



Press release

Helsinki (Finland), 24 November 2014

AT FORT PARTNERS TAKE THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON FORTIFIED HERITAGE

During the final conference of the At Fort project in Suomenlinna, Helsinki, 27th-28th October 2014, the eleven partners¹ solemnly declared their intention to launch consultations with the Council of Europe on a common legal European framework concerning the safeguarding and redevelopment of European fortified heritage.

Enriched by three years of intense exchanges of practices on themes such as accessibility, renewable energy resources and training of staff and unpaid work forces on fortified sites, amongst other conditions indispensable for sustainable redevelopment of these important landmarks in the common European identity for today's and future generations, the partners of the At Fort project unanimously emphasize the need for a clear commitment of the member States to technically, financially and legally support initiatives taken by local communities, public and private bodies.

The main challenges they are facing are related to the high level of financial and human resources needed for restoration and maintenance regarding the conservational requirements and the architectural peculiarities, appropriate re-use strategies and governance models respecting the Dutch "preservation through development" principle. The potential and the willingness at local and regional level are high to transform dismissed military areas into catalysts for socio-economic development of the sites and the surrounding European urban and rural landscapes.

The recent EU communication on culture and the Barroso speech called 'A new narrative for Europe' underline the importance of the protection of the unique and irreplaceable environmental, architectural, historic and artistic heritage assets, regardless of their geographical location across Europe.

Therefore, the partners will start consultation with policy makers on national and European level to share their concern and propose their practical experience as input for the convention.

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Notes to Editors

The project ATFORT 'Atelier European Fortresses - Powering Local Sustainable Development' is a Regional Initiative Project in the INTERREG IVC programme.

The ATFORT partnership brings together several important European fortified heritage sites who share the firm belief that preservation of these sites, coupled with their economic exploitation can only be achieved by creative, mutual thinking, building on an exchange of experiences. ATFORT partners have set the overall objective to facilitate the adaptive re-use of fortified heritage sites by exploring solutions for successful approaches and methods to deal with enabling conditions and to create better frameworks for their exploitation.

For more information, see: www.atfort.eu

The **Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVC**, financed by the European Union's Regional Development Fund, helps Regions of Europe work together to share experience and good practice in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention. EUR 302 million is available for project funding but, more than that, a wealth of knowledge and potential solutions are also on hand for regional policy-makers.