



PRESS RELEASE

Opening of the first European ÉCONOMUSÉE® in Norway, July 1st 2009

Québec, July 1st, 2009: Today, in Aurland, marks the opening of the first ÉCONOMUSÉE® in Europe. It is situated close to the city of Bergen, Norway, at the tip of the Grand Fjord, recognised by UNESCO as a World Natural Heritage Site.

This first European ÉCONOMUSÉE® is a small-scale cottage industry producing the traditional Norwegian shoe, better known in its American version as the “penny loafer”. It is the last heritage cottage industry of this type in Aurland whereas thirty years ago, we could still count twenty of these shops in the country.

Thanks to an agreement signed in Québec City in April 2008 with the International ÉCONOMUSÉE® Network Society (IENS), European partners can use the ÉCONOMUSÉE® trademark as well as benefit from the expertise of the Society for the implementation of the project according to the six main components of the concept. A training program, for these partners, was developed by the IENS in cooperation with the UNESCO Chair on Cultural Heritage at Laval University.

Organisations from five northern European countries are part of this agreement for an initial network of artisans in Norway, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands, within the framework of an European Union program. (*Northern Peripheries Programme of INTERREG IV*)

“These days, it is always a challenge to find solutions to preserve and develop our heritage and our traditions for the future” said Mr. Helge Andre Njaastad, President of the Hordaland County committee on Culture and Resources and mayor of the Norwegian municipality of Austevoll adding that “through the concept of the ÉCONOMUSÉE®, an idea has developed here in Québec that is sensational and innovative and that may be of incredible value to us in the ‘Old World’”.

“Such is the show of support from our European partners towards the traditional trades, highlighted in a contemporary fashion and within a viable network and we are very proud of this” said Mr. Cyril Simard, president of IENS.

Currently, the network comprises fifty ÉCONOMUSÉE® in five provinces in Canada and attracts more than 750 000 visitors annually wishing to discover the tangible and intangible heritage of our cultural and economic diversity.

The opening of the first European ÉCONOMUSÉE® takes place in the presence of the founder of the network, Mr. Cyril Simard, CEO of the International ÉCONOMUSÉE® Network Society and Mr. Claude Dubé, vice-president for international affairs at the IENS and holder of the UNESCO Chair on Cultural Heritage, Laval University.

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Website: www.economusee.com

Source: International ÉCONOMUSÉE® Network Society

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