

# HerO Heritage as Opportunity

## NEWSLETTER August 2010



Graz, Austria (Photograph: Michal Trzewik)



Connecting cities  
Building successes





# THE HERO NETWORK

THE URBACT II THEMATIC NETWORK 'HERO - HERITAGE AS OPPORTUNITY': STRENGTHENING THE ATTRACTIVENESS AND COMPETITIVENESS OF HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPES

The rapidly changing basic conditions of modern times pose a big challenge on the management of historic towns in Europe. The imbalance of progress and the preservation of the historic urban fabric often result in either economic stagnancy or the loss of cultural heritage values and with it the loss of identity.

In this context, the network HerO aims to develop integrated and innovative management strategies for historic urban landscapes. The main objective is facilitating the right balance between the preservation of built cultural heritage and the sustainable, future-proof socio-economic development of historic towns in order to strengthen their attractiveness and competitiveness. Emphasis is placed on managing conflicting usage interests and capitalizing the potential of cultural heritage assets for economic, social and cultural activities ('Heritage as Opportunity').

## The HerO Partners are:

- Regensburg (Germany), Lead Partner
- Graz (Austria)
- Naples (Italy)
- Vilnius (Lithuania)
- Sighisoara (Romania)
- Liverpool (United Kingdom)
- Lublin (Poland)
- Poitiers (France)
- Valletta (Malta)

To capitalize on the experiences of other historic towns in Europe and to widely disseminate the network's results, the HerO network cooperates closely with the 'European Association of Historic Towns and Regions EAHTR', an organization formed by the Council of Europe in 1999 that represents almost one thousand historic towns in Europe. Further information at [www.historic-towns.org](http://www.historic-towns.org).



HerO project meeting in Liverpool, July 2009 (Photograph: Terry Mealey Pictures Liverpool)



## EXPERT WORKSHOP IN VILNIUS

FROM 9TH TO 11TH MAY 2010 THE HERO PROJECT PARTNERS MET IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA TO DISCUSS THE 'VISUAL INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPES'

Despite Eyjafjallajökull's ash cloud all project partners arrived in time in Vilnius for the HerO network's Expert Workshop on the topic 'the visual integrity of historic urban landscapes'. 44 delegates from the HerO cities Graz, Naples, Sighisoara, Liverpool, Lublin, Poitiers, Valletta, Regensburg and Vilnius as well as representatives from the associated Managing Authorities and the European Commission met to discuss, amongst others,

- the integration of new architecture into the historic cityscape, respecting the historic and spatial characteristics of its setting,
- instruments to protect visual view perspectives, silhouettes, townscape characteristics and panoramas, which strongly contribute to the distinctiveness of the historic urban landscape
- as well as the proper integration of advertisement and commercial signs in public space.

In his keynote speech external expert Dennis Rodwell introduced the topic and raised relevant issues before representatives of the City of Vilnius and the other HerO partner cities highlighted their local approaches and challenges in view of the 'visual integrity' of their old town areas. Walking tours through Vilnius' Old Town gave participants the opportunity to learn about the local characteristics and to explore the city's rich cultural heritage.

The presentations and results of this meeting are available for download at the HerO project website [www.urbact.eu/hero](http://www.urbact.eu/hero) (section 'Our Activities'/'Events').



Photographs: Zappart, Vilnius

## VILNIUS

From the 13th century to the end of the 18th century Vilnius Old Town was the political centre of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a role that it retains in the presentday independent Republic of Lithuania. It has been a centre of learning and culture since the 16th century.



In the early 90s the old town became attractive for investors and for economically well off people. The rapid change of the economy made an impact on its functional use - the growth in the number of shops, restaurants, hotels etc forced the decline of residential flats. Vilnius historic city centre became vibrant and the most attractive part of the city, at the same time there still exist neglected parts of the historic centre with empty neglected buildings.

The size of Vilnius Old Town - UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1994 - is 351 ha. Due to the change of functional use, the number of residents in the old town dropped from 30.000 in the early 90s to 20.000 currently.

The town, which developed at the confluence of the Neris and Vilnia rivers, is an outstanding example of the blending of the cultures of eastern and western Europe, and also constitutes one of the most easterly examples of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture in Europe. It played an important role in cultural developments in Belarus, Poland and Ukraine.



Photograph: Zappart, Vilnius





# REGIONS FOR ECONOMIC CHANGE

PRESENTATION OF THE HERO PARTNER'S LOCAL ACTION PLANS AT THE 'REGIONS FOR ECONOMIC CHANGE' CONFERENCE 2010 IN BRUSSELS

Together with the URBACT network UNIC, the HerO partners have been invited to present their Local Action Plans at this year's 'Regions for Economic Change' Conference which took place on 20th-21st May. Political representatives of the HerO cities Sighisoara, Lublin and Regensburg as well as representatives of their associated managing authorities came to Brussels to introduce their approaches on local level to Commissioner Johannes Hahn and to Dirk Ahner, Director General for Regional Policy.



Regensburg's Lord Mayor Hans Schaidinger (right) and Sighisoara's Vice Mayor Sorin-Virgil Savu (middle) meet Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn in Brussels

At the beginning of the HerO network activities, the European Commission has awarded HerO the 'Fast Track Label', a specific instrument of the 'Regions for Economic Change' initiative which aims to get the cities and the managing authorities of the European Cohesion Policy's Operational Programmes working together to enhance the impact exchange activities have on local level. The early launch of the HerO partner's Local Action Plans facilitates the implementation of concrete measures before the end of the project period.



# GRAZ: WORLD HERITAGE SITE EXTENDED

AT ITS 34TH MEETING IN BRASILIA THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE DECIDED TO EXTEND THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE 'HISTORIC CENTRE OF GRAZ' BY SCHLOSS EGGENBERG

Graz, Austria (Photograph: Michal Trzewik)



Schloss Eggenberg in Graz (Photograph: Universalmuseum Joanneum / zep@cam.at 2010 / Graz, Austria)

Being an outstanding example of the living heritage of a central European urban complex that was under Habsburg rule for many centuries, the historic city centre of Graz has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in the year 1999.

In its 34th meeting in Brasilia that took place from 25th July until 3rd August 2010 the World Heritage Committee now approved the extension of the site: Castle 'Schloss Eggenberg', located around three kilometres west of the city centre, has now been included into the World Heritage ensemble. Schloss Eggenberg is exceptionally well-preserved and bears witness to the influence of the late Italian Renaissance and Baroque period. The house and Eggenberg family were inseparably associated with the history of Styria and its capital and the Eggenbergs had an important influence on the political, economic and above all artistic development of the city for centuries.

The extended World Heritage site is now called 'City of Graz - Historic Centre and Schloss Eggenberg' and has been listed under UNESCO's criteria ii and iv. Further information are available at the official UNESCO website at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/931>.



## FURTHER NEWS AT A GLANCE

THE HERO NETWORK'S RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### HerO Strategy Paper 'The Untapped Potential of Cultural Heritage'

To contribute to the current discussion on the future of the European cohesion policy, a strategy paper has been developed by the HerO partners in cooperation with the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions EAHTR. The paper calls on the EU Commission to include specifically the preservation and development of historic urban landscapes in the next EU funding programme period.

The HerO Strategy Paper, which has been widely disseminated to EU institutions, to relevant national institutions in the HerO partner countries and to the member cities of EAHTR, is available for download on the HerO project website [www.urbact.eu/hero](http://www.urbact.eu/hero) (section 'Our Outputs').

### HerO Project Brochure now available in German and Romanian language

The HerO project brochure, introducing the network's partner cities, its objectives and activities, is now also available in German and Romanian language. The English, German and Romanian versions are available for download at [www.urbact.eu/hero](http://www.urbact.eu/hero) (section 'Our Outputs').

### The HerO Network's Final Conference in Regensburg - Save the Date!

On 13th and 14th April 2011 the HerO network's results will be presented to the public at its final conference in Regensburg. Conference venue will be Regensburg's historic saltbarn which is located at the river Danube, adjacent the famous historic stone bridge. Please already save the date! Further information will be available in due time.



The historic saltbarn and the famous stone bridge in Regensburg  
(Both photographs: Nürnberg Luftbild, Hajo Dietz)



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With a background in historical geography and tourism, Matthias officiates as Regensburg's World Heritage Manager since 2007. As Project Coordinator of the HerO network he accounts for the topics chosen for our exchange activities.



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Klaus graduated in mechanical engineering and has got 12 years of experience in managing EU-funded projects. Since 2006 Klaus is European Officer of the City of Regensburg. He initiated Regensburg's Lead Partnership for the HerO network and provides advice on project management issues.



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With degrees in architecture and world heritage studies Barbara works for Regensburg's world heritage office. Being the HerO Project Manager, Barbara is responsible for our network's overall management, for communication activities and financial reporting.

### The HerO Lead Expert



#### **Nils Scheffler**

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With a degree in spatial planning Nils works independently as an urban planner in Berlin. Nils is skilled in integrated management processes and he has worked as consultant for several EU-funded projects. Nils is the Lead Expert of the HerO network.



AN URBACT II PROJECT

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants.

URBACT is co-financed by the ERDF Funds and the Member States.

[www.urbact.eu/hero](http://www.urbact.eu/hero)