS (COMUS)

Communities at the heart of heritage governance

Principles for heritage based urban development of small and medium-sized heritage towns in countries in transition



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1. Forewords

1.1 European Union

Reinforcing economic resilience and promoting stabilisation at the EU's borders are key goals of both our revised Neighbourhood Policy and of the Eastern Partnership. Citizens across the Eastern Partnership countries aspire to economic development, prosperity, stability and a greater sharing of common values and heritage. It is in this spirit that the European Union launched the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme, now in its second phase (EaP II), of which this Community-led Urban Strategies Project (COMUS) was part. The EaP programme reflects the increased weight that culture has gained in EU external cooperation worldwide, and particularly in the Neighbourhood, where it is being supported and valued as a vector for economic and social development, growth and job creation, innovation and social inclusion. These are also the very objectives of EU external policy and assistance in the region.

Under the Community-led Urban Strategies Project (COMUS) a significant sample of historic towns in the EaP countries has been the target of focused interventions in historic centres. The Project contributed to the regeneration of the urban and social fabric and the strengthening of local communities. Through capacity building, policy advice and public debates, the project promoted democratic standards in local communities, by including civil society in the decision making process, and enhanced role of culture as a driving-force for reform, promotion of inter-cultural dialogue and social cohesion.

The work carried out under this Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS) also met the stated goals of supporting municipal development and helping the preservation of cultural urban heritage in small towns. All the participating 9 pilot towns in the 5 EaP countries have cooperated on urban rehabilitation projects and increased regional cooperation.

The EU has put an emphasis on cultural cooperation throughout its bilateral, regional and cross-border cooperation in the Eastern Neighbourhood. Programmes and policy dialogue in support of culture involve our partner governments, public administration and non-governmental actors alike. But we are aiming at doing more. We aim at having a systemic impact by promoting policy and institutional change, by improving the regulatory environment and increasing business opportunities for cultural operators. The EU Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 we hope will offer an added chance to reinforce this link between politics and culture and to deepen our partnership with our Eastern Neighbours.



Lawrence Meredith

*Director Neighbourhood East
DG European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement
Negotiations European Commission*

1.2 Council of Europe

Technical co-operation has been one of the Council of Europe's key components in the field of cultural heritage for over forty years. The focus has increasingly been on sustainable development and quality of life, with an enhanced understanding of heritage and its role in societies.

Setting standards and carrying out pilot actions have allowed us to retain a dynamic process where we learn from the experiences across our member states and make the necessary adjustments. Our strength has been in the ability to work with national and local authorities, communities and experts simultaneously, providing flexible methodologies to adopt and adapt to local circumstances. In this respect, we have been very aware of the importance of guiding the processes, rather than directing them, bringing together all relevant stakeholders for constructive dialogue around the principles of democratic participation. Through this approach, we have observed the successful integration of policies at local and national levels, where the stakeholders have been active players in the process.

The European Union / Council of Europe Joint Project Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns - COMUS is a very good example of this steady evolutionary process, ensuring the essence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law across our member states, through the lens of heritage-led initiatives for sustainable development. Fruitful co-operation between

partner organisations has provided a significant number of opportunities for professional capacity development. Furthermore, it has offered a sound methodology for social and economic development, by enhancing cultural heritage and urban regeneration in small and medium-sized historic towns.

Considering the community-led nature of the project, we have been particularly impressed by the dedication and mindful efforts of the Ministries of Culture of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, where national coordinators have skillfully monitored the process while creating the necessary space for local stakeholders and project implementation units to be in the driving seat. The hard work and diligence of the project officers on the ground has been remarkable, and this has resulted in a rich portfolio for each COMUS pilot town, including a work programme, trained human resources and tools. Community-based activities have been equally important throughout the project to ensure social inclusion and awareness-raising.

We have also incorporated academia into the project activities, through a research study among five universities, where multi-disciplinary academics studied the community perspectives at local level. This aimed at connecting project activities to a longer term engagement through the Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.

This publication, “Communities at the heart of heritage governance – principles for heritage based urban development of small and medium-sized heritage towns in countries in transition” will be another building block in the local development processes, providing increased understanding of democratic participation and respect for human rights.

We trust that the positive outcomes of this project will be shared extensively, and that the very promising network of COMUS pilot towns will be maintained, in order to improve capacities further and to provide inspiration for integrating the COMUS principles into local and national policies.



Claudia Luciani

*Director of Democratic Governance
Council of Europe
Strasbourg*

1.3 Organization of World Heritage Cities – a valuable partnership

Based in Quebec (Canada), the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) has grown since its foundation in 1993 into a community of more than 280 cities inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The seat of the OWHC Regional Secretariat for Northwest Europe and North America – covering 19 member cities from 12 different countries – is located in Regensburg (Germany). Aside from improving communication within the organization and the member cities through a variety of programmes, a key goal of the OWHC is to offer a platform for international solidarity and expertise for urban heritage sites.

A goal of using a new scientific approach saw the publication, in 2013, of the OWHC Position Paper “Safeguarding and further developing World Heritage Cities”, which focuses on the manifold challenges of historic towns worldwide. It has become apparent that not only UNESCO World Heritage sites, but all historic towns with a rich monumental heritage, could profit from developing an integrated concept when tackling problems of preservation and development.

One consequence of these two aspects of OWHC work in Northwest Europe and North America was to begin to co-operate with the Council of Europe/EU in the COMUS project from its inception onwards. The partnership aims to support the nine COMUS pilot towns with the experience of

experts at OWHC. Consistent feedback was given throughout the development of the different programme modules and in selecting external experts from the OWHC partnership. A successful study visit to the OWHC member Bamberg/Germany was organized for the COMUS partners in June 2016. Intense support was provided by the Regional Secretariat as co-ordinator of a management course and a workshop for the COMUS mayors, using knowledge transfer and methodological training.

Communication support has been provided at many levels: there is a specific section for COMUS on the OWHC website; all COMUS towns were invited to become observer-members of OWHC for the duration of the programme and their information has been listed alongside the OWHC member cities on this prominent World Heritage international platform; and, several international OWHC meetings, both regional and global, the partnership – and the COMUS project and its towns – have been presented to the audience.

Since 2015, OWHC has focused on the important topic of community involvement in Heritage Management. The culmination of this work will be the OWHC World Congress in Gyeongju/Korea in November 2017 with the theme “Heritage and Communities: Tools to engage local communities”. In an OWHC guidebook, edited by the Regional

Secretariat Northwest Europe and North America, a selection of Best-Practice examples from OWHC cities as well as EUROCITIES will be presented. Entitled "Community Involvement & Heritage", there will be a specific chapter devoted to good practice examples, in which COMUS towns present

their approaches to community involvement. The OWHC wishes all COMUS towns and the respective countries in transition a successful continuation beyond the COMUS project and a fruitful follow up!



Denis Ricard
OWHC Secretary General



Matthias Ripp
OWHC Regional Secretariat North-West Europe and North-America

Executive Summary

Communities at the heart of heritage governance

On-going efforts towards sustainable development require sound and innovative perspectives on human rights and democratic governance, beyond solely economic concerns. With the consideration of heritage as a social, economic and political resource, it is essential to develop a new way of looking at heritage, by setting the ground to reframe relations between all involved stakeholders. An enhanced definition of heritage and a new approach to heritage governance present challenges for countries, particularly those in transition that are of concern to the European Neighbourhood Instrument – Eastern Partnership Programme.

The European Union and Council of Europe Joint Project Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns – COMUS, implemented by the Council of Europe in partnership with the Organization of World Heritage Cities between January 2015 and June 2017, presents a sound model for countries in transition, including Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The Council of Europe has been working in the area of culture and heritage with countries involved in COMUS bilaterally and regionally for over a decade. Multilateral co-operation has been developing since 2007 in the framework of the “Kyiv Initiative Regional Programme”.

The primary aim of the Council of Europe is to create a common democratic and legal area throughout its 47 member states, ensuring respect for its



Streetscape in Dusheti, Georgia

fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe’s pan-European reach allows constructive dialogue with member states and generates political leverage. The Council of Europe’s legal instruments and soft-monitoring tools serve as valuable benchmarks for the European Union in the context of its cultural and other related sectorial policies, enlargement and integration of new members, reconciliation and neighbourhood cooperation objectives.

Political objectives and assistance to countries have been implemented through community-led and place-based approaches in reference to fundamental European conventions, in particular the 1985 Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, the revised 1992 Valletta Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, the 2000 European Landscape Convention and the 2005 Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.

It is within this context that the COMUS project was initiated in nine pilot towns: Goris and Gyumri



Regional training in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova



View from Cable Car in Chiatura, Georgia

(Armenia), Mstislavl (Belarus), Chiatura and Dusheti (Georgia), Soroca (Republic of Moldova), Pryluky, Lutsk and Zhovkva (Ukraine). The richness and diversity of the heritage in these pilot towns is of major cultural significance to Europe, and is an important resource given the present economic context and on-going societal transformations. The activities that fall under COMUS have been implemented in order to convince communities that small local initiatives are significantly better than inaction, and could lead to more ambitious opportunities and new partnerships.

Each pilot town has gone through a comprehensive and transformative process, producing a significant amount of outputs including essential technical files as well as promotional materials. While focusing on the tasks in a relatively short time, the capacity development of practitioners and local / national professionals was emphasised. Community awareness-raising and involvement were encouraged in various degrees through community based activities, and established human infrastructure at local and national levels. Although a large number of stakeholders have

been involved in the project, it is important to note that learning curves and active engagement have varied regarding the understanding of the competencies and skills. However, a constructive dialogue has been activated among stakeholders, leading to joint actions locally, nationally and internationally. Such momentum should be carried out by local and national entities, sharing the methodology, principles and lessons learned from this experience with other towns in the respective countries. Furthermore, the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the COMUS towns' network in five countries should be maintained, benefiting from each other's significant skills, experience and wisdom.

Four phases, introduced throughout the project, focused on the development of technical files with guidance provided, and offered continuous capacity development opportunities for professionals. In view of the community based nature of the work, equal importance was given to local demographic mapping, in order to understand what the community was composed of in each town, and whether all community

members had the opportunity to be involved or take an active role in the process.

Setting up the management structures and human infrastructure was time consuming and challenging; however, this proved to be a very important part of the project. This investment in human resources at the beginning is essential for the sustainability of the action beyond projects, as human resources, particularly at local level, may require more time to adjust to new ways of working.

While each town had a different pace in implementation, the development of reference plans, including a shared vision and priority actions, was identified as a tipping point for many. This generated extensive and inclusive dialogue among community members, authorities and experts. This period was valuable, allowing the deconstruction of fixed positions, questioning of the rationale for the selection of priority actions and considering future use and benefits for the communities.

The technical work on the selected priority actions through assessment and feasibility studies allowed further questioning of whether decisions would be beneficial to communities in the short-medium term, as they all experience difficulties in accessing financial resources.

Consolidated experiences throughout the project, together with the concrete outputs, were reflected on the relationship with potential donors, as the COMUS approach received positive feedback

and attracted donors locally, nationally and internationally. Integration of COMUS outcomes into local and national policies, strategies and development have been taking place in all COMUS countries in various levels.

Throughout the COMUS project, nine pilot towns collectively produced a hundred documents, and further revised twelve. All documents are available on the COMUS website in English and local languages. These documents include heritage assessment reports, preliminary technical files, reference plans, preliminary technical assessments and feasibility studies, offering details of the technical work.

Increased community-based initiatives have mobilised the local communities and engaged them in the COMUS project at various levels, introducing public debate and direct participation of inhabitants in the decision-making process. These actions were well documented and presented through news and promotional films.

It is important to note that a dynamic network was developed through periodic regional workshops and study visits, where each pilot town was represented and had the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the issues at stake.

COMUS brings heritage and communities together, in the heart of decision making on urban regeneration and local development. It introduces a methodology based on existing heritage resources, laying out an integrated approach with emphasis on the process. It further argues that

urban heritage is not an isolated concept on its own, but is part of a larger system, and therefore should be considered in the entirety of a heritage-led and community-based development process. In the context of the COMUS project, heritage is considered as a means and not the end result itself, demonstrating an increased role by communities in decision making. Thus, COMUS advocates for working with all layers of society simultaneously, encouraging a new constructive dialogue among all involved.

The Council of Europe has had a long lasting relationship with the COMUS countries in the region, and perceives the project as another step in this cooperation. COMUS' integrated methodological approach and outcomes should gradually be included into local and national policies and strategies, furthering the institutionalisation of the processes. As some of the impact has already been demonstrated with the results in Georgia and Armenia, this positive momentum should continue between pilot towns.

Following a thirty-month process, the COMUS project stands out as a good exercise in democracy through consideration of heritage as a resource. It advocates the creation of an inclusive platform, based on the principles of democratic participation and community empowerment as an essential part of policy making. It demonstrates a new way of looking at heritage management and shares concrete results for future considerations. It is hoped that the outcomes and lessons learned from the COMUS project are duly taken into account in the next European Neighbourhood Instrument Strategy.



Degraded Carmelite Church in Mstislavl, Belarus, proposed for rehabilitation under COMUS program

This publication is aimed at both international and national donors as well as national and local decision-makers. It demonstrates key principles for sustainable actions in community based heritage development to be incited through international, national and local policies and programmes.

Interested stakeholders should not take each step and activity as a strict model, but rather draw from the principles of this integrated approach. Each community is unique and has its own internal dynamics. However, they all share aspirations for more democratic societies and a better quality of life. Democracy is more meaningful when it mobilises innovative powers in the perspective of building more just communities, respecting human rights and dignity. This has been the core value and message of the COMUS project.

Introduction

In the context of eastern Europe, there are many small and medium-sized heritage towns with historic urban areas and valuable cultural heritage assets facing various challenges. Some of these challenges include economic downturns, emigration of skilled people, as well as ageing populations. Experience with participatory practices and local community engagement for the preservation and reactivation of the cultural heritage to support the cultural, socio-economic urban development is in its early stages. In this context, preserving and reactivating heritage sites – whether they are historic, spiritual or industrial – implies the double challenge of dealing with low investment in capacity and limited skills and resources.

Sites that had previously been significant for their heritage value and importance for local or national identities became neglected or even derelict; others suffered due to the legacy of centralised planning systems and limited capacity and resources at the local level to deal with the growing responsibilities of decentralisation. As these countries have been going through a transitional period in their economic and political structures, new ways of addressing these challenges become important for the democratisation process where heritage may play an essential role in mobilising innovative powers in communities.

The COMUS project “Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns” aims to address these challenges and demonstrate how cultural heritage and its regeneration can provide opportunities for the financial, social and cultural development of a town (heritage based urban development).

Heritage and Community for the COMUS project are defined as

Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and tradition*s. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.

(Faro Convention, Council of Europe 2005)

Community

A community is a group of people that have something in common, i.e.

- a. living in the same area (geographical communities)
- b. having similar cultural, religious, ethnic backgrounds and characteristics (cultural communities)
- c. having similar interests, beliefs, attitudes, objectives (social communities).

(Nils Scheffler, OWHC Regional Conference.

“Heritage and Community Involvement” 2016)

Heritage Community

A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations. *(Faro Convention, Council of Europe 2005)*

Therefore, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization of World Heritage Cities jointly developed a community-based, cultural heritage-led, development methodology and tested in nine pilot towns in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

This publication shares the wide-ranging experiences gathered during the implementation of this methodology, presenting its key technical and organisational principles, with the aim of applying this methodology successfully elsewhere.

It aims to support international, national, regional and local policy makers to plan and implement effective and successful projects, using tried and tested policies and funding programmes, so that cultural heritage assets are used sustainably to improve the quality of life in small and medium-sized towns in countries in transition in eastern Europe.

For further information on COMUS, please refer to the project website:

<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/comus/home>

Chapter 2 provides an overview, setting out the context and challenges of small and medium-sized heritage towns in countries in transition in eastern Europe (cf. 2.1). It lays out the ways the COMUS project has addressed these challenges (cf. 2.2) through a description of COMUS' approach, its benefits and opportunities (cf. 2.3). Key facts and project partners are also presented here.

Chapter 3 looks into "Principles for Sustainable Actions in Community-Based Heritage Development", presenting examples from the COMUS project. It further introduces the key principles of a successful heritage-based urban development strategy – including technical and organisational features – that create the conditions for an integrated and synergetic approach to heritage as a valuable resource in these small and medium-sized towns.

Chapter 4 draws the main messages from the COMUS project implementation. It summarizes the principle lessons learned for the benefit of future projects of similar scope.

Chapter 5 focuses on "Programme synergies and follow up" offering an insight into how the COMUS project may continue and link to other Council of Europe and EU programmes, including the next Eastern Partnership programming period.

Chapter 6 "Resources for Replication and Follow-up projects" provides further information about COMUS documents, diving deeper into the COMUS approach, its application and lessons learnt.

2. The COMUS Project – Community-Led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns

2.1 Context and Challenges

The challenges that eastern European countries face in preserving and capitalising on their cultural heritage using community-based processes are unique. The COMUS project team needed to deal with a very different context compared to similar endeavours in other European countries. The challenges faced by the COMUS teams and stakeholders, as described below, reflect both the particularities of heritage and community work in the post-socialist space of eastern Europe and the complex question of how resilient small or medium-sized towns can be, in a globalised big-city biased economy.

Heritage and Community in Countries in Transition in eastern Europe

Over the past three decades, as the transition process unfolded, communities have faced a shifting base for previously stable local identities. Sites that were previously of significant heritage value and importance for local or national identities became neglected or even derelict, much to the regret of many of today's residents. The reverse is also seen, as underlying ideological frameworks change, communities have been (re) discovering and remembering long-forgotten symbols and histories.

The legacy of centralised planning systems includes limited experience with participatory practices and local community engagement. At the same time, local administrations have limited capacity and resources with which to meet the

complex needs of their constituencies in the context of a growing tendency to decentralise powers.

Another particularity of this region is that eastern European countries top global rankings in demographic decline (UNDESA, 2013). Small towns have been most affected by this loss. Population decline is often associated with industrial restructuring. Community projects face the additional challenge of building trust in small historical towns, where in many cases people's civic pride has been eroded and they believe their towns have no future, resulting in the exodus of young people. Heritage preservation, in this context, can act as the glue to bring people together towards a common cause, generating local pride and sense of purpose.

Economic restructuring and emigration of those most able to work means that local skills are increasingly difficult to retain. Faced with a diminishing economic base, small towns are confronted with low income levels and an ageing population. Thus, preserving heritage sites – be it historic houses, spiritual and cultural edifices or industrial heritage sites – implies the double challenge of dealing with low levels of investment in capacity and limited skills.

Property vacancy and abandonment is also a frequent feature of small towns in eastern Europe, as their demographics and economic bases have shrunk. Often, buildings and sites of significant

heritage value have changed uses and are more prone to degradation, as they remain empty. However, this may also encourage innovative approaches to rehabilitation and conversion of such sites can stimulate new uses to support community functions or entrepreneurship and employment opportunities.

Finally, civil society in eastern Europe has been less developed, and tends to have fewer active grassroots organisations and community groups. For this reason, knowledge and resource flows are more difficult to facilitate and the community is less adept at mobilising, supporting and pursuing larger-scale community projects.

Heritage and Community in Small Towns

In an urban era dominated by the big city rhetoric, small towns may only survive and flourish by proposing an alternative to the noise, crowd and alienation of the big city life. Cultural heritage creates a sense of place, identity and makes small towns distinct, thus consolidating the sense of belonging and attachment of local residents. Buildings and sites of heritage value often accommodate public spaces, culture and leisure functions, contributing to residents' quality of life.

Cultural heritage in small towns can act as a connector, create a sense of purpose and pride. Heritage brings the community together, motivates locals to keep their memory of places alive, and bridges current realities with past traditions.

However, small towns may often manifest a 'lock-in syndrome' (Knox, 2009); an inertia into long established perceptions which may impede locals' understanding of the value and potential of local assets. Indeed, heritage sites may be of prominent interest and importance to constituencies outside the local community. For this reason, residents of small towns need help to reconnect to external networks, to be exposed to communities of interest that may lie beyond the territorial limits of their town, as well as learn to look at their own environment through a variety of lenses.

Finally, the local community can capitalise on its heritage in order to boost the visitor economy, contribute to creating jobs and diversify revenues. However, one should bear in mind that successful tourist destinations are generally wider regions, rather than individual small towns. For this reason, the tourist inflow of small heritage towns is often dependent on wider regional aspects, such as connectivity and accessibility as well as availability of tourist services and information.



School children waiting for the cable car in the old mining town of Chiatura

The cable-car system of Chiatura is a soviet industrial engineering work of art consisting of 26 cable lines carrying both people and manganese up and down the steep slopes of a spectacular valley. Unrestored since the 50's, when it was set to function, this cable line represents a challenging duality as label of a hidden industrial heritage treasure - of interest for an increasing number of foreign tourists, but also as a serious safety risk for its daily commuters.



The Pioneer Palace, in Chiatura, Georgia, left abandoned during transition years

A common feature of post-socialist towns were the community centres hosting activities for the meritorious youth (named 'pioneers'). Given that such centres were often associated with ideological symbols that lost importance in the transition process, many were left abandoned. The local community in Chiatura wishes now to revive this centre, reconciling a new use pattern with its initial vocation, and valuing its role for the town's youth.



A former machinery deposit in the picturesque setting of Dusheti, Georgia, currently being envisaged as a potential arts residence for artists in nearby Tbilisi

The small town of Dusheti has lost much of its transit visitors as the road on which it is situated lost traffic to a newer modern axis. The local community is seeking to generate new uses for its abandoned patrimony so as to attract visitors of a younger creative profile.

2.2 Objectives and Approach

COMUS in Brief

COMUS is a bold project, jointly supported by the European Union and the Council of Europe, that brings together nine small historical towns in eastern Europe to work on enhancing their cultural heritage resources.

In line with the common priorities of the Council of Europe and the European Union, COMUS works to improve the living conditions of European inhabitants and the quality of their living environments, while giving citizens a more direct role in defining, deciding and implementing local economic development projects. It presents an opportunity to bridge heritage preservation concerns with municipal, empowerment, democratisation and economic growth.

Throughout the 2½ years project timeline, communities in the participating towns have worked together to draft urban development strategies based on heritage, as well as design and prioritise project concepts that would preserve and capitalise on the heritage values of their towns.

COMUS builds upon the policy priorities of the Council of Europe and European Union in the context of the Eastern Partnership Programme by targeting co-operation activities with Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

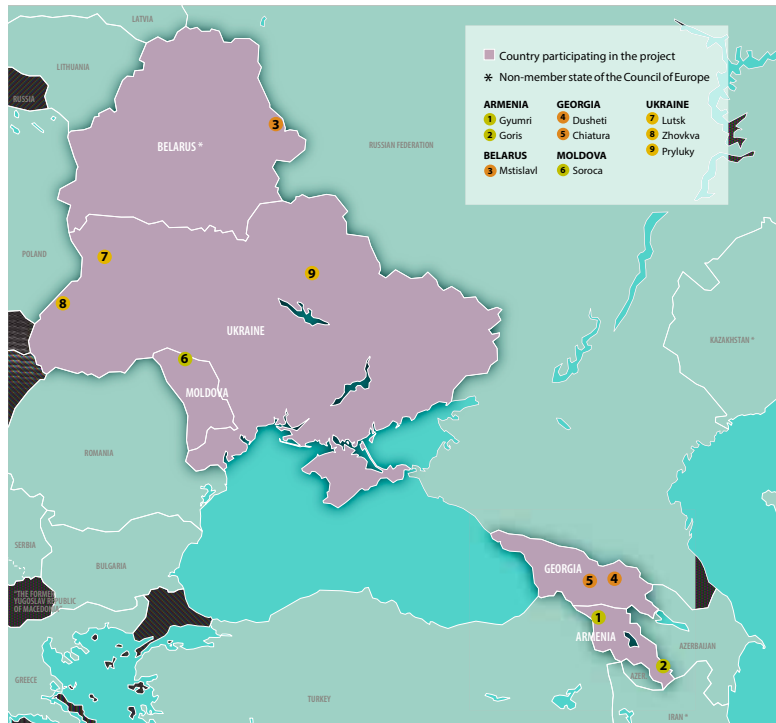
The partnership with the Organization of World Heritage Cities has generated opportunities for longer-term co-operation with other European historic towns. The COMUS experiences aim to serve as examples to inspire spontaneous projects in other towns in participating countries, and also in other international contexts, while impacting on existing national policies and intervention models to encourage local development processes.

COMUS Key Facts

- 30 months: Jan 2015 to June 2017;
- Nine small historic towns: Goris and Gyumri (Armenia), Mstislav (Belarus); Chiatura and Dusheti (Georgia); Soroca (Republic of Moldova); Lutsk, Zhovka and Pryluky (Ukraine);
- Three implementing partners: European Union, Council of Europe, Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC);
- Over 200 national and local stakeholders involved in participatory processes;
- 45 heritage sites analysed and transposed into project concepts;
- € 650,000 project budget.

COMUS Objectives

COMUS seeks to stimulate social and economic development through enhancing cultural heritage and urban regeneration in historic towns by:



Countries participating in the COMUS project

1. Broadening the concept of heritage as a resource in the context of human rights and democracy;
2. Increasing the capacity of local and national authorities in the management of their heritage resources;
3. Empowering communities and citizens as the main actors in carrying out their heritage-led development processes.

COMUS Approach

COMUS was designed to be implemented in phases, each corresponding to a set of actions and planned outcomes. These phases involved target groups, stakeholders at local and national levels,

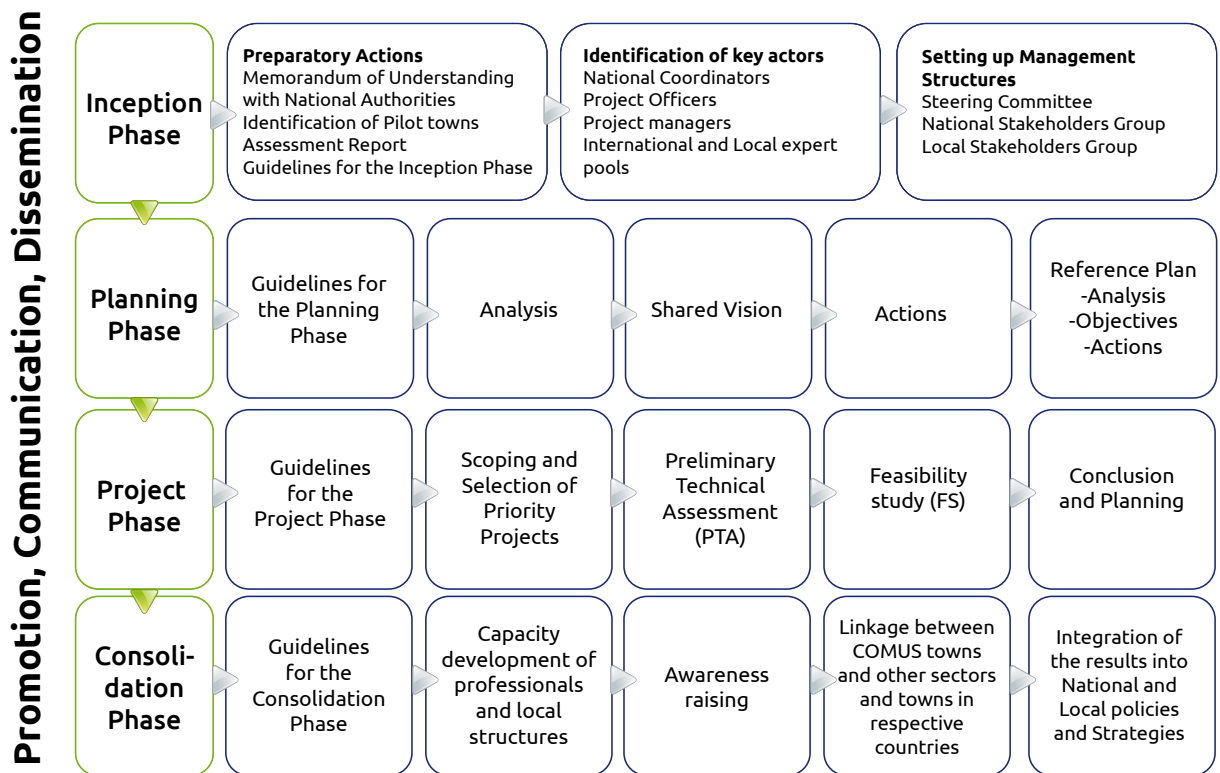
as well as partners working together throughout each step. The four main COMUS phases consisted of:

- I. **The Inception Phase** created a context for explaining the project objectives and methodology, mobilising stakeholders, setting up the management structures and providing local staff with the required skills and competencies to use the methodology;
- II. **The Planning Phase** consisted of detailed analysis, vision setting and prioritisation. National stakeholders and communities worked together to debate and decide on their shared objectives for the future development of the pilot towns and decide on the priority interventions;

- III. **The Project Phase**, during which projects targeting the rehabilitation of monuments, buildings or sites were elaborated through technical documents to be used for promotion and mobilising of funds;
- IV. **The Consolidation Phase** enabled target groups to take stock of their experiences, learn about the experimentation and formulate decisions to be taken at national level regarding the relevant adaptation of policies and strategies, with a COMUS inspired future perspective.

To help navigate through these phases, guideline documents were provided for each one, explaining the aims, targeted results and methodology. The local teams were supported throughout by a lead expert, accompanied by several other international and national/local experts involved in co-ordinating thematic regional and country-based workshops, assisting with feedback and review of work produced.

COMUS MODUS OPERANDI



2.3 Benefits

Having gone through the COMUS process, local communities benefit in several ways, as COMUS can be a useful precursor of donor and funding bodies' decision-making processes as well as

national and local authorities' work. The benefits from the COMUS process and methodology for the stakeholders as described below can vary, depending on the local conditions.

Benefits of COMUS approach for:

Donors and funding bodies

- Provides a thorough process profiling town context, needs and potential, as a prerequisite for targeting of funds and tailoring of interventions;
- Supports community involvement through the entire process, essential for ensuring relevance and sustainability of follow up actions;
- Involves prioritisation and well-documented investment design, based on sound methodology and instruments;
- Strengthens the commitment of local and national authorities to intervention sites;
- Facilitates transfer of know-how in preparing investments, which sets the background for smooth implementation;

National authorities

- Supports the promotion of the principles of heritage and sustainability to local stakeholders, concepts which may otherwise remain abstract national policy objectives;
- Creates bridges for interaction and direct work with local communities;
- Provides tools and context for national policies to trickle down into concrete local projects;
- Generates feedback for the improvement of national policies so that they meet local needs and challenges;
- Consolidates the capacity of national authorities, by exposing them to practices of other countries;
- Creates a channel of reference between national heritage legislation and local perceptions and needs

Local authorities

- Assists in engaging the community in heritage preservation, by providing a method of participation;
- Exposes network to 'know-how' and experience of other countries and facilitates exchange of best practice and lessons learned;
- Provides instruments to structure work and approach donors and funding bodies;
- Offers support in working with national and international stakeholders;
- Provides resources for engaging with qualified national and international experts in the field;
- Raises visibility of local challenges and heritage potential, essential for mobilising resources.

3. Principles for Sustainable Actions in Community-Based Heritage Development

International, national and regional policies and funding programmes employing a comprehensive and community-based approach to heritage should refer to the following principles in their work. This will contribute to their impact on the sustainable use of cultural heritage to improve the quality of life in small and medium-sized towns.

These principles are based on the outcomes and results of the COMUS project.

Technical principles

1. Development of a cultural heritage-led urban development strategy (hereafter referred to as the strategy);
2. Detailed analysis of the current cultural heritage and urban situation;
3. Identification and evaluation of priority heritage-led urban interventions through feasibility studies;
4. Joint collection of new uses for the heritage rehabilitation projects.

Organisational principles

5. Community based set-up of a vertical and horizontal governance system;
6. Thorough preparation of the development process;
7. Capacity building of the team in charge.

In the following sub-chapters, each principle is explained in detail: what they set out to achieve and how they can be put into action.

Statement

“Constructive dialogue, established and reinforced by the COMUS projects, has emphasised the importance of community involvement as an essential component of the long-term success of local development projects. Local communities and civil society, as local stakeholders, have been able to recognise the capacities and diverse ideas at local level, and have adopted a democratic approach to improve quality of life for all organically”. (Alla Stashkevich, COMUS Project Officer, Belarus)



Local and national authorities meeting COMUS team to discuss a heritage based strategy in Soroca

3.1 Development of a cultural heritage-led urban development strategy



Participatory exercise engaging youth in Mstislavl, Belarus, in formulating a shared vision for their town



Joined strategy planning work sessions in Ukraine

The intention of the strategy is to:

1. Develop understanding and raise awareness of the existing and diverse cultural heritage;
2. Recognise and stimulate the use of the local cultural heritage assets as a positive impulse for the improvement of the quality of life in the town;
3. Develop a co-ordinated and shared strategy on how to make the best use of local heritage in urban sustainable development through a community-based, heritage-led elaboration process [cf. 3.5];
4. Guide public actions and limited public and private resources towards the urban heritage intervention areas achieving the best impact on the local development, capitalising on cultural heritage assets.

The COMUS experience has demonstrated that such a strategy should contain the following components:

1. **Presentation of the local cultural heritage and its distinctive features**, highlighting the opportunities for reinvestment, economic activities and the improvement of the quality of life of the town to make the case for preservation and investment (*cf. Faro Convention, which emphasizes the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-convention>*);
2. **Coherent setting of a shared vision, operational objectives and priority urban intervention areas** to advocate for cultural heritage-led urban development as opportunities for the town;
3. **Description of the integrated management system** for cultural heritage-led urban development.

The involvement and co-ordination of relevant stakeholders using constructive dialogue [cf. 3.5] is of crucial importance during the development process; this also reinforces democratic processes, allowing diverse ideas to compete and the most suitable solutions identified.

Recommendations and Considerations

It is of crucial importance that:

1. The strategy is widely accepted by decision-makers at all levels, and institutions responsible for its implementation and the wider public, and that it corresponds to community and urban development needs;
2. The decision-makers (in particular mayors, key national ministries and institutions responsible for relevant funding programmes) are fully aware and understand the potential opportunities of cultural heritage as a tool to improve the quality of life and an asset for sustainable urban development. This is essential for local authorities to support the process, both in terms of political will and financial resources;
3. The strategy is understood as an important initial step for the implementation of a heritage-based, urban development process.

To support this, international, national, regional and local institutions are encouraged to draw on the following in their programmes and policy development. To ensure that:

→ the strategy, with its vision, objectives and urban interventions areas, is developed through dialogue and participation at each step of the process [cf. 3.5] and results are shared by the relevant stakeholders, in particular those responsible for its implementation (i.e. stakeholders sign up to the strategy). This will increase the credibility of the decisions made:

- needs are identified together with communities and feed into the strategy [cf. 3.2];
- prior to developing the strategy, the potential contribution of cultural heritage to improving the quality of life and sustainable urban development should be demonstrated to local leaders and key decision makers. Effective tools may include site visits to comparable cities that have been successful in using their cultural heritage and peer-to-peer presentations of good-practice [see also 3.6];
- the strategy contains implementable and feasible actions and target intervention areas, agreed by the stakeholders [cf. 3.3].

Some good examples can be found at

<https://rm.coe.int/goris-armenia-comus-reference-plan-rp-english-version/168071059a>
<https://rm.coe.int/168070c54b>

Another key lesson learnt is to ensure that the strategy is not seen as the ultimate document to identify a town's most important heritage buildings and define how to rehabilitate them. Instead, it is about identifying the needs and interest of the communities and the cultural heritage assets. It is about how to define the best use of these cultural heritage assets whilst satisfying the needs and interests that have been identified, and putting a joint vision and objectives into practice. This will multiply the benefit of cultural heritage rehabilitation and further the development of the town.

Statement

"COMUS indeed brought a new perspective to urban planning, including heritage management as a component of development. This was a new type of exercise introducing the principles of sustainable planning on one side, and public participation on the other. It also insisted on bringing together different sectors of the public administration, local or national, who generally do not communicate directly about common problems, but preferred to offer sectorial solutions according to their legal responsibilities".
(Dumitrița Efremov, COMUS Project Officer, Republic of Moldova)

3.2 Detailed analysis of the current cultural heritage and urban situation

Development of an effective cultural heritage-led urban development strategy, which encourages the use of the local cultural heritage in favour of sustainable development, requires a thorough analysis. Without it, it is not possible to conduct a professional local heritage-based development process.

The analysis should be designed to provide an overview, describe and raise awareness about the current urban heritage and see the challenges to cultural heritage in the light of future developments. Such an analysis should take into account the objective of heritage as a resource in the urban development and renewal. The analysis describes:

1. The general characteristics and significance of cultural heritage;
2. The relationship between heritage and the key urban challenges and community needs.

Through such an analysis – involving stakeholders in reflecting on urban development needs together – coherent and reliable shared visions, operational objectives and priority interventions can be produced.

For this analysis, the following activities are proposed:

1. Mapping demography and community needs, problems and goals as well as key issues related to the urban situation as regards heritage-based urban rehabilitation;

2. Mapping cultural heritage resources, their general characteristics and significance, producing a SWOT analysis of community needs and key urban issues;
3. Assessing how heritage assets can be utilised to improve the general prosperity and well-being of citizens;
4. General desk-based interpretation of thematic maps and historical maps;
5. Analysing existing policies, plans and by-laws for urban and cultural heritage development.

The “Analysis” ultimately provides the framework within which future proposals for beneficial change can be made. It is crucial to discuss the results with relevant stakeholders to achieve a shared understanding of the current situation [cf. 3.5].

Recommendations and Considerations

During this rigorous analysis of the cultural heritage and the urban situation, it is of crucial importance to:

1. Ensure a “neutral” institution or person with the requisite experience and skills, is charged with leading the task;
2. Involve communities and key stakeholders in the analysis as a primary resource for gathering information i.e. through interviews, surveys and other activities that enable them to determine their needs, interests and knowledge;



Mapping exercises in Mstislavl, Belarus, help the understanding of heritage sites in the overall context of their surroundings.



Architectural sketches and current condition of the Jesuit Church in Mstislavl, Belarus. The degree of degradation poses significant challenges to the local team in identifying the proper architectural and construction solutions for its renovation.



Heritage walks with local stakeholder group members and experts, in Gyumri, Armenia. Black stone buildings represent the architectural distinctiveness of this town. Heritage preservation does not solely imply targeting specific listed buildings, but perpetuating specific construction practices, aesthetics and urban landscape.



This archive photo reveals the intricate cave dwellings system of Goris, Georgia, whose ruins can now be barely seen. The local community wishes to revive this system as a tourist attraction.

3. Record, share and discuss the results of the analysis with the stakeholders involved in the development of the strategy to encourage joint diagnosis and establish a common understanding of the current situation and existing key needs, challenges and conflicts. This will facilitate a joint development of the strategy, defining principal themes for consideration, common objectives and actions, based on the challenges, opportunities and needs identified [cf. 3.5];
4. Examine the validity of identified cultural heritage assets and whether they respond to assessed needs and interests of communities.

To support this, international, national, regional and local institutions are called upon to include the following standards in their programmes and policies:

- Support the selection of a suitable person / institution to lead the analysis i.e. by forming a pool of suitable experts and institutions;
- Require that desk-based work is enhanced by fieldwork, (photographic) surveys, interviews, information from specialists (local economists, property consultants, etc.). Ensure that information is up-to-date and from a variety of perspectives;
- Ensure that the results are summarised in a written report including a SWOT responding to the main issues identified;
- Require that results are shared and discussed, and where possible co-produced with key stakeholders;

- In the COMUS context, an analysis, vision, objective setting and list of actions were brought together in strategic reference plan;
- Use an external expert to validate the final draft of the preliminary technical file to ensure that both the content and quality is of a suitable standard before using it to further develop the strategy.

This approach to analysis has helped project teams in dealing with the complexity of the rehabilitation process, which far exceeds the restoration of a few monuments; helping teams to ensure that the national authorities consider the problems and challenges of implementing the project, and in communicating to potential international, national, regional and local partners.

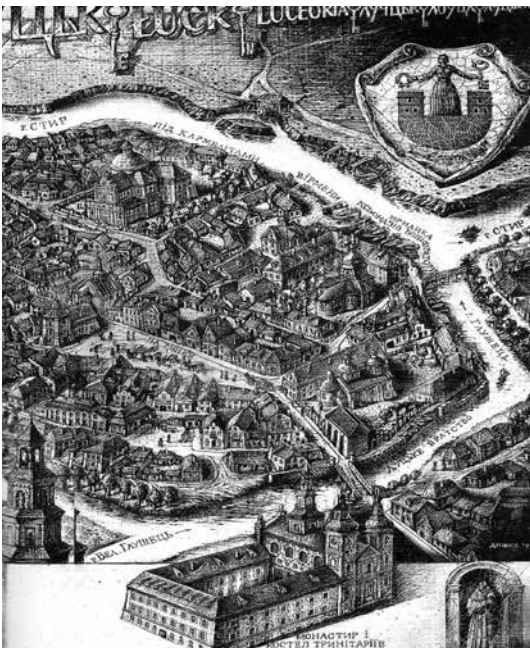
Some good examples can be found at <https://rm.coe.int/mstislav-belarus-comus-reference-plan-rp-english-version/1680715adb> <https://rm.coe.int/gyumri-armenia-comus-reference-plan-rp-english-version/168071059b>

Statement

"The functioning of local stakeholder groups has been broadly successful and locally appreciated across the Pilot Towns. Some have even extended this forum to reach out to the wider community, so capitalising on the project dynamic to raise understanding and awareness, promote community ownership of the project and establish ongoing wider engagement. Engaging the stakeholders was the most useful and necessary part of the process". (Alla Stashkevich, COMUS Project Officer, Belarus)



The thorough documenting of archives for photographic stock, engineering and architectural sketches are essential for a righteous preservation and restoration of heritage sites. This archive photo, found by the Georgian team, illustrates the first years of the Chiatura Cable Car functioning, at the beginning of the 1960s a remarkable example of soviet engineering.



The Market Square with "Ratusha", XVI c. Art reconstructions of Oleksandr Dyshko



The Middle Town and the extended Market Square in Lutsk XIV – XVI c. The reconstruction of the architect Oleh Rybchynskiy

3.3 Identification and evaluation of priority heritage-led urban interventions through feasibility studies

Following this analysis, it is crucial to select heritage rehabilitation projects that are both owned by the local community while technically and financially viable. This can be facilitated by preparing feasibility studies that allow project teams to:

1. Gather all relevant information in one place in order to present sound, comprehensive and implementable heritage rehabilitation projects to regional, national and international funding bodies and investors, encouraging public and private partnerships, investments and funding;
2. Guide public actions and allocate limited public and private resources to the most effective urban heritage rehabilitation projects with the highest, positive impact on local development.

A further role of the feasibility studies is to enable project managers, local stakeholders and political decision makers to assess the potential and challenges of specific heritage rehabilitation projects. A presentation of the results in this format will allow discussion and final decisions to be made jointly.

Such feasibility studies have been more effective for participants of the COMUS project when they follow a two-step selection and evaluation process, consisting of:

1. Preliminary technical assessments of the priority urban intervention areas: these set out the operational design of heritage rehabilitation projects and help stakeholders to understand whether to take a project any further. They consider the financial implications, human resources and assess capacity;
2. Feasibility studies for the heritage rehabilitation projects: these set out a scenario for project implementation within the next 3-5 years so as to present the project's viability. They have implementable, realistic and fundable components.

Statement

"The Feasibility Study is a new type of document which focuses on proposed activities rather than on buildings. This opened up new perceptions for experts who are used to more technical approaches".

(Dumitrița Efremov, COMUS Project Officer, Republic of Moldova)

Recommendations and Considerations

In order to identify priority heritage-led urban interventions through feasibility studies, it is crucial to:

1. Single out priority interventions together with stakeholders, considering the stakeholders and community heritage values and interest levels; the potential for use in the



Orthodox Church in Pryluky, Ukraine, planned for rehabilitation works



The Mihai Eminescu High School Soroca, Republic of Moldova, currently abandoned, was evaluated for rehabilitation and reconversion to new educational uses



Local stakeholders in Mstislavl, Belarus, discussing project prioritization

short term; needs; how to improve quality of life in historic towns; the possibility of local, national and international funding; and, the potential impact on local development;

2. Ensure the feasibility study reports on: the significance of the monument or site; degree of risk or danger of deterioration; aim and scope of the project; the constraints to be acknowledged or overcome; the stages necessary for project implementation; the organisational structure required for the project and the long-term management of the monument or site and broad cost estimates for the various rehabilitation options, from initial conservation to full rehabilitation;
3. Base the rehabilitation options upon the potential uses identified for the building or site [cf. 3.4];
4. Elaborate the preliminary technical assessment and the feasibility study using local experts;
5. Inform and discuss the results of the studies with the involved stakeholders [cf. 3.5] to ensure decisions on which and how the buildings are to be rehabilitated and reused are taken jointly, and in particular, to check for potential and available resources.

To support this, international, national, regional and local institutions are encouraged to include the following considerations within their programmes and policies:

- Apply the two-step selection and evaluation process set out in the preliminary technical assessment, which identifies priority urban intervention areas, and – within these areas – selects heritage rehabilitation projects based on a feasibility study;
- Select with care a local person / institution with the requisite experience and skills to lead the study stage; if suitable, provide access to national and international experts i.e. by forming a pool of suitable experts;
- Require that results are summarised, shared and discussed with key stakeholders and the communities to ensure that the rehabilitation projects are in-line with the community interests;
- Use an external expert to validate the final draft of the studies and cross check with international standards before final decisions are taken.

Some good examples of Preliminary Technical Assessments can be found at

<https://rm.coe.int/1680707336>

<https://rm.coe.int/goris-armenia-comus-pta2-goris-urban-streets-rehabilitation-english-ve/168071059d>

Some good examples of Feasibility Studies can be found at

<https://rm.coe.int/1680707336>

<https://rm.coe.int/goris-armenia-comus-fs1-goris-urban-streets-rehabilitation-english-ver/1680710594>

3.4 Joint collection of new uses for the heritage rehabilitation projects

Base the rehabilitation of heritage buildings on their future use for the community

It is crucial to understand that rehabilitation is not an aim in itself. Rather it is a tool to reactivate cultural heritage and provide space for the community for cultural, social and economic functions to take place. It is important that potential uses be identified at the outset. Responsible and sustainable use of the sites provides the best protection for a heritage asset. Through this approach, cultural heritage will serve the local community to enhance their quality of life. It is important to involve the communities in defining new uses.

Statement

*“We see some changes in the current mind-set both on local and national levels. Current projects in both pilot towns are quite heritage-oriented with an intention to consider heritage as an asset for economic and social development. Both towns, especially Goris, are considering heritage as a tool for economic investments”.
(Sarhat Petrosyan, COMUS Project Officer Armenia)*

Embed the reuse of the cultural heritage in the urban development context

In order for heritage rehabilitation projects to benefit the community and enhance quality of life, it is important that they are embedded in the urban and neighbourhood development context. The intention is, in the best-case scenario, that the rehabilitated space will become a nucleus, a starting point for the sustainable development of the neighbourhood or even the entire town. This

can attract further public and private resources for the cultural heritage assets. Using a holistic approach, taking into account the surroundings, uses, etc. is important, as it builds a climate of change, generating a new dynamic based on understanding and confidence. The new uses and functions should be linked as much as possible to the daily lives of the citizens.

The level of success in the reuse of a heritage building also depends on its accessibility and whether it is well connected through roads and other means of transport. Thus, the improvement of the accessibility of the site for the citizens is an important part of the process.

Recommendations and Considerations

To develop new uses for the heritage assets and improve the quality of life in town in partnership, it is crucial to:

1. Base potential uses on the needs and interests of the communities identified during the analysis phase [cf. 3.2] to ensure that the projects are in-line with the public interest or even directly involve communities in the identification of potential uses i.e. public consultations, workshops and idea competitions [cf. 3.5];
2. Bear in mind that the future use(s) of the building or site must include both rehabilitation and long-term maintenance to avoid “dead investments”;
3. Reconsider the idea of singular investment in an empty, hard to access environment.



Local stakeholder group members joined experts involved in COMUS to discuss - in an interactive group work exercise - on post-rehabilitation uses of heritage sites.
 'Which new uses could we add to the Library building, after its rehabilitation, considering that the actual library functions need less than a half of the space available?'
 'How can we reconvert a former industrial site to host cultural events and residencies that could boost the cultural life of our town?'
 These were just a few of the questions raised by participants at this exercise, as part of the Feasibility Studies Workshop, held for COMUS stakeholders in Dusheti, Georgia.

3.5 Community based set-up of a vertical and horizontal governance system



Mayors' gathering in Tbilisi, Georgia. COMUS pilot town mayors, deputy mayors, national coordinators and project officers discussed future perspectives and strategic actions to integrate COMUS methodology and recommendations into local policies and strategies.



Local stakeholder group consultations in Gyumri, Armenia

Stakeholders from the national to the local level must be involved in developing a cultural heritage-led urban development strategy that guides and co-ordinates public and private actions in favour of a cultural heritage-led urban regeneration. Involvement has the specific intention of:

1. Raising awareness about the opportunities that heritage-led, community-based urban development can provide for the sustainable development of towns;
2. Highlighting the role cultural heritage can play in addressing urban challenges;
3. Setting up synergies between all levels of authorities in order to share responsibilities and mobilise and combine their capacities and resources in agreeing a joint strategy and available resources;
4. Encouraging inclusion of cultural heritage as a factor of development in national and local sectorial policies;
5. Promoting democratic processes, public debates and direct public participation in decision-making processes, broadening the concept of heritage as a resource in the context of human rights and democracy;
6. Setting up a structure of co-production and subsidiarity;
7. Addressing the idea of dysfunctional policies and laws that can be addressed based on grassroots findings.

For principles of good governance at local level, see Appendix "12 principles for good governance at local level".

The COMUS experience has demonstrated that a governance system needs to be set up, considering that decision making processes should take place together with the elected officials, authorities, experts, local communities and other relevant stakeholders. The COMUS governance model establishes a new platform for co-operation, fostering new ways of working together. It creates management and co-ordination structures, new partnerships, and shared responsibilities between central and local authorities as well as between public and private stakeholders and the local communities. It is recommended that the following management and co-ordination structure is set up:

1. Local Stakeholder Group

At local level it is recommended that a local stakeholder group (LSG) be established, bringing together the different perspectives, viewpoints, skills of local government partners, relevant stakeholders and the local community. Potential members could include: elected representatives; local departments; experts; specialists; local institutions; civil society representatives; associations and interest groups; residents; and investors. The aim of the local stakeholder group is to:

- create an environment where people from different (professional) backgrounds can interact, come to understand each other's roles and aspirations, and can benefit from the exchanges on a personal and professional level;
- develop, together with the Project Implementation Unit, the cultural heritage-led

urban development strategy in the spirit of co-production, recognising the capacities and diverse ideas circulating at the local level;

- ensure stakeholders have a role in determining their future and quality of life, with the aim of increasing their sense of belonging;
- introduce public debate and direct participation on shared visions, objectives and actions in the decision-making process, promoting community ownership of the defined projects;
- raise the understanding and awareness in respect of the opportunities presented by a cultural heritage-led urban development;
- share responsibilities between inhabitants, elected representatives and technicians;
- strengthen the LSG's confidence in its capacity to take the initiative and build partnerships, especially in implementing the priority interventions.

For further information about the concept of Local stakeholder groups see: <http://urbact.eu/urbact-local-groups>.

Statement

"I think one of the successes of the COMUS project is related to the participatory work. The most important thing was that we had an opportunity to get acquainted with the experience of other countries in this sector. In general, Goris can create great opportunities for the city development through tourism development. And by these steps we will be able to achieve our vision on how we imagine Goris later". (Susanna Shahnazaryan, COMUS Goris LSG Coordinator)

2. National Stakeholder Group

It is also recommended that a national stakeholder group (NSG) be established. Potential members could include key national ministries and institutions, partners with competencies, responsibilities who have a role in cultural heritage and urban development. The aim of the national stakeholder group is to:

- assess required professional capacities and training needs of the local authorities developing a cultural heritage-led urban development strategy;
- organise adequate capacity development, training and exchange opportunities;
- discuss alignment of the cultural heritage-led urban development strategy and the local heritage revitalisation projects with national policies and programmes (strengthen the national political back-up toward the projects);
- identify improvements national regulations and programmes and ensure these are communicated to the responsible parties;
- consider and provide expertise for the urban, heritage-led, development process to the local authority;
- advise on the objectives and practicalities to be included in the Memorandum of Understanding.

3. Project Implementation Unit

To manage decisions at an intermediate level, it is recommended that a project implementation unit (PIU) is set up to co-ordinate between the national and the local levels. The PIU acts as a steering group to ensure that dialogue is timely and effective, and

involves the necessary stakeholders. The COMUS project PIUs typically consisted of a representative of the Ministry of culture, the co-ordinators of the national and local stakeholders group, the project officer and project manager, even the mayor and external specialists when required. The task of the project implementation unit is to

- identify a project officer who would be in charge of overall coordination of activities and facilitation between all stakeholders, ensuring a coherence of approach across all participating towns. It is essential to note that this should be a paid position.
- prepare, support and co-ordinate the elaboration of the cultural heritage-led urban development strategy (driving the process) by drafting key objectives, priority interventions and rehabilitation projects, building on the results of the analysis phase [cf. 3.2] and of the LSG;
- assist in the set-up of the Local Stakeholders Group;
- help in identifying needs, knowledge or capacity gaps, and bring in additional skills related to the preparation of the cultural heritage-led urban development strategy through the Expert Pool;
- update the National Stakeholder Group regarding advancement of the cultural heritage-led urban development strategy and to co-ordinate its conformity with National policy frameworks as well as providing the opportunity to seek support for the town initiative where necessary or opportune;
- communicate goals, advancement and achievements at local level to the partners;

→ prepare the process of validation of the Strategy by the municipal authority and endorsement by the National Stakeholder Group.

4. Direct involvement of communities through community-based activities

Besides the involvement of key stakeholders through the national and local stakeholder group, it

is crucial to engage and work with local inhabitants and the different communities directly: to discover their interests, their relationship with the heritage, to give them the opportunity to get involved and express their viewpoints (social inclusion).

It is recommended that community involvement activities be developed to achieve this aim, integrating them in the development of Strategy.

Youth Activist school in Zhovkva, Ukraine

To provide relevant information about the city and its heritage to active community members in order to collect ideas for the development of the urban heritage, an 'activists school' took place.

The 'Youth Activists' was a full four-day school programme. During the first few days, the participants received basic information on the town history, about the most important cultural heritage objects and prominent personalities of Zhovkva, from its foundation to the present. In the afternoon, the students enjoyed an excursion and visited several heritage sites, in particular sites not currently accessible to tourism.

During the second day, participants talked with local officials to familiarise themselves with the work of the city council, the formation of the local budget and decision-making. Furthermore, the participants talked about municipal enterprises (also responsible for the cultural heritage) and discussed ways to improve their work. The activists visited some of the enterprises.

During the third day, three types of investments in Zhovkva (urban heritage) were discussed: public, private and grants. After the discussion, the participants visited five Zhovkva-based private enterprises set up with foreign investments.

On the fourth day, in addition to receiving further information about project management, the participants became acquainted with special aspects of the city and with the international concept of "right to the city". Based on this, the participants drew 'rich pictures', working in groups: two groups drew Zhovkva today related to their urban heritage, the other two the 'dream city'. Thus, the situation today and the vision for the future of the city based on the urban heritage were identified. Part of that session was a SWOT-analysis and the development of a problem tree.

This all led to the development of ideas for the development of Zhovkva's urban heritage based on the views of the city's young people.



Team work at the Youth Activist School in Zhovka, Ukraine. Young people drawing a dream city.

5. Pool of Experts for outside assistance

At national level an expert pool (EP) was set up, which – as and when required – supported the communities in developing their Strategy or in capacity building activities.

Recommendations and Considerations

When setting up community-based management and co-ordination structures, and establishing new partnerships, shared responsibilities between central, local authorities, public and private stakeholders, and the local communities, it is crucial to:

1. Create the necessary human infrastructure to steer and guide the governance and co-ordination structures by recruiting co-ordinators for the LSG and NSG.

NSG co-ordinator

The tasks of the National stakeholder group co-ordinator include:

- supervising and supporting the elaboration of the deliverables produced by the Project Implementation Unit;
- assessing the existing national and local skills in order to assess required professional capacities;
- assessing needs for professional capacities and developing capacity development activities [cf. 3.7];
- drafting the Memorandum of Understanding of the NSG [cf. 3.6];
- ensuring the follow-up of an integrated approach involving all relevant stakeholders.

LSG coordinator

The tasks of the Local stakeholder group co-ordinator include:

- supporting the identification and selection of the stakeholders to be involved in the LSG through a stakeholder analysis together with the PIU [cf. further below]
- supporting the acceptance by the local authorities of the involvement of the identified stakeholder in the LSG;
- giving practical advice with regards to the development of LSG;
- setting up the working programme for the LSG in co-ordination with the PIU's project management team;
- identifying the needs and priorities of the LSG;
- keeping the LSG active and facilitating dialogue in the LSG, making sure that each voice is heard to support and contribute to the process;
- facilitating communication and co-operation between the stakeholders, in particular between the public institutions;
- maintaining contact with project leaders;
- supporting capacity building efforts;
- disseminating and communicating information about the project to LSG members;
- developing a specific communication strategy toward the civil society.

URBACT LSG Toolkit

For guidelines on bringing together city stakeholders, facilitating collaboration in the analysis of urban challenges and the co-creation of solutions, download the URBACT LSG Toolkit. It provides tools to support cities in setting up and running a LSG and in producing an integrated local action plan.

http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/urbact_toolkit_online_4_0.pdf

Recommendations on running a Local Support Stakeholder Group

- *The stakeholders should benefit from participating in the LSG;*
- *Do not raise expectations: clarify at the outset the rights and duties of the LSG; be open and transparent;*
- *Build trust between the involved stakeholders;*
- *Invite no more than 15 people to be involved, any more and the groups work is detrimentally affected. If needed, involve more stakeholders in subordinated groups or an open forum;*
- *Bring public and private stakeholders with different needs together and help them understand each other's needs;*
- *Do not duplicate structures: if a comparable body exists, use it. Add activities and stakeholders if needed;*
- *Establish durable structures: structures should continue after having elaborated the strategy e.g. using the LSG for the implementation and monitoring of the strategy and the defined regeneration projects;*
- *Have a skilled 'neutral' moderator in charge of the LSG, accepted by all partners, his/her task will be to animate the LSG members to contribute to the development of the Strategy and organise the work of the LSG;*
- *A successful LSG requires time and thorough preparation;*
- *Ensure the city council and mayor support the LSG. The direct involvement of the mayor in the process might be essential to receive political and financial support;*
- *Involve the stakeholders according to their needs and interests;*
- *Take opinions and feedback of the key stakeholders seriously and try to integrate their comments into the Strategy;*
- *Raise stakeholder-awareness concerning the significance of cultural heritage for the development of the area. Only then will they take the best care and feel ownership of this "resource";*
- *Plan sufficient time for the LSG: the process of involving a wide range of stakeholders and incorporating meaningful reaction to their concerns is essential but requires time;*
- *Involve stakeholders from the very beginning: Involving stakeholders from the initial stage of developing the strategy is crucial to making them feel comfortable about the whole process and encouraging them to participate;*
- *The involvement process has to be well organised in terms of structuring the aspects of the matter in discussion; further it has to be transparent to generate enough interest and ability to come to conclusions;*
- *Have a 'project champion' who represents and stands for the project in public and spreads the message of what is happening to a wider community;*
- *Let the LSG sign the final version of the strategy and action plan.*

Typical activities of the LSG involved with the COMUS projects include: regular meetings and workshops; exploratory walks; questionnaires and photographic surveys.

2. Set up a project management team for the PIU, to act as the core group for the development of the strategy, based on the input provided from the LSG and the community activities.

Project management team

The tasks of the project management team should be to:

- take responsibility for the elaboration of the technical documents [cf. 3.2 and 3.3] and coordination and supervision of international, national and local expertise in support of it - quality control and validation [cf. Pool of Experts];

- manage the Project Implementation Unit;
- include the LSG in the development and planning process as well as the organisation of local events with partners;
- facilitate dialogue between inhabitants and public authorities (local and national);
- facilitate the transfer of experience from the project to local technical departments (increase local competencies);
- organise international and national expert missions and study visits to transfer competencies to local stakeholders;
- organise public relation activities to communicate the project and improve its visibility.

A key factor for success is the presence of a professional facilitator at the heart of the project management team. The project management team should work together with international, national and local specialists interacting closely with the Local Stakeholder Group i.e. to develop the technical documents [cf. 3.2 and 3.3]. A further success of the PIU, has been its work, through steering committee meetings and presentations to the town council or public debate, in enhancing the value of the dialogue between parties and the quality of the participation of local stakeholders in the debates. This has led to the adoption of a shared vision for the future heritage-based development of the town which is led by the locals.

3. Engage professionals in the organisation and implementation of community engagement activities to ensure that the voices of the people concerned are heard and can influence the result of the Strategy. Typical activities involving the communities taking part in the COMUS projects have included:



Regional training in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova

- ✓ periodic sessions to inform the public and seek their opinion;
- ✓ heritage walks (Gyumri, Goris, Soroca);
- ✓ workshops with local children and teachers discovering the town (Mstislav);
- ✓ interactive workshops with young people and children at local museums (Dusheti and Chiatura);
- ✓ urban sketching workshop and competition (Dusheti and Chiatura);
- ✓ children's painting and exhibition (Soroca);
- ✓ programmes on local radio and TV (all COMUS towns);
- ✓ outreach and information sharing through social media (all COMUS towns);
- ✓ collection of heritage related stories through local libraries (Soroca);
- ✓ competition for children "cultural landmarks" (Soroca);
- ✓ organisation of activities and promotion of the COMUS project during the European Heritage Days celebrations;
- ✓ photo exhibition "COMUS: towns of living history" (Zhovka, Lutsk, Pryluky).

4. Select a variety of experienced international, national and local experts with different technical and organisational skills to support the community-based development of the Strategy. This requires expertise in the fields of:

- ✓ management and governance;
- ✓ participation;
- ✓ urban and traffic planning and cultural heritage;
- ✓ restoration;
- ✓ communication;
- ✓ capacity development.

To support this, international, national, regional and local institutions should encourage the following within their programmes and policies:

- allocation and careful selection of experienced and skilled persons for the co-ordination of the LSG and NSG.
- allocation and careful selection of a confident, experienced project management team for the PIU, as the core group for the development of the strategy, supported by an expert pool;
- link the provision of funding with the set-up of a horizontal and vertical governance structure including direct community involvement activities.

COMUS Practice examples

COMUS Armenia has made the most of its resources by bringing together community activists, business owners and local authorities around their 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. Local governments have been empowered by the process and their motivation has increased, 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. 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 – it opens up new ways and means for this to happen.

3.6 Thorough preparation of the development process

In order to effectively support the principles mentioned above, the following steps should be taken into account:

- development of a feasible and implementation-oriented Strategy;
- thorough analysis of the current cultural heritage and urban situation;
- community-based set-up of a vertical and horizontal governance system.

In order to achieve successful community-based urban heritage-led development it is crucial to prepare these important steps and components thoroughly, in particular by:

- convincing national stakeholders, with authority over municipalities, and the Mayor and Municipal Council, to follow and apply the COMUS approach as described in [chapter 2c] and the principles [chapter 3] prior to beginning the process;
- establishing the governance system of the COMUS approach.

Whilst this preparation may be complex, it is of crucial importance to the success of the whole process. Based on the lessons learnt during the COMUS project, the overall participative and strategic process should be planned by developing and agreeing the following documentation:



Joined strategy planning work sessions in Ukraine

1. **Road Map** to define the timeframe, milestones, the most appropriate strategy to involve the local political level, the best adapted strategy to ensure citizen participation, information about members of the LSG, all details related to the content of its meetings and the way external partners and experts can be integrated into its work;
2. **Memorandum of Understanding** to determine general objectives, action plan, time schedule, budget, set up of co-ordination and management structures, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the various participants;
3. **Methodological guidelines** for the application of the COMUS approach. This will act as a guideline for the NSG and LSG and the PIU.

This should be accompanied by a declaration of mayors to follow up the continuous local commitment.

Recommendations and Considerations

A thorough preparation of the development process requires the:

- identification of relevant stakeholders who should be integrated in the process and communities that are affected;
- analysis of communication channels, forms and platforms;
- creation of a realistic time-frame;
- necessary formal and informal decisions are taken to start the process;
- necessary skills and knowledge, as well as key persons, are in place throughout to drive and steer the process;
- before starting, communication of the COMUS approach to national and local decision makers (head of responsible national ministry, mayor, city council) i.e. through presentations, debates and the adoption of

Statement

"After extensive community consultation, local authorities have been re-considering possibilities for investment in the city of Chiatura. The municipality and representatives of the LSG have indicated that the COMUS project played a major role in interpreting and redefining heritage from the perspective of local development". (Rusudan Mirzikashvili, COMUS Project Officer, Georgia)

specific local solutions. Raising the awareness about the potential opportunities cultural heritage can provide is of utmost importance;

- take the necessary time to set up the community based governance structure [cf. 3.5]. Sufficient time should be allocated in order to include all relevant parties and to ensure the sustainability of management practices in the long run.

To support this, international, national, regional and local institutions are encouraged to incorporate the following aspects into their programmes and policies:

- a detailed discussion of the Memorandum of Understanding. The MoU must be officially adopted by the responsible representatives of the national and local level and the involved funding organisation;
- similarly, the Road Map should be discussed and agreed on by the institutions and persons involved in the LSG. It should be presented in the city council;
- methodological guidelines that provide relevant templates and practical recommendations for developing a community based Strategy following the COMUS approach should be prepared. These should be presented to the involved stakeholders at the very beginning of the process, in particular to the LSG and NSG co-ordinators and the project management team, to ensure that they all fully understand the purposes and procedures.

3.7 Capacity building of the team in charge

The COMUS approach [cf. 2.2] requires the involvement and coordination of a variety of stakeholders from national to local level [cf. 3.5] as well as the qualified elaboration of technical documents [cf. 3.1-3.3].

This demands certain skills and experiences, which the responsible stakeholders do not always possess for the implementation of such an approach. In order to ensure the successful application of the COMUS approach, accompanying capacity building activities are of great importance for the people in charge of the COMUS implementation process, in particular the members of the PIU (NSG and LSG co-ordinators, project manager). These capacity building activities aim to build-up and improve local capacity (knowledge and skills) to develop and implement community-based heritage revitalisation projects and to reproduce the process in the future.

Skills gaps should be identified as regards the

- participative elaboration of cultural heritage-led reference (development) plans and related technical documents;
- the management of cultural heritage resources and urban development processes involving communities in improving their quality of life;
- communication of project activities and results;
- project and finance proposal writing and pitching to donors.

Training events and exchange activities should be organised accordingly.

One aspect of these capacity building activities is the identification and illustration of opportunities of a cultural heritage-led urban development and how the objectives of the strategy can be rolled out into the community through ancillary events and activities.

In COMUS, this was achieved through organisation of regional workshop, i.e., the COMUS methodology (Regensburg and Sorooca) urban planning (Pryluky), heritage management (Gyumri), housing and finance (Sibiu).

Recommendations and Considerations

International, national, regional and local institutions should include the following with their programmes and policies:

1. organise an initial information and training event to clearly, set out the tasks, explain the methodology and test it (summer school);
2. build capacity throughout the project, if possible, through exchange visits to towns with similar challenges and approaches i.e. excursions; expert and study visits, peer reviews, etc.;
3. link towns with larger exchange networks;
4. identify suitable training experts within the pool of experts [cf. 3.5].

Statement

“Increased capacity development activities, through regional and local workshops, expert visits, study visits and ongoing consultation sessions within and between countries, have been fruitful in understanding better the potential in heritage management and the essential elements needed for the effective use of these resources. COMUS played an important role in building the capacity of local and national experts. It is the first time that Moldovan experts have produced integrated urban policies, and the collaboration and dialogue between different levels of authorities and the interdisciplinary approach was innovative”. (Dumitrița Efreșev, COMUS Project Officer, Republic of Moldova)



Walking tour in Sibiu, Romania, guided by representatives of Heritas Foundation, to discuss heritage preservation techniques and participatory methods to work with heritage housing owners in Sibiu town centre.



COMUS Regional Workshop no. 6 in Sibiu, Romania on the topic of scenarios on housing rehabilitation and funding possibilities in community-led urban strategies.



Site visit in Alma Vii, a small heritage rich village in central Romania. The Mihai Eminescu Trust, a foundation dedicated to the preservation of saxon heritage in Transylvania, shared their practices and lessons learned with regard to mobilizing the community to support the rehabilitation and activation of large heritage sites – in this case, a fortified saxon church of XIV century.

4. The Main Messages from COMUS

The COMUS programme has served as a valuable learning opportunity for all involved, generating insights into the challenges of countries in transition in eastern Europe, as well as showcasing overarching tendencies in heritage work.

Main message 1: Heritage as part of a system

The COMUS experience has generated an understanding that urban heritage is not an element on its own, but is part of a system. This is nowhere better seen than in countries in transition, where societies and underlying political and economic frameworks have gone through dramatic changes over the last few decades.

In the town of Mstislavl, the shrinking population left the secondary school with not enough pupils for it to continue its activity. A spacious heritage building remains, but whom is it to serve, once rehabilitated? The Stansia building used to be a stopover station on a military road across the Caucasian Mountains. Subsequent geo-political changes and investments that favoured other routes meant that this road is no longer used. The beautiful, though neglected, building now hosts a museum, with few visitors. Will its rehabilitation lead to more people visiting the town of Dusheti?

Faced with this kind of reflective question, stakeholders involved in COMUS were challenged to assume an enhanced definition of heritage as an integral part of regeneration planning, whereby their town needs and opportunities, with or without a built/tangible dimension, are all interlinked and interdependent.



Abandoned high school building in Mstislavl, locally referred to as the Gymnasium

Main message 2: Heritage as a means to an end, not an end in itself

COMUS has served as the context for those involved to question their perspectives on heritage. It asked towns to build on their heritage resources for generating socio-economic development, thus framing heritage, not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to attain broader goals. This subscribes to a wider tendency in heritage practice, moving away from a rather conservative and narrow approach whereby heritage ought to be preserved, to redefining heritage as a means towards an enhanced quality of life.

Preserve – for whom? Rehabilitate – for what purpose? Reconstruct – with what impact? These are questions that architects, conservation experts and historians cannot answer alone. As perspectives on heritage go beyond preservation, a change of roles and a demand for increased inter-disciplinarity is also required. In a conventional approach, authorities and experts were the sole retainers of the mandate to decide what should be done. As roles are shifting, conventional decision-makers face challenges in coping with this change. The expertise needed in working with heritage is also shifting, from physical only, to process also.

Main message 3: Heritage as a shared asset of a community

Transforming meetings from monologue to dialogue and active engagement has been a long road for many of the COMUS local teams working with the community. With a longstanding background of centrally planned economies and decision-making processes, citizens lack the experience and self-confidence to formulate and express their opinions. The COMUS context illustrated that, throughout eastern Europe, a new type of dialogue between communities and authorities is being developed. Communities are gradually increasing their awareness and engagement in taking part in the process of envisioning, preserving and promoting heritage, as a shared asset.

At the same time, shifting identities and community profiles imply that there is a coexistence of different narratives with regard to heritage sites. Preservation and promotion of such sites implies a considerate assessment of their significance and status, for different constituent groups.

Main message 4: Heritage as an incremental perpetual process, not a one-off investment

Heritage often comes hand in hand with a sense of overwhelming responsibility towards something that may exceed community resources (financial, technical, know-how etc.). As most rehabilitation projects designed under COMUS have 7- or 8-digit euro budgets, this has also created fears that they will either be impossible, or end in disappointment through failed expectations. COMUS has set the context for participants to understand ways of working towards such projects. Approaching large

heritage sites with complex needs requires the dismantling of such endeavours into smaller, more manageable, steps.

Consistency and perseverance is what the site visit to Alma Vii village showed the COMUS participants. A village of only two hundred people having to care for an immense fortification may seem to be a lost cause to start with. However, the community embarked upon this challenge in small steps: a bridge rehabilitation, facades restorations, setting up a communal stove to welcome visitors, fixing walls etc – all these accomplishments had a positive effect and increased the capacity for collective action. Other restoration works are planned to follow, and they will benefit from an established and successfully tested framework of community groups and support organisations.

Moreover, managing such heritage sites, during and after the implementation of various works, equally requires resources, time and effort. Responsibility in such a process is shared amongst all community members, and is not a top down mandate, as everyone can play their part in cultivating the memory of place, contributing to maintenance and promotion, and benefiting from its presence.



The story of small steps towards sustainable heritage preservation and management, shared in Alma Vii by the Mihai Eminescu Trust representatives



A marker for recording evolution of structural cracks on the walls of the fortified church of Alma Vii. While restoration works are, for now, exceeding the capacity of the community to undergo, the condition of the fortified church is strictly monitored and maintained.

Main message 5: People and heritage – a winning combination

COMUS as a programme worked with people and heritage together. While navigating through a complex programme methodology, the main focus was not on tasks and deadlines, but the learning process and personal enrichment of those involved, as technical confidence and trust building.

Great examples of heritage practice all stem from networks of people and organisations of reflective thinking, integrated perspectives and committed behaviour. For this reason, the effort of following

the COMUS stages was of even greater value than the set of concrete deliverables produced, as it generated personal discoveries and learning for those involved that may now trickle down, slowly but surely, into their day-to-day practice.

Statement

“Through the mobilisation of the community stakeholders (especially those involved in the Local Stakeholders Group), the community has become proud of the results, strengthening the confidence in its capacity to take initiatives and to decide on what is good for the community, and finding a way to build partnerships with external contributors, especially for the implementation of the priority interventions”.
(Alla Stashkevich, COMUS Project Officer, Belarus)

5. Programme Synergies and Follow up

The COMUS project is an extension of a continuous process where participating countries build on their capacities in working with cultural heritage. The EU/CoE joint project has contributed to the practice with innovative and participatory methodologies and has identified good practices through pilot actions. Therefore, the conclusion of the COMUS project is a milestone in stimulating this process; potentially setting a pattern for continuing local stakeholder group meetings and maintaining the network at local, national and international levels.

It is therefore logical that the COMUS methodology be embedded in municipal operational practice as a next step.

The dynamic which COMUS Pilot Towns have set up should be enhanced through concrete actions in order to capitalise on the results of the COMUS project and ensure that its benefits are sustainable

for the participating towns and the COMUS countries as a whole.

To this effect, a series of actions have been proposed whose remit goes beyond the COMUS project. Other towns, national authorities and the COMUS network are encouraged to get involved.

Follow up recommendations for COMUS participating stakeholders

- Continued advocacy at local and national level with relevant authorities to integrate the results of COMUS into all appropriate policies, legal framework improvements and funding programmes;
- Share good practices with other interested towns, particularly those who were identified and participated in the Kyiv Initiative PP2 project;
- Maintain the COMUS towns' network and share existing knowledge and human resources;



COMUS study visit to Bamberg, Germany in July 2016

- Establish links with the Faro Convention Action Plan as well as Strategy 21 (European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century, launched in April 2017): <http://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/strategy-21>)
 - Seek synergies with other programmes and networks including 'Mayors for Economic Growth Programme' and 'Culture and Creativity Programme';
 - Disseminate COMUS promotional videos through social media, websites and other means;
 - Encourage the members of the COMUS pilot towns' network to be used as human resources. These professionals include project officers, project managers, a local expert pool and local stakeholders groups;
 - Use COMUS town portfolios as programming instruments, as they offer extensive documentation on the project methodology and tools; allocate a small-scale budget from local authorities and relevant Ministries to disseminate COMUS outcomes and principles;
 - Lobby the EU to consider the methodology and outcomes of the COMUS project in setting up the standards for the European Neighbourhood Instrument – Eastern Partnership funding scheme 2018.
- of Culture and hosted by local municipalities;
 - Follow-up event, to be financed by the Culture and Creativity Programme; a workshop focusing on project proposals with an integrated approach and other practical skills.;
 - Faro Convention Labs;
 - Production of a technical publication on the COMUS project for practitioners;
 - Joint actions among COMUS network members on ongoing network building and capacity development in the region;
 - Identification of community-based initiatives in-line with the Faro Convention principles and criteria and joining the Faro Convention Network.

While regional network actions are encouraged, the Council of Europe Secretariat remains available to respond to individual requests for technical assistance from its member states.

Statement

“COMUS has clearly demonstrated that citizens should not only be informed, but also encouraged to participate in the development of strategies and in the decision-making process. Several representatives of the communities in Soroca have repeatedly expressed their enthusiasm about the COMUS approach. For many, it was the first time they had been invited to the same table with the authorities and asked about their needs and interests. This helped them understand that as a community they have an important role to play in the development of the city and also helped to strengthen solidarity and the sense of initiative. Some people rediscovered their city, its history and heritage during the organised tours and creative activities”.
(Dumitrița Efremov, COMUS Project Officer, Republic of Moldova)

Suggested short-term follow up actions for post-COMUS project

- Travelling exhibitions of the results of the COMUS project, accompanied by information sessions for the dissemination of methodology, to be financed by the Ministries

6. Resources for Replication and Follow-up Projects

COMUS was conceived as a methodology to build capacity and awareness of stakeholders involved. This methodology, described above, has been reduced to a series of resources that can be used, either for scaling-up work in COMUS participating towns or replicating COMUS in other towns.

The resources for replication and scaling, generated by COMUS, are threefold. They are further described below:

- (1) **Programming tools**, representing examples of know-how which describe stages, approaches and actions implemented;
- (2) **Resource persons** involved in the process, who may contribute to further development of the work in similar endeavours;
- (3) **Funding preparedness resources**, consisting in better knowledge and expectations of donors and other funding sources, and portfolios of ready-to-fund mature projects.

Finally, the network of towns represents a resource. Sharing experiences, collaboration and joined-up action amongst COMUS towns is expected to continue or expand to new areas of work.

Statement

"I think the CoE/EU needs to carry out long-term and multi-stage capacity building projects to enhance multi-disciplinary expertise on local and national levels, which can be spread and have a multiplicative effect on local community actors through the participative instruments that COMUS successfully implemented between 2015 and 2017".

(Sarhat Petrosyan, COMUS Project Officer Armenia)

Note that, when tapping into COMUS resources for replication, it is important to understand that the application of each tool is largely context dependent. While there are many similar challenges faced by small and medium-sized historical towns in eastern Europe, each local community has its own set of particularities, cultural features and wider region-specific factors, which all require customized approaches and in-depth understanding.

(1) Programming tools

During all stages of COMUS, teams involved had access to a series of guidelines describing methodologies and created detailed analysis, strategic planning and project design documents, all leading to a mature ready-to-fund project portfolio.

The full portfolio of these resources is described below:



Presentation on emerging donors in eastern Europe, by UNDP Regional Office for Europe and CIS, at the 6th Regional Workshop of COMUS. This is part of a wider set of resources shared with COMUS stakeholders with regards to funding opportunities and approaching donors.

Title of document / tool	Purpose of document / tool
A. National level	
Heritage Assessment Report	Outlines the present situation and capabilities concerning the protection and management of the heritage in the respective country, with particular reference to small- and medium-sized historic towns.
Self- Evaluation Report	Impact assessment exercise stimulating stakeholders involved to reflect on the outcome of the project and lessons learned.
B. Pilot Town level	
Preliminary Technical Files (updated)	Presents a series of standardized maps about the urban situation and processed data, outlining town profile, specific strengths and weaknesses.
Reference Plan	Sets out a strategic framework as a basis for operational project activity in the Pilot Towns, while drawing on the survey material and data gathered in the Preliminary Technical File.
Preliminary Technical Assessments (5 per Pilot Town)	Describes the background of each of the selected priority sites for intervention, its technical status and requirements for its rehabilitation, including broad cost estimates for each phase of proposed intervention, from initial conservation to full rehabilitation.
Feasibility Studies (2 per Pilot Town)	Elaborates and presents the viability of the proposed rehabilitation pilot projects, continuing and expanding the themes outlined in the Preliminary Technical Assessment.
Demographic Mapping	Based on the local statistical data, provides information about the community members in order to ensure their participation and assess their needs.
Individual Brochure for each town	Presents the town and the projects for potential funding bodies as well as communities.
Promotional Film for each COMUS town	Presents the town and priority project sites for potential funding bodies as well as communities.
Self-Evaluation Report	Impact assessment exercise encouraging stakeholders involved to reflect on the outcome of the project and lessons learned.
C. COMUS Project level	
Description of Action	Main project outline, describing objectives, methodology of work, activity plans and governance structure.
Project Phase related Guidance Documents (4) - Inception Phase - Planning Phase - Project Phase - Consolidation Phase	Guidance documents describing each methodology phase of COMUS to local and national teams involved in implementation.
COMUS general brochure	General overview of COMUS programme.
COMUS Project website	Website of COMUS: www.coe.int/comus , including database of most of the above-mentioned programming tools and documents.
COMUS Publication for Practitioners	Publication to be issued at the beginning of 2018, describing COMUS methodology to practitioners potentially interested in replicating the process for other towns.
Report on COMUS to Faro	Country report on their plan on linking the outcomes of the COMUS project to Faro Convention Action Plan and the Network.

Further helpful documents

- URBACT Local Support Group toolkit: http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/urbact_toolkit_online_4_0.pdf
- Heritage as Opportunity – HerO Guidebook: <http://urbact.eu/file/10654/download?token=jUu7u8hU>. The guidebook gives recommendations on best practice in preparing and implementing integrated heritage management plans using clear steps that practitioners within historic towns can follow to support the safeguarding and capitalising cultural heritage as a component of sustainable urban development.
- Documentation produced through COMUS regional workshops and training sessions, which can be located at <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/comus/achievements>



Stencil art workshop for young people from Chiatura

(2) Resource persons

COMUS also provided the right environment to identify a network of people working at different administrative levels, civil society and other stakeholder groups and improve their capacity.

A brief list of key people involved in the process is provided below, according to each country involved. These individuals can be contacted to find out more about the COMUS project or to express interest in contributing to further developments of COMUS.

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(3) Funding preparedness

While the COMUS project did not foresee funding for follow up project implementation, it assisted pilot towns to go through a process of understanding the needs and opportunities in order to mature project portfolios, consisting in both technical assessments and feasibility studies, as well as promotional materials such as brochures and photo-video stock.

In addition to this, the regional workshops provided training and insights into donor approaches and institutional funding, assisting local stakeholders to prepare their fundraising strategies. Harvesting funds from alternative sources has also been an aim of workshop sessions and site visits, in an effort to expose participating stakeholders to a multitude of approaches to fundraising.

The list below sums up a series of donors and other funding sources relevant for eastern Europe:

The list of possible funding sources in the region can be found at:

<https://rm.coe.int/comus-community-led-urban-strategies-in-historic-towns-funding-research/1680717e58>

Appendix

12 principles for good governance at local level

Council of Europe: http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/strategy_innovation/12principles_en.asp

Principle 1 - Fair Conduct of Elections, Representation and Participation

- Local elections are conducted freely and fairly, according to international standards and national legislation, and without any fraud.
- Citizens are at the centre of public activity and they are involved in clearly defined ways in public life at local level.
- All men and women can have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate bodies that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on the freedoms of expression, assembly and association.
- All voices, including those of the less privileged and most vulnerable, are heard and taken into account in decision-making, including over the allocation of resources.
- There is always an honest attempt to mediate between various legitimate interests and to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the whole community and on how this can be achieved.
- Decisions are taken according to the will of the many, while the rights and legitimate interests of the few are respected.

Principle 2 - Responsiveness

- Objectives, rules, structures, and procedures are adapted to the legitimate expectations and needs of citizens.
- Public services are delivered, and requests and complaints are responded to within a reasonable timeframe.

Principle 3 - Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Results meet the agreed objectives.
- Best possible use is made of the resources available.
- Performance management systems make it possible to evaluate and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of services.
- Audits are carried out at regular intervals to assess and improve performance.

Principle 4 - Openness and Transparency

- Decisions are taken and enforced in accordance with rules and regulations.
- There is public access to all information that has not been classified for well-specified reasons as provided for by law (such as the protection of privacy or ensuring the fairness of procurement procedures).
- Information on decisions, implementation of policies and results is made available to the public in such a way as to enable it to effectively follow and contribute to the work of the local authority.

Principle 5 - Rule of Law

- The local authorities abide by the law and judicial decisions.
- Rules and regulations are adopted in accordance with procedures provided for by law and are enforced impartially.

Principle 6 - Ethical Conduct

- The public good is placed before individual interests.
- There are effective measures to prevent and combat all forms of corruption.
- Conflicts of interest are declared in a timely manner and persons involved must abstain from taking part in relevant decisions.

Principle 7 - Competence and Capacity

- The professional skills of those who govern are continuously maintained and strengthened in order to improve their output and impact.
- Public officials are motivated to continuously improve their performance.
- Practical methods and procedures are created and used in order to transform skills into capacity and to produce better results.

Principle 8 - Innovation and Openness to Change

- New and efficient solutions to problems are sought and advantage is taken of modern methods of service provision.
- There is readiness to pilot and experiment new programmes and to learn from the experience of others.
- A climate favourable to change is created in the interest of achieving better results.

Principle 9 - Sustainability and Long-term Orientation

- The needs of future generations are taken into account in current policies.
- The sustainability of the community is constantly taken into account.
- Decisions strive to internalise all costs and not to transfer problems and tensions, be they environmental, structural, financial, economic or social, to future generations.
- There is a broad and long-term perspective on the future of the local community along with a sense of what is needed for such development.
- There is an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which this perspective is grounded.

Principle 10 - Sound Financial Management

- Charges do not exceed the cost of services provided and do not reduce demand excessively, particularly in the case of important public services.
- Prudence is observed in financial management, including in the contracting and use of loans, in the estimation of resources, revenues and reserves, and in the use of exceptional revenue.
- Multi-annual budget plans are prepared, with consultation of the public.
- Risks are properly estimated and managed, including by the publication of consolidated accounts and, in the case of public-private partnerships, by sharing the risks realistically.
- The local authority takes part in arrangements for inter-municipal solidarity, fair sharing of burdens and benefits and reduction of risks (equalisation systems, inter- municipal co-operation, mutualisation of risks...).

Principle 11 - Human rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion

- Within the local authority's sphere of influence, human rights are respected, protected and implemented, and discrimination on any grounds is combated.
- Cultural diversity is treated as an asset, and continuous efforts are made to ensure that all have a stake in the local community, identify with it and do not feel excluded.
- Social cohesion and the integration of disadvantaged areas are promoted.

- Access to essential services is preserved, in particular for the most disadvantaged sections of the population.

Principle 12 - Accountability

- All decision-makers, collective and individual, take responsibility for their decisions.
- Decisions are reported on, explained and can be sanctioned.
- There are effective remedies against poor administration and local authority actions which infringe upon civil rights.

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. It promotes increased understanding of democratic participation and respect for human rights in heritage management.

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The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organization. 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 of 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 this 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).



EUROPEAN UNION

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