



EUROPEAN  
association  
Historic Towns & Regions

# Annual Report 2009

**Strasbourg**

**26 – 27 November 2009**

**Report of the Secretary General**



Education and Culture DG

Culture Programme



EUROPEAN  
association  
Historic Towns & Regions

## **Annual Report of the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions 2009**

### **Report of the Secretary General**

#### **Introduction**

1. This annual report covers the period from Mid - September 2008 to the end of November 2009. It follows on from the Annual report presented to the last General Assembly held in Targoviste, Romania in early September 2008.

#### **Ptuj Symposium 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

2. The Secretary General made a presentation to a Symposium in Ptuj in Slovenia on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The theme was 'Old Town worries versus privileges'. The meeting was attended by 20 mayors of Europe's oldest historic and presented a good opportunity to promote the work of EAHTR and attract new members.
3. A Declaration pledging cooperation was signed and EAHTR asked to advise on future organisational arrangements and funding opportunities

#### **Istanbul Capital of Culture 2010- Symposium 'What is European Culture' 13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

4. The Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts invited the Secretary General to present a paper on European Architecture and Identity to the symposium held in Istanbul in November 2008 as part of the preparation for its year as Capital of Culture in 2010.
5. The conference was seen as an important opportunity to build sustainable collaboration between Turkish and other European cultural organizations both at governmental and non-governmental level.

#### **The HerO Project - 'Heritage Opportunity'**

6. The Secretary General attended an initial HerO partners' meeting on 19 September 2008. The partners are Regensburg (lead partner), Graz, Naples, Vilnius, Sighisoara, Liverpool, Lublin, Poitiers, and Valletta. The meeting agreed the role of EAHTR in the project. This involves participation in 5 meetings over the life of the project; two presentations on topics to be decided; contributions to drafting project and strategy reports and dissemination of meeting invitations and documents to EAHTR members.

7. The project's 'kick off' Conference was attended in Poitiers 4th & 5<sup>th</sup> December. The Secretary General gave a presentation on the conclusions of the INHERIT Interreg 3C project highlighting the benefits of investing in heritage and examples of integrated management approaches.
8. EAHTR also participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> thematic seminar in Graz on 18th - 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009 which identified good practice case studies to be highlighted in the first project report.
9. The project's mid-term Conference was held in Valletta, Malta 8<sup>th</sup>- 11<sup>th</sup> November. EAHTR was asked to help draft a major strategy paper on the importance of Cultural Heritage with recommendations to the EU aimed at influencing future EU cohesion policy. The meeting focused on implementation strategies and agreed the structure and content of the proposed 'Cultural Heritage Integrated Management Plans' (CHIMPS)
10. EAHTR convened a 'Round Table' discussion with the partner City participants and the expert representatives of 'managing authorities' and the EU DG Regional Policy. The subject was the 'Economic, social and environmental benefits of safeguarding cultural heritage'.

### **Good Practice Guidelines**

#### **Sustainable Cultural Tourism**

11. The work by the EAHTR project group on Sustainable Cultural Tourism has developed well over the year. This work has been coordinated with the Council of Europe's work in this field. To this end EAHTR drafted a policy paper for the Council of Europe entitled 'Between mass tourism and cultural tourism: a drift towards folklorisation of cultures'. This was presented to the Committee on Culture and Education in Spring 2009 and adopted by the Committee as the next step in the development of its policy on cultural tourism.
12. The guidelines were completed in draft and reported to the Council of Europe's Committee on Culture and Education at their meeting in Bydgoszcz in September 2009. This substantial initial report was well received. Committee members were particularly interested in the guidelines being produced in a summary format and developed further in terms of case studies. The challenge for the future will be securing funding for taking this work forward.
13. There remains a significant amount of work in refining the initial report and in drafting, designing and producing the guidelines ready for dissemination. This will be carried out in November/ December 2009 and the final published guidelines presented to the spring session of the Committee on Culture and Education in 2010.
- 14.

#### **Historic Towns Visit to Vilnius 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2009**

15. EAHTR organised a Historic Towns Visit to Vilnius during the city's tenure as European Capital of Culture 2009. 37 Delegates including senior politicians and officials from 13 Countries participated in the study visit and seminar. The visit also included tours of Riga and Tallinn.
16. EAHTR convened its first 'Round Table' to discuss European cities policies for cultural heritage with expert and political inputs from 15 European cities as well as representatives of National Heritage bodies e.g. English Heritage. The meeting also drew conclusions on the strengths and weaknesses of the current approach to managing cultural heritage in Vilnius.

**2009 Annual Symposium EAHTR/Council of Europe – Bydgoszcz, Poland - 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September**

17. The theme of this symposium was Diverse cities, Creative cities. The meeting took the form of a hearing with evidence of experience received from a wide range of participants ranging from religious diversity to the experience of the European Capitals of Culture in Linz and Vilnius in developing creative cities as a means of regeneration. The draft Sustainable Cultural Tourism Guidelines was also discussed in the Council of Europe's committee on Culture and Education as part of the Symposium.

**Walled Towns Friendship Circle**

18. The Secretary General has agreed to make a presentation to the Walled Towns Friendship Circle Annual Symposium 10<sup>th</sup> –14<sup>th</sup> October 2008 in Canterbury and to lead a workshop for participants. The theme is Regeneration through culture and EAHTR's contribution will focus on the INHERIT project.
19. The Secretary General also made a presentation to the WTFC 2009 Annual Symposium 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009 on sustainable cultural tourism and the production of the EAHTR guidelines. The meeting explored how the guidelines might be applied in the context of walled towns where the distinctiveness afforded by the presence of the walls was an important factor in promoting cultural tourism.

**Experience Exchange**

20. Discussions are well advanced for an experience exchange between representatives of the cities of Newcastle upon Tyne in the UK and Delft in the Netherlands. The outcome will be reported in the 2010 Annual Report.

**Communications and Marketing - Video conferencing**

21. Meetings took place on 7<sup>th</sup> October and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009 attended by experts in this field to explore the feasibility of introducing video conferencing as a means of improving EAHTR communications. Inputs were received from Illusion Media, John Knowles digital Media and BICSTony Davis
22. A feasibility report was commissioned from Tony Davis of BICS. This concluded that although the technology was available for online conferencing it would be cost prohibitive for an organisation like EAHTR. Videoing relevant sections of a conference and embedding them within the main web site would be a feasible option and something we will endeavour to do in the future as part of the further development of the web site in 2010. 'Webinair' was also felt to offer the Association potential benefits and will also be explored further in the future but again the draw back is not the

technology but the relatively low usage of new media technologies by cultural heritage practitioners.

### **Web Site Development – EAHTR and Heritage Zone**

23. Website hosting has been changed from Steria Ltd.-a contractor of Norwich City Council - to John Knowles Digital Media. This was in order to achieve more timely updating of the site and more effective control of content. The adaptation of the site will also allow full integration with the Heritage Zone, our technical networking web site.
24. Progress on Heritage Zone has been slower than anticipated. This has been due to the constraints of the available software and the more fundamental problem of our target participants not being active users of social networking media. Upgrades in the software will now allow an improved and more integrated web presence and enable us to build on the early work especially in promoting the potential technical networking benefits.

### **Bureau Meetings**

25. Three bureau meeting were held in 2009. These were in Valletta, Malta 26<sup>th</sup>- 29<sup>th</sup> March, Bydgoszcz, Poland - 17<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> September and in Strasbourg, France 26<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup> November. The Strasbourg meeting will also act as the annual general meeting for 2009.

### **Preparation and Submission of Culture 2010 Programme**

26. The EAHTR programme for 2010 was submitted to the European Commission by November 1<sup>st</sup> 2009. This was in line with the approved 3year programme previously endorsed by the Bureau.

### **Membership Development**

27. 2009 has proved a very challenging year for membership development and in sustaining partnership funding from associations in particular e.g. the English Historic Towns Forum. In the circumstances reciprocal arrangements will be needed to sustain membership levels. Nonetheless progress is being made in attracting cities to join with Liverpool, Valletta and Stip joining in 2009 and several further cities in the pipeline indicating a willingness to join.

### **Headquarter Relocation**

28. The Secretariat is moved in October 2008 to new offices in the historic Guildhall in the heart of Norwich.

### **Financial Report**

29. A copy of the approved audited accounts of EAHTR for the year ending 31 December 2008 is attached. This shows that the auditor's are satisfied that the accounts give a true and fair view of the financial position and that the financial statements have been properly prepared.

30. The financial position of EAHTR remains stable but reliant on the Culture Programme funding. Efforts to attract member cities will continue as the best way of maintaining and securing the matched funding needed to attract EU funding.

**Conclusions.**

31. The establishment of a 3 year partnership agreement with CULTURE 2007 –13, now in its second year, has proved an important development for EAHTR. It provides for the first time core funding of the organisation over a three-year period offering stability and the opportunity to take the organisation to the next level in terms of increased membership, enhanced member services and a wider spread of influence.
32. It is becoming clear that the way forward for 2010 and beyond will be an improved and more accessible profile for EAHTR with better integration and improved presentation and marketing of who we are as an organisation.
33. As in previous years, I would like to thank all of those who have participated in the activities of EAHTR in 2008-9 with particular thanks to the President, the Bureau and Secretariat and, of course, to Norwich City Council and The Council of Europe for their continued support. Thanks are also due to the European Commission for their funding support for the organisation and the range of projects that we have participated in and contributed to.

**Brian Smith**

**Secretary General**