



EUROPEAN  
ASSOCIATION  
Historic Towns & Regions

## **12<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL WALLED TOWNS FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE SYMPOSIUM**

### **‘Historic Towns Working Together’**

**Presentation by  
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Secretary General**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

May I begin by thanking the Mayor of Soave, Giorgio Magrinelli, Luigi Rossetto, Deputy Mayor and of course John Price, the President of The Walled Towns Friendship Circle, for inviting me to contribute to this Symposium and to visit the world famous town of Soave. I am looking forward to learning more about this beautiful part of Italy and to meeting the delegates attending this 12<sup>th</sup> International Symposium organised by the Walled Towns Friendship Circle.

The theme of my talk, ‘Historic Towns Working Together’ is, I hope you will agree, an appropriate subject for this symposium. It is through friendship between historic walled towns that the Walled Towns Friendship Circle has developed over the years into such a successful and important organisation.

The European Association of Historic Towns and Regions and the Walled Towns Friendship Circle have now established close links with the WTFC joining the EAHTR as an Associate member last year. Indeed, earlier this year the WTFC was represented at the General Assembly of EAHTR where delegates heard an excellent presentation about the work of WTFC from Mayor Vojka Stular and Nada Zajk from Piran.

This is the third annual conference of the Walled Towns Friendship Circle that I have had the pleasure of attending. Firstly, three years ago when the Friendship Circle were celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Tenby. On that occasion I introduced the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions which had just been established. Last year at Elvas, I presented a paper on the sustainable management of historic towns and this

year at Soave it offers an opportunity to update you on the activities of EAHTR and share examples of how we are encouraging historic towns to work together.

## **BACKGROUND**

For those of you who are new to the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions, a very brief history. EAHTR was formed by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in October 1999. This followed an initiative taken by the English Historic Towns Forum to create a network of Associations representing all countries in Europe.

The Council of Europe created EAHTR as part of its campaign 'Europe - a Common Heritage'. 13 Historic Towns Associations have joined or are in the process of joining so far – representing over 1000 historic cities and municipalities.

The aim of EAHTR is to promote the interests of Europe's historic towns and regions. Its objectives include the promotion of international co-operation between heritage organisations and between historic towns. Our mission is to share experience and good practice wherever possible and to promote vitality, viability and the sustainability of Europe's historic towns and cities.

## **CONFERENCES IN 2002**

The policy of the EAHTR is to organise, contribute to and participate in a range of conferences each year where the conference themes are consistent with EAHTR's aims and objectives. In particular we are keen to work with and contribute to Symposiums organised by member Associations.

2002 has been a busy year with our first General Assembly proving very successful in March of this year. This was followed by a joint conference with the Council of Europe and the City Of Kazan in the Russian Federation where the theme was 'Cultural Diversity in Historic Cities – Key to a Sustainable Future'. I propose to say a little more about this conference shortly. Most recently we have organised, in conjunction with the city of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in the UK, a major international conference on the theme 'Investing in Heritage – Regenerating Europe's Historic Cities' and again I would like to say a little bit about the conclusions of this conference later in my presentation.

Following The Walled Friendship Circle International Symposium, EAHTR will be represented at the annual conference of the Association of Historic Towns of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Finally this year we are organising a unique conference with the Association of Historic Towns from Finland on the subject of 'Wooden Towns Throughout the Centuries' and this will take place in Porvoo on the 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

## **KAZAN DECLARATION**

I would like now to share two examples of historic towns working together. The first is the conclusions and outcomes from the symposium held in Kazan in June of this year on

a subject both topical and crucial to historic cities across Europe. The symposium was attended by over 150 people from 26 countries and included representatives from the Council of Europe, Unesco, Europa Nostra, ICOMOS and many other heritage organisations. The outcome of the symposium was that the Council of Europe jointly with EAHTR have produced the 'Kazan Declaration'.

The three main conclusions of the symposium were that;

1. Preservation of our heritage is essential to both cultural diversity and a sustainable future for historic towns.
2. That cultural diversity contributes hugely to our quality of life, to social harmony and security and in addition brings clear economic benefits, for example, through tourism.
3. International, national and regional collaboration is essential to the successful promotion and preservation of cultural diversity.

Several key actions were agreed and form part of the Kazan Declaration. These included asking national, regional and local authorities to:

- Strengthen educational and social policies to reflect the importance of cultural diversity in society.
- Promote understanding between East and West.
- Encourage joint working and exchange of experience across cultures.
- Establish national associations of historic towns to act as a lobby to influence policy making with regard to cultural diversity and identity.

The Kazan Declaration asks the Council of Europe to:

- Present the 'Declaration of Kazan' to the United Nations World Summit in Johannesburg in September of this year.
- Continue to support the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions and to organise further historic symposia jointly with EAHTR.

Unesco was asked to establish a network of 'Towns for Peace', recognising the topical importance of cultural tolerance and understanding. Lastly, EAHTR were asked to take forward the central conclusions of the symposium in it's future work programme.

## **INVESTING IN HERITAGE**

My second example of historic towns working together is the very successful conference held in July in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the UK organised jointly by the City Council, Civic Trust and EAHTR. Here the conference host was the Grainger Town Project – an example of public and private sectors working together investing in heritage to secure the regeneration of a very important historic centre. The purpose of the conference, in addition to understanding more about how the Grainger Town Project works, was to

explore examples of heritage – led regeneration from across Europe and to draw some central conclusions. These conclusions were grouped into four broad areas.

### Context

The first overarching principal was that context was central to successful regeneration. By this was meant that for cities and towns to be successful in regenerating their town through investing in heritage, there had first to be a sense of pride in that town or city and an understanding of it's distinctiveness. Not just in terms of architecture but also recognising the importance of the historic street pattern to the character of the town or city. Context was also felt to be very important in designing new buildings within historic areas where it was crucial that architects and designers understood and took account of the context within which they were designing.

### Socio - Economic

The second overarching lesson about successful heritage regeneration related to the importance of social and economic considerations. The importance of ensuring a social mix of people in the centre of our historic cities was underlined. The economic benefits of investing in heritage were also clear from the many examples presented to the conference – not just in terms of tourism which of course is important but also the skilled employment that is nurtured and developed as a consequence of investing in the heritage. Many speakers stressed the importance of recognising that investment had to be profitable and that this was possible thereby attracting private investment and securing regeneration.

### Partnerships

The theme of partnership was considered central to successful heritage regeneration, not just in terms of community involvement but also including all stakeholders in decisions. Different approaches of how to work together were examined with a common experience that building consensus was crucial; that sharing experiences were essential and that an integrated approach to managing partnerships brought real benefits.

### Qualities

Lastly the conference underlined the importance of the less tangible qualities that contributed to success. These included 'understanding'; from the designer understanding the context of a new building, to the municipality understanding the needs of the private sector through to the need for understanding between partners. Developing shared values was seen as crucial - not just copying other people's experiences but developing these to fit with particular local circumstances. Lastly three further qualities could be seen in all the successful projects that were presented at the conference. These were the central need for commitment from all parties to be sustained over time; for towns and cities to aspire to the highest standards and everyone involved to be prepared to take risks and embrace innovation.

## **INHERIT**

Delegates from the 'Investing in Heritage' conference felt strongly that the important lessons of investing in heritage as a means of regenerating our historic towns and cities should be taken forward and developed in more detail to produce tangible and useful outputs that meet the needs of historic cities.

It was agreed therefore to establish an international group of cities committed to heritage led regeneration and to sharing good practice in order to explore further this topic and to publish the results for other cities to share. This new group of cities would work within EAHTR who would provide the Secretariat and help with co-ordination and the widest possible dissemination of the findings.

### Proposed Terms of Reference

INHERIT will aim to identify good practice in heritage-led regeneration in historic cities and to explore and understand the structures and processes (mechanisms) which assist successful heritage - led regeneration in historic cities. In it's first year, INHERIT will also aim to deliver a good practice guide book funded by those who participate and wide publicity and dissemination of findings including through member cities and the EAHTR website and newsletter bulletins. It will also organise professional secondments, a 'city visit' and organise a future INHERIT conference.

### Members of INHERIT

A number of heritage cities have applied to join INHERIT and EAHTR is currently developing the processes and work programme of the group. These are Antwerp, Barcelona, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Gothenburg, Newcastle, Olomouc, Santiago de Compostella, Sarpsborg, St Petersburg, Sunderland and Turin as well as a number of other organisations and Associations.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

I have described two examples of historic and heritage towns working together - the 'Kazan Declaration' and 'INHERIT'. EAHTR is convinced that investing in heritage is a key to cultural diversity, civic pride and identity as well as social well - being and economic prosperity.

I am sure this is a message that the Walled Towns Friendship Circle would endorse. We share common ground in our two organisations as we strive to promote the interests and sustainability of historic towns generally and walled towns in particular.

I hope we can find new opportunities during this 12<sup>th</sup> International Symposium to develop further collaboration between our organisations where we can continue to work together to help Europe's historic towns face the many challenges ahead.