



Links

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Future-proof historic centres

AN URBACT 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 their key role 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 professional involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 255 cities, 29 countries and more than 5000 active participants.

www.urbact.eu/project



Links

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AN URBACT PROJECT



European Union
European Regional Development Fund

Connecting cities
Building successes



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Building successes





“ Enhance the new city,
conserve the old city ”

Victor Hugo, 1839

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THE INS AND OUTS OF LINKS

A starting hypothesis

Historic centres can become tomorrows “eco-districts”

THE CONTEXT

For the past decades, many European cities have been suffering from an important loss of interest in their historical centres and have had to face population decrease, building decay, commercial specialisation and pauperization. For many people historic centres are only considered as picturesque and touristic areas

The old European town is already showing some advantages: urban density, high architectural quality and thrifty constructions in natural resources, diversity and proximity of urban functions as well as economical, cultural and educational development potential. All these assets make it **THE sustainable city model**. That's why revitalization and enhancement of ancient quarters are the main challenge for sustainable urban development.

THE OBJECTIVES

The exchange network developed in this URBACT project will examine **how to reconcile patrimonial and environmental qualities** to obtain, for a diversified population, a sustainable and robust housing environment in the heart of the cities.

The network, thanks to the exchange of experience and good practices, wishes to promote solutions which can both be eco-efficient and respect the urban, social and cultural heritage.

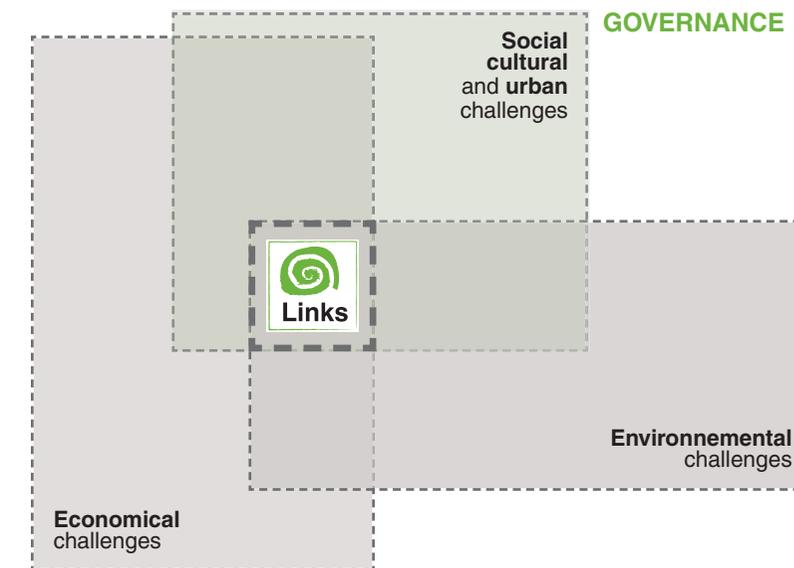


THE THEMATIC APPROACH

A voluntary wide thematic approach

The main issue exposed in the project is "**how can historic centres be considered as tomorrow's eco-districts**". This question implies decision to attain the four targets of the sustainable development: social/cultural, environmental, economic, and sound governance.

That is why, besides the large scale of the subject, LINKS aims to tackle all as well as these aspects by means of a work programme organized in 3 successive sub-themes, indivisible one from the other, and a methodological framework for a sound governance.





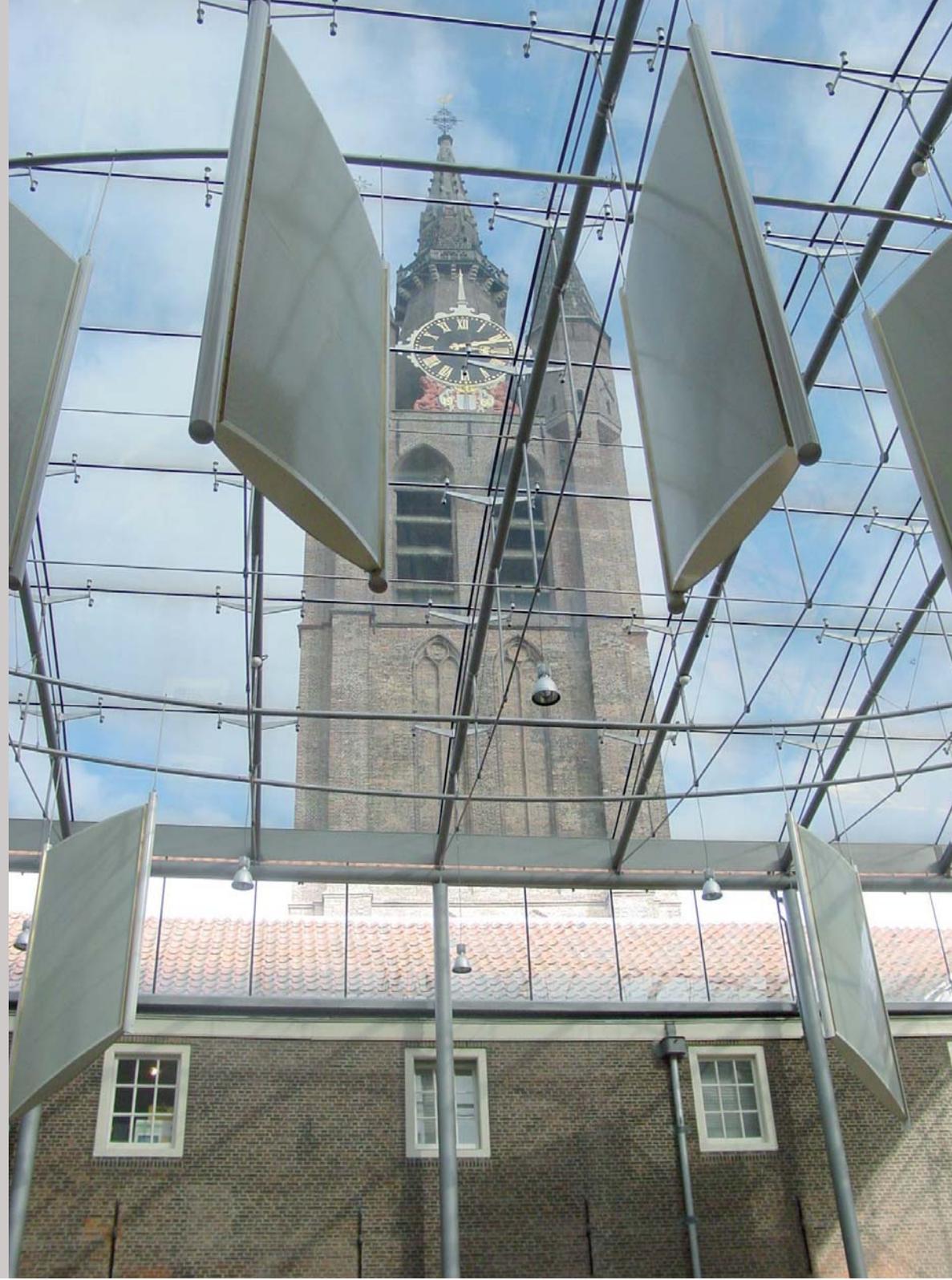
THE THEMATIC APPROACH

Urban and social challenges

A necessary preamble

To assess the real adequacy between historic centres and a modern way of life.

- Urbanistic and social analyses to assess the opportunity of historic centres meeting the demand in terms of housing : Living in a historic centre: is it a possibility, a lifestyle choice, or an objective ?
- Citizen involvement is the chosen way to approach the different factors of residential quality : consumers habits, mobility needs, leisure activity, expectations, culture and services.
- The question of social balance will be permanent: How to revitalise ancient decayed districts stimulating social diversity without disadvantaging the low income population, as, very often, long term settled inhabitants wish to remain there.



THE THEMATIC APPROACH

Technical solutions for **eco-restoration**

Are historic and architectural characters an asset or a constraint ?

- Technical assessment of the ancient buildings is necessary to enhance their intrinsic qualities and environmental performances.
- Panels of technical solutions must be established in a way as to utilise the resources of traditional architecture (the part of the low-tech: natural, local and organic materials - passive climatism) as well as the perspectives given by innovation (part of the high-tech).
- The legal context analysis determines whether the technical instructions grown up from the standards respect or degrade the intrinsic qualities of the ancient architecture, and if legal evolutions are necessary to allow adapted solutions.



THE THEMATIC APPROACH

Economic challenges

Eco-restoration : an asset for green economy ?

- Economic viability of solutions and the existence of the local market skills are a requirement for success.
- Local sourcing and procurement of materials and skills are part of the eco-restoration process.
- Training sessions have been identified as outputs of Local Action Plans.



THE THEMATIC APPROACH

Sound governance

A collective methodological framework

Eco-restoration : an asset for green economy ?

- All participating municipalities will explore the best practice in the sound governance of eco restoration and engagement towards citizens. Good governance of the LINKS Project will entail an integrated approach to planning, technical solutions, green procurement, the facing up to urban and social challenges and most particularly imbuing a sense of ownership among citizens in the sustainable development of their historic urban centre.
- This enshrines also the principle of subsidiarity, that decisions are made from the bottom up, facilitated by municipal authorities, thus achieving a high level of engagement and civic pride in the development of historic centres and minimising issues of conflict. LINKS partners will share the best practice in governance, from a municipal and national perspective.



KILKENNY

DELFT

ANDERLECHT

BAYONNE

ALMERIA

FREIBERG

BUDRIO

BRASOV

VERIA

The Partnership

Lead Partner :

BAYONNE (France)

Partners :

ALMERIA (Spain)

ANDERLECHT (Belgium)

BRASOV (Romania)

BUDRIO (Italy)

DELFT (Netherlands)

FREIBERG (Germany)

KILKENNY (Ireland)

VERIA (Greece)





- 45000 inhabitants of the south west Atlantic coast of France

- Former military site participating in the "iron belt" of the Pyrenees until 1907

- Cultural and economic capital of the basque country



THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Bayonne

"Conservation measures are not necessarily conservative"
A.Melissinos

The urban fabric in Bayonne has been qualified as very limited in terms of habitability by Alexandre Melissinos, architect responsible for town planning, in charge of the Plan of Protection and Highlighting for nearly 20 years. The historic core of Bayonne belongs to those cases where the ancient buildings inherited from the past centuries have become inadequate for modern life.

Notwithstanding these important challenges, the city of Bayonne wants to prove that it is possible to solve the apparent contradiction between heritage conservation and modern comfort, avoiding the temptation for normalization and standardization of solutions. Indeed, the progressive decay due to techniques developed for new buildings but inappropriate for ancient buildings is a disguised threat for fragile historical heritage.

Bayonne aims to exchange all experiences which can be useful in rallying the inhabitants expectations and in answering them, thus developing the ancient centre while respecting the built heritage but applying the advanced technology based on intrinsic qualities of the "low tech" buildings and combining where appropriate "high tech" solutions.



■ 188 800 inhabitants coastal and port city in the south of Spain, located in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia



“Rooted in History, turned to the modernity”

THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Almería

The historic district of Almería is divided into areas : the centre and the Chanca district. This centre suffers from a considerable level of degradation and physical isolation due to lack of mobility and accessibility facilities, increasing social exclusion of inhabitants. Nevertheless, the historic centre presents an important potential that could be of commercial, cultural and environmental benefit to the population. To meet the sub-standard quality of housing, the municipality of Almería is implementing programs of lodging rehabilitation and is attempting to improve the efficiency of the heritage regulation.

Through LINKS, the city of Almería wants to add the eco-restoration and eco-building dimensions to the existing urban project for the rehabilitation and development of the gypsy district La Chanca. Highlighting the historic centre and developing ecological practices for renewal, it is also seen as an opportunity to stimulate active social inclusion of the roma population. LINKS integrated approach fits exactly to the local priorities.

Many local project will be experimental laboratories for LINKS : in the field of citizen participation and social inclusion, in the technical field with the eco-restoration of ancient buildings, in the economic fields with the stimulation of the building sector and the creation of professional school, in the field of local governance with the establishment of a new municipal company.

■ 110000 inhabitants of the 19 municipalities of the Brussels Region

■ 1789 hectares, south-west sector of the Brussels region



THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Anderlecht

"Simple, in vogue, bright, going out of it self and giving its best, architecture is a language"
Daniel Libeskind

The Municipality of Anderlecht is very contrasted. Indeed, one can notice there a rural zone, a zone exclusively devoted to sports activities and leisures, industrial parks, cities peripheral garden workers, modern cities, smart residential zones, several parks, a historical center and a more dense urban area with a high level of poverty. The municipality has developed programs and actions to improve the quality of urban planning and is tackling the degradation of public spaces and dilapidated built heritage.

Over the past number of years, the municipality has started to improve the quality standard of the urban fabric by means of a sustainable renovation process (Low energy concept, sustainable materials, citizen participation). LINKS is expected to improve its strategy for eco restoration for the cultural built heritage and the urban fabric, by developing local expertise through exchange of experiences and collaborative dialogue between partner cities.

In such a project, Anderlecht intends to share its significant experience in integrated approach to stimulate economic competitiveness, employment and urban development, to identify and access funding streams and to develop a participation process. The city of Anderlecht will also be particularly involved in the technical feature of the LINKS project.



■ 278 000 inhabitants located in the historic transilvania, flourishing economy and highly appreciated touristic destination



“Historic city on the move”

THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Brasov

In 2009, the municipal council of Brasov adopted regulations to protect and enhance the historic centre, in particular its dense urban fabric, the architecture and the multitude of historic monuments. These are indicative of the medieval character of the area. This centre is a really vibrant area, well equipped for leisure activities, but is challenged by the fact that the residential quality of life is becoming more and more compromised. An ageing local population is finding it difficult to restore dwellings, and young couples cannot find affordable and comfortable housing.

Brasov’s involvement in LINKS is the opportunity for the municipality to explore new tools to preserve and revitalise the historical, cultural, aesthetic and economic vibrancy of the centre. Developing eco-efficient practices within LINKS is a way to improve public awareness of the population in areas of the historic urban fabric and buildings. Eco-friendly restoration is a way to promote an image of modernity and sustainable economic development. This in turn will promote appreciation of the economic and social value of historic buildings.

The experience of Brasov in several European projects and its practices of integrated approach is an asset for LINKS partners.

- 17 800 inhabitants, in one of the main "Regulator Centres" of the Bologna Province,
- 12 100 hectares, Emilia Romagna region



THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Budrio

"Cities are places of exchange... but not only in the exchanges of goods, but in the exchanges of words, of wishes, of memories..."
ITALO CALVINO
 from "The invisible cities"

The city of Budrio is located in the second belt of the Bologna metropolitan area. Its historical centre dates back to the 14th century and is characterized by numerous and significant examples of medieval architecture, many in public use. The global situation of the historic centre is rather positive, but the population increase and the generation renewal demands new careful policies to provide for citizens, an adequate level of services and quality of urban comfort.

Historic centre sustainability means finding solutions for energy efficiency in historic buildings, lower energy costs and better climatic comfort in public buildings (the theatre, schools, the town hall). Budrio has recently received an important contribution from Emilia Romagna Region aimed at the implementation of energy policies in several sectors. In coherence with LINKS, it creates the opportunity to engage citizen participation in order to obtain feedback and to develop strategies for the best use of the grant obtained.

Budrio is one of the rare city partners not to suffer from functional unbalance of its historic centre : it stills benefit from a good retail offer that is resilient to the competition of nearby commercial zone. Commercial functions and retrofitting interventions are supported by the municipality. The question of functional equilibrium is one of the most difficult problems to tackle in historic centres of the LINKS partners. The concrete experimentation of innovative technologies for energy efficiency in historical building and public spaces is a priority for Budrio Municipality and represents an added value of Budrio participation in Links Project.



■ Delft is a small historic city in between the cities of Rotterdam and The Hague in the southwest of the Netherlands. In the last century it expanded a lot to give place to its 97.000 inhabitants



"Creating history"

THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Delft

The historic centre remains relatively well preserved over time, thanks to a detailed conservation policy which respects its value as a living, functional, social space. Recently inhabitants and professionals are energized by a demand for technical solutions for sustainable improvement of buildings concerning energy use and comfort. These solutions have to be cross-checked with a value on cultural heritage, its physical characteristics and aesthetic vibrancy. Furthermore there is a demand to improve the accessibility of information on the financial aspects, qualified professionals and legislation.

LINKS is the opportunity to improve the visibility of Delft's environmental approach to the historic city and to stimulate eco-renovation. For the next two years in the inner city, Delft plans to monitor its existing planning and governance policy, to integrate the work of the department of environment with the department of built heritage, to monitor demonstration projects and disseminate the results in order to demonstrate to stakeholders the advantages of eco-restoration.

The particular experience of Delft in the field of eco-restoration and its willingness to involve the local community in international exchanges will contribute to disseminate knowledge about eco-restoration and to stimulate good practices, what is the main goal of LINKS.



- 42 000 inhabitants located on the territory of the former GDR in the federal state of Saxony, between Chemnitz, Dresden and Leipzig

- Traditional mining city, mining stopped in 1969

- Capital of the district Mittelsachsen, TU Bergakademie Freiberg



“From Silver to Silica”

THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Freiberg

Freiberg, which originally means „free mountain“, is the oldest and most important mining town in Saxony. Silver mining has been the main economic driver of the city for about 850 years and in 2012 this anniversary will be celebrated. From 1991 to 1994 we had preparatory investigations in the historic city centre by architects. A serious deficit in the quality and scope of urban planning was identified. This process has led to the restoration of a considerable proportion of the city’s built heritage stock.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider the remaining, dilapidated buildings, which are to be found in problematic locations of the historic centre. Approximately 30 percent of the buildings located in the historic centre still need to be restored. The demand for climate protection in the buildings is very high. Lowering the operating costs and the possibility for commercialization, creates a potential for conflict between energy efficient redevelopment and the demands of the conservation of historic monuments.

An innovative low-cost energy supply; near-surface geothermal energy, plays an increasingly important role in Freiberg. At the same time, Freiberg respects the aspect of the preservation of historic monuments. Also the usage of solar modules and interior insulation has to be a priority during this project. The involvement of inhabitant’s, municipality, engineers and University in town planning processes plays a very important role in Freiberg.

Our historic city centre has top priority of urbanistic development.

A living city needs a living centre.



- 24,000 Inhabitants, 8,600 in the Urban Centre. Former Capital of Ireland, Kilkenny is located in the South East Region of Ireland. In 2009, Kilkenny celebrated 400 years as a chartered city

- Its main industries are agriculture, tourism, financial services, brewing and animation



“Ye Faire Citie”

THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Kilkenny

Kilkenny City is derived from the Irish, Cill Chainnaigh (meaning the Canice’s wood). The medieval street pattern in Kilkenny is largely unchanged in 800 years since its foundation. While much of the building stock is Victorian/Georgian, the footprint and basic fabric of the buildings in the historical centre are of medieval origin. Some significant 16th century houses remain intact and the Tholsel (City Hall) was originally constructed in 1540. its current form dates back to 1719. The Norman Kilkenny Castle (c. 1170) and the ecclesiastical sites of St Canice’s Cathedral, the Dominican Black Abbey and St Mary’s Church are of a similar vintage.

Much work has been done in recent decades to enhance and consolidate the quality of Heritage buildings and the remaining city walls. Although much destruction took place, particularly in the 1970’s and 1980’s, a recognition of the value of the built heritage to the cultural development of Kilkenny has replaced the development imperative.

The historical centre is protected by National legislation under the Heritage act. Kilkenny’s focus in the LINKS Project will be on the Urban Planning challenges relating to eco restoration and consolidation of the city centre. Further challenges such as urban mobility, pedestrianisation of the city core and maintaining a vibrant population living in the city will be addressed over the lifetime of the project.

Sharing best practice with partner cities and the engagement of citizens and stakeholders using collaborative dialogue will ensure sustainable outcomes. It is hoped to share legislative and governance policies throughout the process also.



■ The city of Veria is located to the Region of Central Macedonia, in North Greece and has a population of 47.500 inhabitants. Dating back to the 5th century BC, with a continuous historic presence, the city used to be the urban center in a broad and fertile area

■ Nowadays, it is the capital city of the Prefecture of Imathia



*"Already 2500 years old,
and its future ahead"*

THE PARTNERSHIP

City of Veria

The historic centre of Veria has suffered from much destruction, mainly in the 1970s and 1980s. Nowadays, parts of it are preserved, as well as many isolated historic buildings, interspersed all over the city. In 1990s action was taken to restore some municipal buildings and towards the urban regeneration of the listed areas. But still problems remain such as bad conditions of many historic buildings, inappropriate uses and low quality use of public space, abandonment or inappropriate restorations which are mainly due to complex ownership and to a strong public belief that old buildings have no value in a modern context.

The municipality of Veria wants to transform its historic centre to a place where everybody wants to be. LINKS can act as a positive example, with the use of demonstration projects, and show that proper restoration of historic buildings in respect to their historic character can provide a response to contemporary needs for comfort and performance. In addition, urban regeneration plans and activities will ensure that the historic centre regains its identity and becomes a living space for all citizens regardless of social background. The communication and encouragement of citizens' participation on one hand and knowledge gathering and dissemination on the other will be the basis of the local action plan.

Through LINKS, the city of Veria will promote technical solutions for eco-restoration and urban regeneration, as well as tools and methodologies for citizens' participation. It will also exchange solutions for legal, financial and management tools and investigation for the possibilities of an emerging local market in terms of skills and material use to respond to the needs of eco-restoration, thus helping to consolidate the local economy.