

SPEECH of Frank PETER

President of EFFORTS

Opening Congress EFFORTS 8/11/18, Venice

Dear (Minister, President)

Dear colleagues, dear participants,

12 months after we met last time in Spandau, we are here together again, united in our interest in the preservation and the renewed use of Europe's built military heritage. I am most grateful to the Forte Marghera Foundation to help us hosting you all in this magnificently restored and re-used fort, that is also one of the venues of the Venice Architecture Biennale. It is a wonderful place to host a congress on European fortifications.

Forts, they are all the same, throughout Europe. Our ancestors have fought each other fiercely over the battlements and trenches of walled towns, defence lines, forts and fortresses. And they were built by the same architects, inspired by the same schools. We now remember the innumerable sufferings by recognizing this fortified remnants as European heritage.

But it is not only remembrance that makes us strive to preserve these European heritage sites.

Besides the obvious memory work a preserved site can bring us, the architectural characteristics are similar throughout Europe and they represent an invaluable insight into military construction history.

Today we see that many of these sites are still overly present in our land- and cityscapes. And they sometimes present formidable challenges to incorporate them in the present city or landscape.

Like the fortifications of yesterday, the challenges of today are equally 'European'. The knowledge of the old days was European, the solutions are obviously European, too.

This is why, as EFFORTS, we instigated the European Fortress Day in 2018 (more than 60 sites in 12 European countries participated for the first time and showed the public how difficult heritage can be opened up to all. I thank you for your efforts.

I also thank our Member Stichting Liniebreed Ondernemen for the tremendous common investment with EFFORTS in this. We have succeeded in creating the beginning of an annual European Fortress Days.

Next year, EFFORTS will present yearly its EFFORTS Award, showcasing an interesting participant of the European Fortress Days. We are presently working on structural funding for this initiative.

Another initiative we want to bring to you in 2019 and beyond, is the European Knowledge Center for Fortified Heritage.

Conceived with Forte Marghera, we strongly believe that this initiative will resonate with other EFFORTS members and we are presently active in constituting the plan for installing this, maybe also with European support.

What else do we plan next year ? We will present a website that is more adapted to Member's needs. We will set up, with each interested Member, a network of European funding professionals.

But, especially, we need to spread the word : with more members and larger cities and regions and provinces, we will be able to present ourselves as the European Commission recognized European Network of Fortified Heritage. This will only be possible when we work hard in enlarging our base, our partnerships, and attract new members that are interested in the preservation and re-use of these monumental structures.

In order to structure our line of thought, we presented to you this summer a draft 'Declaration of Venice', the EFFORTS position paper on the European policy linked to fortified heritage. As you will see in the outline of our Congress today and tomorrow, participants and speakers are invited to make reference to this draft text and add their comments and ideas to it. Together with what comes out of this Congress, this paper will be presented to our Stakeholders, European institutions and in our communication feeds. It will guide or network and our work together for the next year.

Dear listeners, I am the Mayor of the Dutch city of Bergen op Zoom. Bergen op Zoom has a long and very rich history as a fortified city; a history that dates back to the 16th century. The investments in our fortifications and garrison relicts are significant.

I would like to mention a best practice. In this matter it is not about Bergen op Zoom, but about a project that might inspire you, the participants to this congress. We want make our walls, gates and fortresses perceptible. To achieve this objective it is important to gather and tell the stories behind these relicts. Stories of soldiers, citizens and spectators of sieges and attacks. To develop a concept to tell these stories, we work closely together with Breda University in The Netherlands. This university is developing a special narrative concept. To my opinion this concept is very promising. Bergen op Zoom strongly believes modern visitors are interested in history. Otherwise than via books and articles, the best way to reach visitors is through stories of the people who have lived it.

Fitting in the objective of sharing knowledge and therefore in the benefit of all the EFFORT members, I would like to make the principles of this narrative concept available for our members.

Finally, I want to thank you all, members and also the International Fortress Council and our former Board Member Andrea Theissen, for your continuing support over this firsts EFFORTS-full year. And I want to thank all of you, members and sympathisers,

speakers and experts, for coming together here in Venice, celebrating in this European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, *our* European Heritage.

I wish you all a very interesting conference,

Thank you,

Frank Petter

EFFORTS president

Mayor of Bergen op Zoom