



## ACE Leeuwarden Conference 2018

**EFFORTS** is a European network organisation established in 2017 to share knowledge and practical expertise on military heritage, such as walled towns, forts and defence lines. Fortified heritage is a particular, widespread category of architecture. **As heritage it is both global** – related to the worldwide evolution of weapon technology and architecture – **and local**, anchored in an intentionally chosen place, built with local materials and by local people.

When they were built, military architecture was meant to be functional, modern and as durable as possible, using all technical and architectural know-how available. Today these sites often represent important challenges: spatial, socio-economic and energy-environmental. **These places also offer great opportunities for a large range of local and regional stakeholders.** They offer space for experimental approach in renovation, energy transition and spatial development. They highlight the past but can be transformed into development for the future. They can be transformed into social, economic and ecologic poles and yet remind us, teach us. As much as they demonstrate the intrinsic need to defend borders in the past, today they are **symbols of our common history and challenges, uniting Europe instead of dividing it.**

These six EFFORTS propositions emphasize the awareness of the great cultural educational, research, social, environmental and economic-tourism assets of European fortified heritage.

### 1. **Understanding fortified heritage increases European unity.**

Fortifications testify of human ingenuity and an exchange of multidisciplinary technical and scientific experiences worldwide. Fortifications recount history with an enormous power of persuasion, having been transformed into compelling cultural tourist attractions. Through fortifications and the borders they defined, we can read our territory and the strategic map that has evolved over time.

Fortifications bear historic witness to events of great European drama, in a mixture of heroism and tragedy that should not be forgotten. They are therefore places of excellence to teach and educate and to motivate reflection towards European and world peace, contributing to **uniting Europe instead of dividing it**, promoting democracy and tolerance.

As part of cultural heritage, fortified heritage plays an important role for community cohesion at a time when cultural diversity is increasing in European societies. A shared comprehension of the past will help to better understand the present and shape our common future. New participatory and intercultural approaches to heritage policies and educational initiatives that attribute equal dignity to this form of **cultural heritage that has the potential to increase trust, mutual recognition and social cohesion.**

### 2. **Fortifications offer educational and economic opportunities.**

Cultural and creative industries can ensure the much needed **innovation and high-quality services** Europe aspires. Fortified heritage being an integral part of European cohesion, it has the potential to build bridges between tradition, innovation and education. Its repair, maintenance and development offer working opportunities not only for a large range of professionals but also for non-professionals and volunteers.

Fortified heritage triggers a spill-over effect into other industrial sectors, such as tourism, retail, and digital technologies. With innovative initiatives, fortified heritage presents an opportunity for job creation.

Fortified heritage definitely speaks to the imagination of youth and provides the perfect stage for tales, imagination and links to our common heritage and future. It is clear that these sites of former war between our cities and countries offer interesting **spaces to teach all citizens about our shared history**. Fortifications also constitute teaching material of great importance because these places create shared environment conducive to learning. We will have to teach our children about their past in a way that appeals to them. Viewed in this way a fortification is a well-equipped classroom, where all can experience, discover and learn on European history and values.

### **3. Adapting fortification use is combating climate change.**

Valuable lessons that can be learned from properties constructed and operating during an era before electrical power and central heating. **Combined with today's technology these places challenge us to find new solutions for low energy performance, with respect to the place and its environment.** Monumental buildings are challenged in energy performance. They are not easily adaptable to today's energy performance standards.

The revival of fortified heritage makes a positive contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 'Climate Action'. This is not only by improving their energy performance, but also because the thick walls and roof constructions are ideal to retain heat and cold. The original living quarters and barracks are easily reusable for housing with high occupancy rate. Gunpowder magazines, arsenals, strongholds are transformable for new public or private purposes. The sites can be used for different climate-related functions, such as water storage, flood protection, generation and storage of sustainable energy.

For these purposes, and due to the similarities of fortifications across Europe, adaptive re-use of European fortifications, fortresses and defence lines need a Europe-wide research agenda.

### **4. Fortified sites provide sites for employment and social development.**

Even though hospitality was never the hallmark of fortresses, nowadays fortified sites provide a low incentive sheltered workplace. Fortifications can offer a new work place to people who are distanced from the traditional labour market. In a protected regenerative environment they can hone their skills. When working on monumental military heritage, quality takes precedence over speed. In restoration, working pace is less important. It is about craftsmanship and skills. **The restoration, cultural and catering sectors for instance are ideally suited for the influx of experienced professionals who can transfer their years of experience in construction to younger generations.** Repair work can often be carried out without great time pressure, which makes it suitable for the employment of all sorts of people, e.g. people with a mental disability, the long-term unemployed, ex-convicts. But also providing opportunity for practical training for drop outs acquiring recognized competences. By linking their skills, dreams and ambitions to activities that are of value to their environment and society, all involved parties benefit.

## 5. Fortified heritage improves access to culture and quality of life.

**Innovative European fortified heritage concepts can take on an active place in the present day cultural development.** Fortified heritage can offer a new urban cultural stage on which artists or sporting events are spotlighted. Investing in fortified heritage has a positive yet undervalued impact on our societies, contributing to the quality of life, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue. By engaging the citizens and increasing the occupancy rate, justification of big public investments in heritage buildings and local public cultural events will be encouraged.

In order to realise the full potential of cultural heritage for European societies and economies, the safeguarding, enhancement and management of built military heritage require effective participatory governance and enhanced cross-sectoral cooperation.

The increased recognition at international level of the need to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage reinforces the need to foster wider access to cultural heritage, inter alia, in light of its positive effects on the quality of life.

‘Rampart could turn into Ramp Art.’

## 6. Fortifications are smart actors of urban development.

Most fortifications had enormous influence on the birth and development of towns. Historic defensive walls and forts need to be interpreted as intrinsic components of the historic urban landscapes they were meant to defend and protect. In many cases the fortifications, in addition to defining an urban area, became more extended to involve a whole territory, constituting a ‘fortified system’. The open, deserted, fortified areas of cities need to be turned into opportunities for today’s development needs. Remedying to the empty fortification sites of today, offers the connection that is most important for the revival and transformation of cities.

**Fortified sites can be transformed into cultural hubs, parks or event spaces, in a way that respects its nature and values.** They can also host activities that are less welcomed in urban areas, e.g. concerts, festivals and outdoor activities. High and long continuous walls, deep canals make fortified heritage an excellent location for outdoor adventure, as well as for artistic purposes and all other public cultural, economic and sports events. They can help fighting sedentary life styles and enhance physical activity. They offer the green spaces that connect different parts of cities and regions and built bridges for economic and social development. Creativity and history enter into an exciting alliance.

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Founding partner of EFFORTS, 1 October 2018