

## DECLARATION FOR AN INTEGRATED REVITALISATION OF HISTORIC CENTRES

### Importance of and challenges to small and medium-sized historic towns

Our cities are the economic, cultural and social drivers for a dynamic and sustainable Europe. They constitute an integral part of European history, identity and regional diversity. Small and medium-sized historic towns with their outstanding built cultural heritage strongly shape our urban landscapes and form the backbone for a balanced and polycentric settlement structure – the main territorial strengths of Europe. However, our historic towns face manifold challenges like accelerating globalisation, structural, social and demographic changes as well as environmental problems. They have to find the right balance between restoring and preserving their unique cultural heritage and enabling future-proof urban development. Supporting our historic towns to maintain and to strengthen their attractiveness and competitiveness is a crucial prerequisite to guarantee Europe's future competitiveness, sustainability and identity, and highly contributes to the Lisbon and Gothenburg goals.

Within the two transnational cooperation projects **Hist.Urban and ADHOC**, 32 partners from twelve Central and South East European countries have formed a strong partnership to develop and implement innovative and future-oriented approaches to build up lively, attractive and socially balanced historic towns. Despite different economic, social, geographic, cultural and institutional contexts, all partners share the will to apply integrated revitalisation strategies and instruments, which address not only urbanistic (physical) but also social, ecological and economic issues, combining the urban development with the promotion of the built cultural heritage as a development asset and factor for local and European identity.<sup>1</sup>

With this declaration we lay down our common convictions and call all responsible actors on local, regional, national and European level to support the integrated revitalisation of historic towns.

### We are committed to apply integrated revitalisation strategies on a local level

**Integrated revitalisation emphasises the development of vital town centres attractive to live, work, invest and spend time in for all actors, population groups and generations.**

With our activities we will guarantee and promote an attractive and balanced mix of functions and a healthy living environment. Therefore we will

- valorise and make best use of the potentials of the cultural heritage for tourism, cultural, creative, economic and recreational activities,
- strengthen inner-city retail and services to maintain the position of our historic centres as development poles providing specific functions for the entire city and the surrounding region. This has to go along with the restriction of out-of-town developments harming inner city functions.
- foster the local identity of our town centres as 'lieu of identification' and
- maintain or increase the population and ensure a balanced social structure.

**Integrated revitalisation combines the protection of our built cultural heritage with the requirements of our changing society and economy.**

We are committed to find a sound balance between the divergent demands on future-proof uses and interests of preservation. Thus we will

- give sustainable and future-oriented functions to our historic buildings and urban spaces,
- carefully adapt, renew and improve the physical shape and ecological performance of our built heritage to changing economic, social, ecological and demographic situations without harming the heritage character and the unique identity of our cities.
- motivate all public and private actors for this demanding task and put continuous effort into raising awareness of the outstanding value and potentials of our built cultural heritage for the entire city and region.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed information on the INTERREG III B projects Hist.Urban and ADHOC and their results can be found on the websites [www.histurban.net](http://www.histurban.net) and [www.adhoc.jeleniagora.eu](http://www.adhoc.jeleniagora.eu).

### **Integrated revitalisation based on a continuous, process-oriented and integrated development approach.**

In order to develop an interesting mix of functions, to balance divergent interests, to mobilise the resources of all stakeholders and to achieve a sustainable design and revitalisation of our towns, we will apply instruments and methods for an integrated urban revitalisation containing the following key elements:

- an inclusive spatial perspective focusing on the entire city-region, with special attention to the historic centre;
- a comprehensive and holistic view, taking into account all dimensions of urban life;
- cross-sectoral governance for teamwork between different departments and agencies;
- a communicative and participative process activating and involving all relevant stakeholders;
- a strategic and conceptual framework going from a common vision to concrete projects, based on a thorough analysis of the current situation;
- a continuous improvement process and implementation-oriented approach delivering visible results;
- monitoring and evaluation of the revitalisation process and results.

### **We need the support of all political levels in our effort for integrated revitalisation**

Revitalisation needs a permanent effort and the integration into local and national development strategies and policies. Therefore we call on regional, national and European decision makers to fully support us in our activities for the sustainable development of lively and attractive historic towns. In this perspective we very much welcome the **Territorial Agenda of the EU and the Leipzig Charta for sustainable European cities**. In our efforts for an integrated urban revitalisation we contribute to the implementation of both political framework documents.

We now expect the Member States and the European Institutions to constantly work on putting the guidelines and principles into real political and practical action. This means:

- cross-sectoral cooperation and cross-thematic thinking should become a working principle for all government levels involved to design integrated policies and programmes;
- all political levels have to consider urban and territorial issues in their policies as well as the importance of small and medium-sized towns for polycentric settlement structures;
- policies have to recognise the value of the built cultural heritage as an important asset for regional and urban development and identity, and design specific support programs;
- integrated urban development also has to be anchored as a major element with sufficient financial means within European Cohesion Policy beyond 2013;
- all development policies and programs should give priority to integrated local approaches
- policy frameworks have to be flexible, taking into account territorial differences for supporting local initiatives instead of adjusting local strategies to community or national programs;
- higher political levels have to recognise the competences of and legitimacy for municipalities to launch targeted and problem-specific efforts on the local level and thus directly involve municipalities in the formulation of policies and in the management of support programmes;
- effects of funding and legislation on urban development have to be constantly monitored;
- national and transnational cooperation, networking and capacity-building have to be strengthened for comparing, sharing and disseminating experiences, knowledge and good practices and improving performances in integrated urban development.

All government levels have to work hand in hand and develop, in close cooperation with cities, the conditions that will allow us to pursue an integrated urban revitalisation of our historic towns.