



## Press release

### *ATFORT - Atelier European fortresses Final conference*

*Helsinki (Finland), 27 – 28 October 2014*

The eleven partners<sup>1</sup> of the Interreg IV-C project *ATFORT – Atelier European fortresses: powering local sustainable development*, invited by the Governing Body of Suomenlinna<sup>2</sup>, will meet in Suomenlinna, Helsinki from 27 to 28 October. These important fortified sites, under the lead of the New Dutch Waterline, share the firm belief that preservation of these sites, coupled with their economic exploitation can only be achieved by creative and shared ideas, building on an exchange of experiences.

#### **Encouraging final results**

More than eighty participants discussed the final results of the project, which started in December 2012 and will run until December 2014. It aims at exchanging knowledge and good practices of multifunctional reuse of fortified sites, following the motto 'preservation through development'.

Heikki Lahdenmäki, head of restoration of The Governing Body of Suomenlinna: 'Most of the buildings and fortifications in Suomenlinna have already been transferred to new activities. During the project we have shared our experience of multifunctional reuse and learnt from other partners excellent examples of measures taken to improve accessibility and safety. We also have got new ideas on how to benefit from voluntary workforce and cooperate with other institutions and private sector.'

Annemieke Traag, chair of the New Dutch Waterline board and on behalf of the Leadpartner, stresses: 'For a sustainable and economically healthy future of military heritage, preservation through development proves to be a winning concept, as the partners of At Fort have experienced. It does however take courage from owners and authorities to make it happen. It requires a coordinated, integrated and systematic approach.'

#### **Declaration of intent**

The eleven ATFORT partners and several other organisations concerned with the redevelopment of military heritage, have signed a declaration of intent to establish a European network of military heritage sites. The ATFORT project has demonstrated the establishment of a vibrant and genuine transnational partnership of areas of military heritage dedicated to the transformation of redundant former military sites into zones of dynamic economic activity and community life. The newly established network will focus on further knowledge exchange, future European cooperation and funding and policy influence.

#### **Policy recommendations**

Policy recommendations prepared by the ATFORT partnership have been presented to the delegates of the eleven partners. The reuse of fortifications asks for appropriate management models, skills, staff and financial support and should therefore be included as a priority on the political agenda.

#### **CONTACTS:**

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<sup>1</sup> New Dutch Waterline (the Netherlands), Network of Vauban's major sites (France), Province of Antwerp (Belgium), Spandau Citadel (Germany), City of Venice (Italy), Governing Body of Suomenlinna (Finland), Kaunas Council (Lithuania), Medway Council (United Kingdom), Paola Council (Malta), Fort Monostor non-profit Ltd. (Hungary), University of Nova Gorica (Slovenia).

<sup>2</sup> The Governing Body of Suomenlinna is a government agency that restores, maintains and administers Suomenlinna, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**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](http://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.