

Strategy 2021-2025

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PERSPECTIVES

The OWHC has established itself as a world network thanks to the participation of an increasing number of cities inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. As a result, the Organization has secured a sound financial position. The trust and respect enjoyed today constitute an invitation to pursue its development.

This development must address the pressing need for concrete results expressed by members. It must also consider challenges faced by the Organization, directly and indirectly, as a result of the pandemic and its consequences. For example, member cities may be facing financial problems or, in the context of a difficult economic recovery, heritage may appear less important.

The Organization has a fundamental role to play, especially in this particular context: remind the cities of their responsibilities in relation to the World Heritage Convention; confirm heritage as a resource; defend historic cities as a source of inspiration and well-being for communities. The Organization must provide the cities with concrete support to implement these principles and encourage a heritage approach to urban development.

In this context, the new Secretary General is adopting a firm position for more action in the field and proposing a new way of approaching the challenges facing the Organization. The prerequisite to change here is convincing member cities that they will reap benefits proportional to their investment (membership fees). The Organization will have to be able to propose innovative and far-reaching international projects that will contribute to establishing new partnerships and sustaining new sources of funding. The roadmap proposed is as follows:

- Phase I (2022): consolidate the General Secretariat; rationalize activities; intensify cooperative activities; initiate a participative approach for the preparation of the 16th Annual Congress; identify and validate strategic priorities during the Congress;
- Phase II (2023): initiate pilot projects (strategic priorities) involving the participation of a maximum number of member cities; assess results; validate recommendations, methods and tools;
- Phase III (2024): propose major projects; financial packages for partnerships; search for complementary/outside funding; keep cooperative activities alive.

PHASE I

At the present time, the General Secretariat is focusing mainly on communication activities. These contribute to promoting the Organization and member cities, and of course strengthening the cities network¹. In recent years, the

¹The Jean-Paul-L'Allier Prize; Solidarity Day; Video competition; Youth on the Trail of World Heritage; Promotional videos.



General Secretariat has also spearheaded cooperation between, and with, the cities², particularly through specific activities organized during the World Congresses (e.g., Krakow workshop, On the Road to Québec). It is also in this context that the Regional Secretariats have begun to develop activities corresponding more directly to the technical, scientific and professional needs of member cities (in addition to a plethora of communication projects).

To pursue this trend and for cities to have a positive perception of the benefits to be reaped as members of the Organization, it is strategically important to put the finishing touches to the current range of communication activities by directing greater attention to cooperative activities covering all fields of expertise related to heritage protection and urban development. In this respect, the Secretary General proposes the following action (Phase I).

1. Consolidate the Secretariat

Pursuant to resolutions already ratified by the Board of Directors regarding the creation of new positions within the Secretariat: recruiting a communications specialist will help rationalize agents' tasks and allow them to be more efficient.

Additional or freed human resources might then be invested in the development of new cooperative activities. It is all the more important and appropriate to proceed with recruiting at the beginning of the year when the World Congress will take place because the Congress itself will inevitably lead to an extra workload. The General Secretariat's specialization in heritage and communication is aligned with the logic proposed in the 2021-2025 Strategy.

2. Develop new cooperative activities focusing mainly on providing technical assistance to member cities involved in heritage protection/rehabilitation projects

- Based on the experience acquired, make changes to the *City2City* concept: the new version of the project (based on the OWHC Grants) must contribute to supporting cities that help each other. The role of the General Secretariat will be to:
 - Identify the expertise of cities in different domains (experts' pool);
 - Handle requests for assistance;
 - Match available expertise with the assistance requested;
 - Financially support experts' missions – a few days maximum;
 - Publish the results of missions to compile experience / best practices and make them available to city members at large.

- Propose the concept of a technical assistance program (name to be determined) to specifically help cities identify their needs and or outline/initiate certain projects within their territory. This complement to *City2City* will allow the General Secretariat to intervene directly with beneficiary cities. The role of the Secretariat will be to:

²City2City Platform; OWHC Grants. Professional capacity-building activities.



- Identify international expertise (including member cities) in different domains (experts' pool);
- Help clarify/express issues and problems related to project implementation;
- Organize brief experts' missions;
- Publish the results of missions to compile experience/best practices and make them available to city members at large.

3. Mobilize member cities' expertise

The creation of a pool of experts from member cities of the OWHC is necessary to mobilize members, decompartmentalize municipal services and integrate them with heritage management. Showcasing practices and experience garnered over time will make a strong case towards convincing member cities that the OWHC is a network where it is important to remain active. The process involves:

- Consulting member cities to identify the “experts”³;
- Identifying international experts in cooperation with OWHC partners;
- Establishing a database;
- Proposing a method to validate concrete expertise and experience related to best practices to be disseminated widely within the members' network.

4. Increase complementarity with the Regional Secretariats

Activities within the Regional Secretariats will be encouraged and supported so that participating member cities will gain access to more tools to exchange information, practices and experience.

The activities in question correspond to site manager and other technicians' requests on the basis of work in which they are involved/or oversee. In addition to communication activities, the Regional Secretariats develop workshops and targeted training sessions.

To complement this basic function, the Regional Secretariats will be invited to work on general interest themes proposed by the General Secretariat. This work will serve to identify and analyze major trends and develop tools and guidelines to be validated during General Assemblies/World Congresses.

³ The concept of ‘expert’ is sometimes tricky to use insofar as an ‘expert’ is usually recognized on the basis of his or ‘expertise’. Therefore, it is up to the General Secretariat, in association with the Regional Secretariats, to assess existing expertise in related to various domains.



5. Capitalize on the preparation for the World Congress to initiate new approaches

The 16th World Congress (Québec, Canada, September 6-9, 2022) offers an exceptional operational framework to deploy Phase I action.

Member cities clearly indicated their wish for a modified Congress formula to satisfy a need for greater participation and interaction. Given this, the preparatory phase of the Congress (December 2021 - Spring 2022) will feature workshops (see Item 5.1) to deploy all the expertise that cities might invest. This approach will facilitate the identification and assessment of available expertise, priorities and cities' needs. It will also serve to test the new cooperative tools (see point 2 above) and involve the Regional Secretariats above and beyond their current missions.

Congress 'sub-themes' will emerge from this democratic, professional process. The Congress will become the time and place to make decisions regarding concrete action proposals. Thus, after having included city experts and specialists in the discussion phase, Mayors will be able to exercise their right and confirm the strategic priorities that the organization will address in the future. Cities will be able to commit on the basis of concrete, clear and achievable objectives to accomplish while accompanied and supported through 'pilot projects' (Phase II).

SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM PERSPECTIVES (PHASES II AND III)

Phase I will serve to establish the new approach proposed for the Organization (more action and projects) and initiate the changes proposed. The Congress will prove instrumental, where members will validate the new work methods based on cities' expertise (collective intelligence) and identify strategic intervention axes to implement 'pilot projects' (Phase II).

The 'pilot projects' must be financed by the OWHC in cooperation with the 'pilot cities'. A results analysis (end of 2023) will confirm the essential city coaching role that the OWHC must develop to gain credibility among its members, then among outside partners.

Once the Organization has demonstrated its ability to propose, innovate, provide scientific content, and practical and operational approaches, it must begin to negotiate with outside partners to find and sustain new sources of funding (Phase III).

The 2021-2025 Strategy will guide the Organization's change, rapid development and create an effective quantitative and qualitative leap. The Organization alone cannot fund this strategy. However, it must prove itself to outside partners in this new operational niche and position itself as a credible representative. The Organization's future capacity for action will involve the need for levels of funding that exceed the resources drawn from membership fees.