

Fortified Futures

Towards a European Platform for Technical Cooperation on Climate-Smart Management of Fortified Heritage

Webinar and Match-Making Session
Monday, 30 June 2025
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM CEST (Paris time)



Organisers: Network of Major of Vauban Sites and EFFORTS Europe



The [Network of Major Sites of Vauban](#) (*Réseau Vauban*) and the [European Federation of Fortified Sites](#) (EFFORTS) are pleased to invite you to an online session dedicated to exploring how fortified sites across Europe are responding to climate change — and to discuss the development of a European Platform for Technical Cooperation on this issue.

Context

In 2024, extreme weather events underscored the growing vulnerability of our fortified heritage. Heavy rainfall in the Alps led to the collapse of walls in Mont-Dauphin; in Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, sea defences struggle against rising tides; and in Neuf-Brisach, alternating rain and drought disrupt both conservation efforts and everyday life. Yet modern fortified sites also offer solutions: ramparts and glacis help regulate temperatures and support biodiversity, while historic buildings present opportunities for sustainable urban renewal.

As Europe's built heritage faces increasing pressure from climate change, preservation efforts can no longer focus solely on monuments. They must anticipate environmental impacts and embrace interdisciplinary, holistic approaches — often with limited resources.



In this context, European modern fortifications stand as testament to the engineering brilliance of their time. Designed to adapt to diverse territorial contexts, they reveal a deep understanding of environments, resources, and populations. Among Europe's most renowned military engineers, Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633-1707) remains an emblematic figure. Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list for their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), the "Fortifications of Vauban" hold a major place in the history of military architecture. Today, these sites — having evolved beyond their original defensive roles — continue to shape the development of cities and serve as living spaces, sometimes even as reservoirs of nature. In the face of unprecedented challenges, these sites must once again innovate, bridging nature and culture to ensure their future resilience.

About the Session

This first informal online exchange will bring together managers of European World Heritage (WH) fortified sites (and those on national Tentative Lists). Together, we will:

- Share experiences from around Europe;
- Reflect on the potential of modern fortifications as "frontline" observatories for climate-related transformations;
- Start a conversation about creating a European Platform for Technical Cooperation between fortified sites.

Objectives

- Bring together site managers (municipalities and professionals) to:
 - Identify common challenges, needs, and dynamics among participating sites;
 - Reflect on opportunities for integrating climate issues into fortified heritage management;
 - Highlight the links between fortifications, territories, and urban landscapes;
 - Discuss the responsibilities and opportunities linked to WH in the context of climate change.
- Discuss the responsibilities and opportunities linked to World Heritage designation in the context of climate change.
- Strengthen the sense of unity and collaboration between site managers.
- Lay the foundations for partnerships around the role of fortifications in climate monitoring and adaptation.
- Advocate for the creation of a dedicated European Platform for Technical Cooperation.
- Share insights and outcomes with national and European authorities involved in heritage-related projects and policies.
- Build the capacities of fortified sites in Europe, notably through the EFFORTS network.

Format:

- Online session via Zoom (in English)
 - The session will be structured in two parts:
 - A series of presentations by fortified sites and networks across Europe
 - A collective debate and match-making session
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**We look forward to
your participation!**

Please register [here](#) by 20 June 2025

Practical Information

- The registration link includes a short questionnaire to help us tailor the discussions and the matchmaking segment of the session. Your responses will be mapped by our team on an interactive whiteboard (using the Miro online tool) and will serve as a foundation for the collective debate and matchmaking activities.
- Connection details will be shared with registered participants shortly before the event.
- After the event, to facilitate networking, we would like to share a list of participants and their contact details with all attendees. You will have the option to be included in this list or to keep your information private.

Programme (10:00-12:30 CEST):

10:00-10:15 Welcome & Introduction

10:00-10:10 Opening remarks:

- Anne Vignot, Mayor of Besançon, President of the Network of Major Sites of Vauban (*Réseau Vauban*)
- John Adam, Mayor of Oudenaarde, President of the European Federation of Fortified Sites (EFFORTS)

10:10-10:15 Overview and introduction to the interactive mural

10:10-11:30 Exploring fortified World Heritage sites and networks

- 10:15-10:30 Camille Thomas, Director, and Alba Zamarbide, Project Manager, Network of Major Sites of Vauban, representing the "**Fortifications of Vauban**" (serial property-France) (joint presentation)
- 10:30-10:45 Raf Deroo, Secretary General, **EFFORTS Europe**, presenting the results of the EU Resilient Fortress project, and Tuija Lind, Senior Architect, representing the "**Fortress of Suomenlinna**" (Finland) (combined presentation)
- 10:45-11:00 Claudio Cecchinelli, Head of the Culture and UNESCO Department, Municipality of Bergamo, Site Secretariat, representing the "**Venetian Works of Defence between the 16th and 17th Centuries: Stato da Terra – Western Stato da Mar**" (transnational serial property-Croatia, Italy and Montenegro)
- 11:00-11:15 Fiorenzo Meneghelli and Daniele Sferra, representatives of the *Fondazione Forte Marghera*, as part of "**Venice and its Lagoon**" (Italy) (joint presentation)
- 11:15-11:30 Magda Gonçalves, Senior Architect, Regional Directorate for Culture of Azores, representing the "**Central Zone of the Town of Angra do Heroísmo in the Azores**" (Portugal)
- 11:30-11:45 Wietse Burger, Site Coordinator, representing the "**Dutch Water Defence Lines**" (serial property-Netherlands)

11:45-12:15 Interactive debate and match-making session

- *What are the key climate-related challenges and opportunities for your site / European fortified World Heritage sites?*
- *What European collaboration tools, projects, or support networks do you need / are needed?*

12:15-12:30 Closing thoughts & follow-up