

Best practice 34: Conservation of the Urban Cultural Heritage and Regional Partnerships: The BALCON project, Sweden.

Scale: Transnational

Stage of tourism development: Beginning

Main objective: Regional development

Categories of effects:

Effects on urban governance

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Sustainable partnerships
- Stakeholder participation
- Steering government
- Regional cooperation
- Networks of cities

Effects on quality of life

- Built heritage diversity
- Cultural practices and representations
- Urban economies

Regions in the Baltic Sea Region have common problems in terms of regional growth, unemployment, environmental pollution, lack of regional cohesion and cultural diversity. BALCON (Development through Conservation of the Cultural Heritage in the Baltic Sea Region) is a partnership aimed at developing a measure-orientated planning system for enhancing regional and international cooperation for regional development, strengthening of democracy, cultural identity and diversity in the Baltic region. The central idea was to foster employment through restoration actions and develop innovative activities in the newly restored buildings throughout the region. BALCON is coordinated by the Halland Region in Sweden, which shares its model and expertise with the cities of Olsztyn (PL), Kaliningrad (RU), Kaunas (LT), Utena (LT), Preili/Latgale (LV), Tartu (EE), Narva (EE) and Christiansfeld (DK). The Polish regions of Lodz, Lublin, Krakow, and Wroclaw have also participated in the partnership. After a 3 years pilot project completed in 2000, the BALCON network was established, and now gathers 15 members. The BALCON project allowed numerous urban cultural heritage restoration and development activities, employed hundreds of construction workers throughout the process, and created over 300 new workplaces, saving jobs in the process. BALCON has developed toolkits for regional cross-sectoral cooperation, involving private and public sectors at various levels in the process. Other impacts of the overall initiative include cultural heritage enhancement, regional governance, tourism development, local identities preservation, and better quality of life for populations. BALCON is now an established network selected as a cultural heritage conservation "Good Practice" by the UN-Habitat in 2002.

Source: UN-Habitat, 2004. Best practices Database in Improving the Environment.

Links:

http://www.bestpractices.org/database/bp_display_best_practice.php?best_practice_id=202

<http://www.balcon.net/frame.htm>