

## PROJECT | FINAL REPORT

# TOUR DES VILLES

Alpine towns discover good examples in dealing with conversion areas

The project "Tour des Villes" promoted the exchange between Alpine towns in the planning and implementation process of projects for sustainable settlement development. In four study trips, partner cities visited each other, drew on their pool of knowledge and developed new solutions. "The 'Tour des Villes' helped us to reflect on our ideas for the Caserma Cantore and to think ahead," says Francesco Brollo, Mayor of Tolmezzo/IT.

The Alpine towns of Sonthofen/DE, Tolmin/SI, Idrija/SI and Tolmezzo/IT, the Alpine Town of the Year Association and the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) were partners in the project. Financial support was provided by the Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) and partly by the partner cities of the Alpine Town of the Year Association.



## Project: Facts

Duration of the project	October 2016 – March 2019
Project management	Association "Alpine Town of the Year" and CIPRA International
Project partners	The Alpine towns Tolmezzo/IT, Idrija/SL, Tolmin/SL, Sonthofen/DE
Project manager	Magdalena Holzer, CIPRA International, magdalena.holzer@cipra.org
Project objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the awareness of the representatives of the Alpine cities, that they are part of an Alpine region and that their commitment is needed so that the Alps continue to be a unique habitat.</li> <li>• Mutual learning from each other and exchange on how city representatives can use their room for manoeuvre for sustainable settlement development.</li> <li>• Dissemination of a view of architecture, that is committed to a multiplicity of criteria and does not stop at pure energy indicators (based on the experiences from four editions of the International Architecture Prize for Sustainable Renovation and Construction in the Alps Constructive Alps <a href="http://www.constructivealps.net">www.constructivealps.net</a>).</li> <li>• Partly also "backing" challenges in the field of spatial planning and urban development ("in the Alpine town of Idrija this was successfully solved in this way").</li> <li>• Strengthening cohesion among Alpine towns.</li> </ul>
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://www.cipra.org/de/cipra/international/projekte/abgeschlossen/tour-des-villes">https://www.cipra.org/de/cipra/international/projekte/abgeschlossen/tour-des-villes</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.alpenstaedte.org/en/projects/tour-des-villes">http://www.alpenstaedte.org/en/projects/tour-des-villes</a></li> </ul>

## Milestones

14.10.2016	Kick-off workshop during the Alpine Week in Grassau for the project partner cities Sonthofen, Idrija, Tolmezzo and Tolmin.
14.10.2016	"Shaping the Future on Fallow Land and in Vacant Land", interactive session with three expert inputs at AlpenWoche 2016 in Grassau. Participants: the project partner cities, further members of the association "Alpine Town of the Year" and participants of the Alpine Week 2016 in Grassau (approx. 80 people).
27. - 28.4.2017	First Tour of the Villes Study Tour, Tolmezzo/IT Caserma Cantore and Palazzo Linussio: just outside the city of Tolmezzo, an extensive barracks area with a historic palace opens up.



18. - 19.5.2017	Second Tour of the Villes Study Tour, Idrija/SI: The historical wooden houses of the workers in the abandoned mercury mines in Idrija: jewels of old craftsmanship threaten to decay.
25. - 26.11.2017	Third tour of the Villes study tour, Sonthofen/DE: 33 hectares of space freed up in the middle of the city - a great opportunity and challenge at the same time.
08. - 09.3.2018	Fourth tour of the Villes study tour, Tolmin/SI: The Baška Grapa valley, its empty factories and the high number of daily commuters to the Slovene capital
23. - 24.4.2018	Inspiration excursion of the project partners to the Gundeli quarter in Basel/CH and the eco-quarter Vauban in Freiburg/DE.
29.11.2018	Presentation of the project results at the 2nd general meeting, Chambéry/F.
03. 2019	Printing of the final publication and publication of an online photo book with ideas for dealing with conversion areas.
04.4.2019	Presentation of the project at the AlpWeek Intermezzo in Inns-bruck/AT in the form of a Pecha Kucha presentation and a market stand.

The aim of the exchange meetings was to gain an initial insight into the relevant issues and current developments concerning conversion areas and sustainability in the settlement development of the participating Alpine towns. The representatives of the four Alpine towns participating in the project visited each other on two-day study trips, "Alpine Town as a Guest on the Fallow Land", and worked in moderated workshops on the topic of sustainable settlement development and conversion areas between October 2016 and October 2018. In a joint case assessment and consultation with local architects and/or experts, the questions were addressed, solutions and parallels with already implemented projects in other towns were sought and inputs were given. The contact person for the project of each participating Alpine town should take part in at least three mutual visits, usually several participants per town. As a joint conclusion, an excursion to multifunctional neighbourhoods in Basel/CH and Freiburg/DE took place in April 2018. The project was concluded with the presentation of the results and the final product at the second general meeting of the association "Alpine Town of the Year" on 29 November 2018.

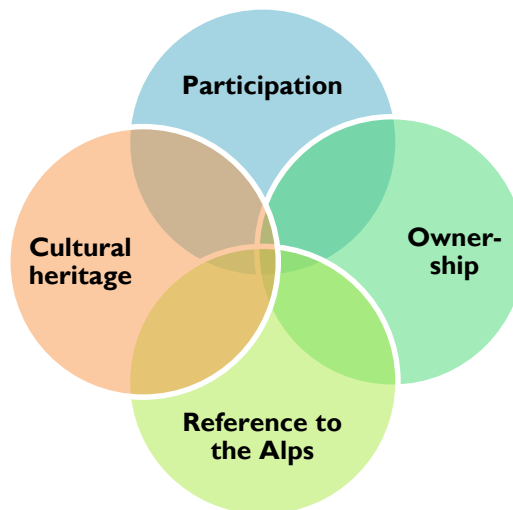
### Target audience | Stakeholders

The conference addressed Alpine city consultants and city representatives from the fields of spatial planning, private and public construction, master builders, architects and the like. The inviting city worked out a concrete question, depending on where it needed the expertise of the participants and which good examples it wanted to present, and defined further actors according to the objects and the thematic focus.



## Kick-Off Workshop

Within the framework of the kick-off workshop, methodological questions were developed in addition to four thematic focal points for further project work. The aim was to think about these aspects in the project work and to integrate them into the programmes of the workshops and excursions. Furthermore, representatives of the participating cities presented the issues to be dealt with in the course of the project and the general urban planning conditions.



### Participation of population

- To what extent should citizens and citizens participate? Which actors should participate in the process? Should the process be accessible to the general public or only to a selected group? How can this selection happen?
- How can architects, experts and planners be convinced of the importance of involving the population in planning processes?
- What level of participation is appropriate? Information (website, newspaper, etc.), organisation of excursions, or involvement in making decisions?
- How can young adults be integrated into the planning process and how can the buildings concerned be used by young people?

### Owners

- How can the owners be integrated into the process?
- How to deal with several private owners?
- How can private individuals be motivated to invest in the adaptation of the property? Who bears the costs? Are there any funding opportunities?
- How can the interests and ideas of the owners be reconciled with the interests and needs of the community?



## Cultural heritage (barracks, old industrial or educational sites, etc.)

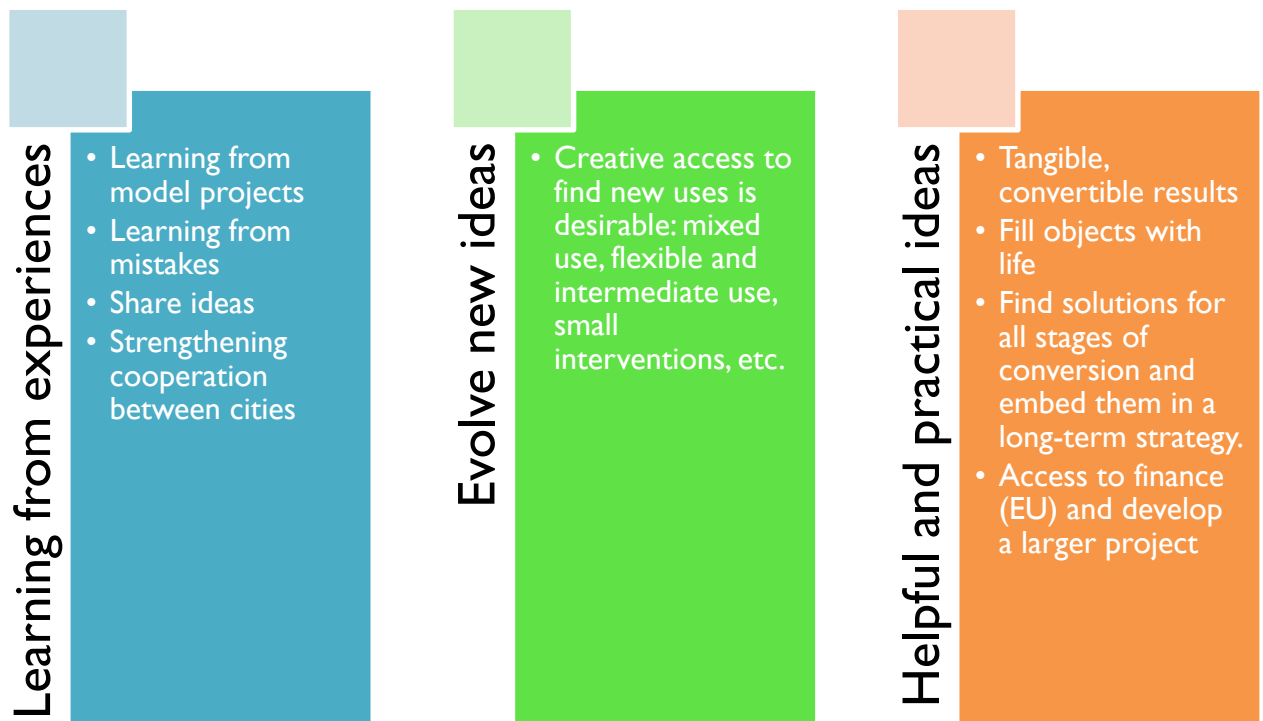
- How can any restrictive regulations be dealt with (old military installations, religious buildings, etc.)?
- How can history and new technologies be reconciled?

## Reference to the Alps

- How can the transformation of conversion areas strengthen the link between the city and the surrounding alpine area? What are the specific Alpine aspects?

## Expectations of participating Towns

The participating experts and city representatives considered the following ideas to be essential for the further course of the project:



## IDRIJA Slovenia

Idrija is a municipality and town in the region of Goriška in Slovenia. In 2011 it was named Alpine Town of the Year. Idrija was strongly influenced by mining in the 19th century and attracted experts from all over Europe in the fields of natural science, medicine and technology through its later urban development. The challenges in sustainable settlement development arise from vacant buildings, factories and - the subject of the Tour des Villes study tour - historic homes of mining workers. They have a largely uniform planning (number of windows, height, interior layout, exterior design and construction according to old craftsmanship) and are therefore specific and special to the cityscape.



How can the historical houses of mining workers in Idrija be revived and private owners be persuaded to renovate them?

In the workshop in Idrija, the question of a financing model for the renovation of the properties was discussed on one hand, and on the other hand the question of the orientation of a possible use of these properties. The workshop participants considered the issue to be particularly important:

- To sensitise the inhabitants to see cultural heritage as an inspiration and not as a barrier.
- Furthermore, there is a need for clarification of a technical nature: how can apartments with a modern standard of living be built in old houses?
- These houses were built with a lot of craftsmanship. The participants proposed to conduct practical workshops with (architecture) students and graduates of corresponding teaching professions together with senior citizens with this expertise.
- Each of these historic houses has a garden right in front of the front door: through the relatively easy replanting and (public) gardening the aesthetics can be improved and the view directed.
- The sensitisation of the owners (often several) needs a lot of attention.
- Incentive to imitate: The city of Idrija is setting a good example and has bought one of these historic houses, which is now planning to renovate it. It will later be used for cultural events.
- These houses would be an ideal affordable first home for young people, the need is great in Idrija.

Protocol of the study visit to Idrija: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org/en/projects/tour-des-villes/tour-des-villes-1>



## SONTHOFEN Germany

Sonthofen is the district town of the Swabian district of Oberallgäu in Bavaria and was named Alpine Town of the Year in 2005. At the centre of the workshop in Sonthofen is the disused barracks area in the middle of the city, which is purchased by the city. Sonthofen sees its unique selling point in the educational offer of the city, the urban and alpine affairs, the hub function, intergenerational projects, the health care, the appreciation for the region, in its openness, the dynamics and the future orientation. The Sonthofer City Council has agreed in a resolution to focus on the two barracks Jäger-kaserne and Grüntenkaserne for the time being. The predominant themes will be housing, education and commerce.



33 hectares of vacated land in the middle of Sonthofen was previously closed to citizens as a barracks area. Representatives of the Alpine towns discuss possible solutions and share their experiences.

- Sonthofen has its own "conversion manager" who is responsible for the further development of the 33 hectares of land freed up in Sonthofen.
- In the workshop it was jointly worked out that the hunter's barracks, due to their industrial charm and their favourable traffic connections, offer optimal framework conditions for the designation of an industrial/operational zone. Here it was noted that this should absolutely be planned with the involvement of the business people in the inner city.
- For the conversion of the Jägerkasernen site, the city of Sonthofen planned to demolish a large part of the existing buildings and erect completely new buildings in order to comply with the current building standards. The participating cities from Slovenia and Italy were familiar with a different way of dealing with old buildings and raised the question of whether it would not be possible to preserve and renovate a larger part of them. This discussion accompanied the group through the whole project, including during the whole project, as well as during the guided tours in Basel and Freiburg im Breisgau.
- Radstadt Sonthofen: the concept for the entire city in implementation. The vacated areas can partly be used for infrastructure and attract single-storey businesses.
- The Grüntenkaserne has loose buildings with several green spaces between the buildings and is therefore ideally suited as a recreational area and as a precautionary area for future urban development.



- Sonthofen has a large number of associations; their participation ensures identification with the area and revitalises the area.
- Bring the areas to bloom: Sonthofen is applying for the German State Garden Show, large parts of which are to concern the barracks area and direct the view to the area, which has been located behind fences and walls until now.
- Interim use: as the area is large and a revitalisation cost-intensive, the workshop participants proposed an interim use at a lower price in order to attract start-ups, creative industry players and other businesses. This should help to revitalize the location and make it attractive for long-term use.
- Furthermore, it was suggested that a large area should not be taken into consideration in current considerations and that planning should be left to future generations.

Protocol of the study visit to Sonthofen: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org/en/projects/tour-des-villes/tour-des-villes-1>

## **TOLMIN** Slovenia

The town is located in the Slovenian region of Goriška near the Italian border and was named Alpine Town of the Year in 2016. As the largest town in the entire Soča Valley (between the Predil Pass and Nova Gorica), Tolmin has cooperated intensively and internationally with other municipalities in the past. Examples are "tourism", "water", "sewage" and "waste". Due to the proximity to the border with Italy and the Slovenian minorities living there, also regular cross-border activities take place there. The representatives of the city present some areas and objects to which a new use is to be made. These include empty buildings with past military use in the city centre and an adjacent valley in which several factories are empty. These factories were built under the socialist regime, which had the vision of creating jobs where workers were available. The geographical location of these factories no longer corresponds to the logic of today's economy, and the city of Tolmin and surrounding communities are struggling with a declining population. Workers depend on commuting. At the same time, there are optimal natural conditions to develop tourism as an economic sector.



The Baška-Grapa is strongly affected by deflection. Many of the residents still living there commute daily to the capital Ljubljana, which is about 1.5 hours away.





**Challenges** for Tolmin in the context of Tour des Villes: At the centre of the post-use debate on objects in Tolmin are both the old military barracks of the Yugoslav and Italian armies and the empty factories from the socialist era. Four areas/object groups were defined for this purpose, one is under closer examination (area 5 Podbrdo). Some of the sites are privately owned, others belong to the public sector. In the discussions, the question often arose as to what should be preserved and what should be demolished in order to return the areas to nature.

In the workshop the experts and city representatives worked out the following, in particular for the Bača valley (Baška Grapa) around Podbrdo:

### **Tourismus:**

- Mountain biking: potential could be exploited
- Accommodation: Development of capacities to accommodate more people, as they are currently only passing through. Albergo Diffuso could be a possibility, or glamping as well. To rely on private accommodation.
- Instagram map: Marking points. (Koritnica or Grahovo eg.)
- Combination of health and fresh water: Kneipp holidays. There is a clinic for young people with mental illness, which is full. There could be more potential.
- Digital Detox: no Internet, no modern luxury.
- Mountain run: Example from France; Trail station for running, overall concept and offer for runners - running routes, special offer for food, close cooperation with a device manufacturer from France. Low infrastructure costs.
- Nature, authenticity, inviting culture and hospitality proved to be strong elements. Tourists can hire a local guide to walk, cycle, etc. with you.
- Improving signage for tourists in the valley - there is a lack of information.
- Tourist office at the petrol station? Since many people only travel through and the tourism office is very difficult to find.
- Bicycle rental center from one of the empty buildings with workshop that repairs bicycles and motorcycles.

### **Infrastructure und energy:**

- Infrastructure, good rail and road connections, modernisation of railway stations
- Development of (micro)energy production

### **Working in Tolmin – economy:**

- Maintaining jobs that require specific knowledge
- Promotion and marketing of local products and dishes
- New agricultural products: Mushrooms, cereals for beer production, herbs & seeds
- Wood recycling: There are young people who are very interested in this area (e.g. furniture).
- Wool processing: Women work with wool (carpets, knitting) in their free time, this could be promoted and marketed.
- Fair trade: development of the idea - facilities, sale of stories, less quantitative



- Why are companies not interested in settling in? Is accessibility too difficult? If not, would they perhaps be interested in moving if the building had been renovated before? To find out how to think in the future.

### **Living in Tolmin – Culture and participation:**

- Guide: There should be an organization that leads the local population to new ideas, new forms of work, new approaches, goals, and motivates cooperation!
- Identification of which associations exist in the valley. Identification of the needs and desires of the population, especially young people. Participation of young locals - development of a vision for this valley together with everyone!
- The central question is the resource: people, knowledge, activity. How can they be activated? The vision should come from them.
- Participation: What kind of life do the people in the valley want? Involve young people from the valley and from abroad in future development and use these spaces (also temporarily) to generate local activities.
- Heritage and strong history: A new spirit, a new perspective on this heritage is needed to enable a modern way of life.
- Taking into account the ageing of the population
- The wool trade (a vacant factory area) with a socialist background should be regarded as an inheritance; the factory is still alive in people's minds.
- Development of a living modern culture - new ways of using the factory, develop new types of crafts, services, factory laboratories. The offer should fit to the people who live there, not to the tourists at all.
- Train & tunnel seem to be central and connecting elements: tunnel could bring young people to make paintings, graffiti, could be a project for several years; the railway company would be open to such proposals, there is a whole system of tunnels.

Protocol of the study visit to Tolmin: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org/en/projects/tour-des-villes/tour-des-villes-1>



## TOLMEZZO ITALY

Tolmezzo is a town on the Tagliamento River in Friuli and was named Alpine Town of the Year in 2017. One of the city's goals, together with the Carnic region, is to grow in close co-operation with the communities of the Tolmezzo region. At the heart of the Villes Exchange Tour is the conversion of the Cantore barracks and Villa Linussio from the 17th-18th century. The challenge that the city has set itself with this project concerns a new combination of urban aspects such as energy, natural resources, local products and public administration. Furthermore, this project and other measures will bring together private and public actors from the economic, social and civilian sectors to discuss the future of the properties and beyond. The Caserma Cantore is currently empty, the technical infrastructure in the building is inadequate and no more than 20 people are allowed to stay in the building. The area consists of two parts: the old military barracks and a part that is particularly interesting from an architectural point of view, including old murals in the walls. In the 20th century the building was home to both the textile and ski industries. The area is state-owned and the municipality will become owner in the next two years. There will be no costs.



The elaborately frescoed Palazzo Linussio from the 18th century stands in the middle of the barracks area "Caserma Cantore" in Tolmezzo.

In the workshop the participants worked out the following possibilities to use the barracks area:

- A home for fab labs, for start-ups, for the creative industry, for e.g. micro breweries.
- Revitalisation of the region also through the agricultural and tourist sectors
- Combating population shrinkage is the wrong approach, better focus on improving the quality of life of the resident population put
- Opportunity for intergenerational activities
- The connection between the barracks and the city centre is not really a spatial one, a new and relatively unknown area to the inhabitants.
- Focus on sport: The founding of a sports university - cross-country skiing, training, winter sports, etc. is another idea.
- Revival of a DIY culture and brokerage company



- Museum: Possible focus on masks from all over the world. The focus is on making cultural experiences possible and making new connections between culture and crafts possible.
- Creating meeting spaces: Connecting generations, schools, production and residents.

Protocol of the study visit to Tolmezzo: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org/en/projects/tour-des-villes/tour-des-villes-1>

## Excursion to Basel/CH and Freiburg/DE

The aim of the excursion held as part of Tour des Villes was to collect ideas from other cities that had already successfully implemented a conversion and to be inspired by them for their own projects. In Basel, the group visited the Gundel-dingen quarter, which was strongly influenced by industrial companies from 1844 to 1999. After a long transformation process, a lively quarter with office, leisure and green spaces, restaurants, etc. was established. The process was broad-based. The aim was to involve as many private and public actors as possible in the bottom-up process.



A guided tour through the city of Basel also offered insights into the political functioning of Switzerland, its aggregation programme or incentives for internal densification and for an interesting exchange on different framework conditions in the Alpine countries.



The Gundeli quarter in Basel/CH was initiated by a consortium of four and now offers space for a climbing hall, a restaurant, a brewery and a youth hostel, among other things, but deliberately no private living space to underline the open, collective orientation.

In the Vauban district of Freiburg in Germany, a residential area was built on 40 hectares of former French army barracks, which is now known for its family-friendly atmosphere. Furthermore, the quarter and its buildings are known for their environmentally friendly and eco-efficient construction, as well as green spaces between the buildings and greened building areas.



The former military site of Vauban in Freiburg was already conferred a few years ago. The guided tour through the 41 hectare area with approx. 5500 inhabitants offered valuable insights into details that have proven to be efficient over the years or not.



## Concluding remarks & outlook

The format of these study visits (four small delegations visiting each other and working together on pre-defined, limited challenges) was very well received by the participants and was reapplied as such for another project on biodiversity in the city. Of course, such a "first pass" in the study visits can only be a starting point and the road to a successful conversion still takes some time.

With the appointment of a conversion manager and a broad-based participation process, **Sonthofen** has created important foundations for the development of the barracks area. The approval for the possible purchase of the two barracks areas was postponed last year until 2023, depending on the completion of the Generaloberst-Beck barracks, into which the Bundeswehr is moving. The future use of the areas (Jägerkaserne: commercial, mixed use (residential, educational), Grünenkaserne: residential, green areas) will remain unchanged. This was the result of the process of drawing up the Urban Development Concept (IUDC) in 2013.

In **Tolmin**, a cultural association deals with the future of the Bača valley (Baška Grapa). In the centre of Podbrdo, extensive road repair and renovation measures are planned. The municipality will participate in this EUR 3 million project by restoring pavements and street lamps and connecting buildings to the Podbrdo sewage treatment plant. The works are scheduled for the second half of 2019. The Podbrdo Municipality has also received funding for the construction of a footpath between the centre and the station/playground. The first section of Baška Grapa's main road, damaged by the avalanche, is currently being renovated. Projects to reconstruct critical road sections between the villages of Klavže and Koritnica are also in preparation. The work will be carried out in the coming years. In Kneža a car park has been built, which can also be used for open-air events.

**Tolmezzo** has invited numerous local associations to think together about the future of the barracks "Caserma Cantore", a research institution (Fondazione Nordest) has been commissioned to carry out a feasibility study of the conversion including citizens' ideas. Four subject areas were identified: Culture and history (museum of the region's handicrafts), school and training (space for new forms of teaching), sport & leisure and a platform for services (tourism, customs, local industry, technology and new forms of work) with respective premises for business activities. At the end of 2018, the barracks area was fully owned by the municipality. With a grant of 500,000 euros from the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, valuable frescoes from Palazzo Linussio have been restored. In spring 2019 the roof of Palazzo Linussio will be renovated.

**Idrija**. In 2018, the conversion baton was handed over to two NGOs (Idrija 2020 and Prostorož), with whom the municipality of Idrija cooperates in the further search for revitalization possibilities. [The PIRH \(Renovation of Idrija Miners Houses\)](#) project dealt with mining houses as a unique architectural type and an important part of the historical cultural landscape of Slovenia's oldest mining town up to the 20th century. A team of young architects and cultural enthusiasts from Prostorož and Idrija analysed the status quo of the existing buildings. They counted, mapped and analyzed them, drew up a catalogue of renovation measures for house owners and drew up a plan for renovation and modernization using the example of the Trnovec house (owned by the municipality of Idrija).



The plan is currently waiting for building permission and securing finances, while the Idrija 2020 Association is concentrating on supporting homeowners with architectural advice.



The delegations from the four participating Alpine towns of the year gained insight into an already successfully converted area in Tolmin.

## Final publication

The ideas developed during the study trips for the conversion areas under consideration are available as an online photo book and as a print product (box with 21 cards).

Online photo book: [www.alpenstaedte.org/tourdesvilles](http://www.alpenstaedte.org/tourdesvilles) (en, it, fr, sl, de)

If you are interested in receiving a card box, please contact [magdalena.holzer@cipra.org](mailto:magdalena.holzer@cipra.org).



21 printed cards are one of the final products of the project and present 21 printed cards are the final product of the project's ideas for conversion areas.

Further information: <http://www.alpenstaedte.org/en/projects/tour-des-villes>

<https://www.cipra.org/de/cipra/international/projekte/abgeschlossen/tour-des-villes>