

Programme:	Europe for Citizens Programme - 3.2.2 Measure Networks of Towns
Deadline:	1st of March 2015
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Organisation:	<p>Hjo municipality has approximately 8.900 inhabitants and is one of 49 municipalities in the Region Västra Götaland. Hjo is a timber town on the western shore of Lake Vättern. Its urban park is located along the lakeside path and was built in the late 1800s. Through the town centre, the Hjo stream floats. In 1990 the town was awarded with the Europa Nostra* Medal of Honor "... for the remarkable preservation of the overall timber town Hjo, resulting in the retention of its character and charm". In the city you can see, smell and feel the environments of over 400 years, which in many places have been lost, but that are still conserved in Hjo.</p> <p>Hjo municipality is divided into two councils (council and building committee) and four policy areas (children and education, health care, culture/tourism/leisure and spatial planning). The municipality employs about 700 people. Hjo municipality works in close collaboration with the local enterprises.</p> <p>Swedish municipalities are unique in the scope of their competencies and their constitutional power of taxation. In Sweden, local authorities traditionally have a strong role in society with a high degree of self-government and responsibility for different sectors and activities. Each of the 290 municipalities in Sweden is responsible for providing a significant proportion of public services like schools, emergency services and city planning. They also have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation. According to law, the municipalities are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare and pre-school • Primary and secondary schools • Social services • Elderly care • Support to people with disabilities • Health and environmental issues

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency services • Urban planning • Sanitation (waste, sewage) <p>Other responsibilities may be voluntarily undertaken, such as culture and leisure activities and business/enterprise development.</p> <p>Website: www.hjo.se or http://www.vastsverige.com/en/Hjo/ (english)</p> <p>*Europa Nostra is an umbrella association of over 200 national organizations in all countries of the continent. From a modest beginning, the Europa Nostra has evolved into a leader in all matters concerning the European heritage. Europa Nostra of today is the main channel between the cultural heritage stakeholders and major international organizations such as the EU, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.</p>
<p>Project idea: (Aim/objectives/ activites)</p>	<p>Long term cooperation with other municipalities based around the exchange of experience on urban development, while preserving, developing and integrating the historical value of the cityscape and utilizing the proximity to watercourses</p> <p>Background and aim Hjo municipality is searching for European partners interested in participating in a project proposal under the Europe for Citizens Programme - 3.2.2 Measure Networks of Towns (deadline 1st March 2015). The project aims at exchanging experiences and knowledge on how to preserve, develop and integrate the historical value of the cityscape while utilizing proximity to watercourses.</p> <p>Hjo is in a phase where the municipality, on the basis of the town's specific qualities and requirements, wants to develop the urban environment in a direction that includes the new modern town while the rich cultural history is naturally integrated and highlighted. Hjo's location near the lake Vättern has an untapped potential. The proximity to the lake could be a major contributor to the development of the town.</p> <p>Hence, Hjo wishes to share experiences and exchange knowledge with other organizations in Europe on how history and culture can contribute to water's role as a catalyst for urban development. By collecting and sharing experiences with partners in Europe, Hjo hopes to gain new knowledge on how other European cities with similar assets and conditions have worked with progressive urban development.</p>

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To be able to reach the best possible results, the project will require a clear and strong civic dialogue, with not only citizens, but also enterprises, associations, civil society, NGO's, etc. It is important that the wishes and concerns of citizens, are taken into account at an early stage, so that they feel active participation in the processes that take place in the community. The increased inclusion will boost people's ownership, responsibility and care for their city. Having already worked successfully with involving citizens in the municipal decision-making process, Hjo wants to continue to use citizens' dialogue not only as an aim in itself but also as a method for the future development of other sectors. A couple of years ago, when creating the new vision for Hjo, the municipality received more than 2000 opinions, views and ideas from the citizens on how they wanted to develop their town.

Considering the above, the project will be carried out close to the citizens, and provide opportunities for civic engagement and democratic participation. By making use of new methods for creating community engagement, intercultural engagement and promote equal opportunities for everyone to participate - regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, etc. - the project will make extra efforts in reaching target groups which are usually inaccessible and under-represented.

Urban development is an issue that concerns citizens in their daily lives, as well as it is relevant and supported by the EU in general and by the Europe for Citizens Programme in particular. At the macro level, the relevant initiatives and recommendations resulting from the project, will ultimately help to design and develop EU policies, helping to reduce the gap between citizens and the EU.

Possible questions to be raised in the project are:

- How do other organizations in Europe work to tie together cultural heritage and urban development by utilizing the proximity to the water?
- How can local authorities develop public spaces where meeting points and venues are created, activity is promoted and where cultural history, the geographical location and the modern town come together and create an attractive area to live and work in, as well as to visit?
- How do we create attractive housing and meeting places, attractive trade and development of industrial sites with regard to the cultural and historical values ?
- How do we create and develop participation and commitment of our citizens, enterprises/companies and associations in this work?
- How do we create a sustainable cooperation with similar European municipalities on this theme?

Activities in the project could be:

Studies

Creation of a guide, recommendations and plan

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	<p>Workshops Lectures by scientists/experts Seminars</p> <p>Results: The project will result in a shorter guide with good examples on how to preserve, develop and integrate the cultural values in the urban landscape while capitalizing on the proximity to watercourses. Based on partner feedback and experience, the partnership will also try to develop recommendations on what steps that need to be taken in order to create a successful result. Beside the manual and recommendations, the partnership will, at the end of the project, also have a plan for how to continue, develop and deepen their future cooperation.</p> <p>Please, show your interest in collaborating on this proposal as soon as possible, but no later than 30th October 2014.</p>
<p>Partners searched:</p>	<p>Hjo is seeking collaboration with partners in Europe who have extensive experience in preserving, developing and integrating cultural values in the urban landscape and exploit the proximity to watercourses. Hjo is particularly interested to collaborate and share knowledge with other local authorities in Europe who are or have been in the same situation and have experience in developing a small town by actively involving residents and the local community. An important part of the project will be to create long-term and structured partnerships between municipalities and other stakeholders, and to encourage active citizenship and help to engage citizens in matters relating to the EU's political agenda, and experience of this is thus also desirable.</p> <p>The partnership is also intended to be the basis for future initiatives and interventions between the participating towns, in the areas addressed in the project, but possibly and hopefully also in other fields of common interest. The potential of the network that is formed should be used to develop a thematic and sustainable cooperation between the participating organizations.</p>
<p>Project period:</p>	<p>September 1, 2015 - March 31, 2017 (18 months)</p>

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