



# The *EuroIndia* Centre

## **Case study of the Valladolid-Ahmedabad tie-up as a role model for Euro-Indian city-to-city co-operation**

as promoted by the EuroIndia Centre  
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### **Summary:**

In exactly two years, two cities which did not know each other at all have reached a climax in their relationship, as exemplified at the last *EuroIndia Summit* organized by Valladolid in October 2009, only one year after signing a co-operation agreement.

They have already touched upon the four strategic areas of the K.I.T.E., namely Knowledge, Investment and business, Tourism and urban Excellence, in search for their own brand of sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership that the Centre advocates for city-to-city co-operation.

It all started from the first mission of Indian cities to Europe that the *EuroIndia Centre* organized in October 2007, which made the Municipal Commissioner of Ahmedabad, I.P. Gautam, fully realize the importance of exploiting built heritage for the development of his city at large, through the shining examples of La Rochelle and Lyon in France.

This in turn prompted his interest in attending our second *EuroIndia Forum* in Goa with a City delegation in order to discuss the issue in detail and find a European partner-city with matching experience in large heritage conservation programmes and its commercial exploitation through heritage-related tourism. In the process, they signed a first co-operation agreement on the subject with La Rochelle (France) and initiated contacts with Halle (Germany) and Valladolid (Spain).

The Valladolid Mayor for his part, wanted to further his engagement with India, while leveraging *Casa de la India*, the Indian cultural centre of Spain, which is housed in his city. He was looking for a full-fledged tie-up with a dynamic Indian city having the potential for diverse and fruitful co-operation across the K.I.T.E. spectrum, with a focus on heritage conservation for development purposes, which is a known strength of Valladolid.

The shared vision and matching expectations of both cities needed a qualified and sensitive Euro-Indian broker to translate this mutual goodwill into a working tie-up. This is typical the role that the *EuroIndia Centre* played, in particular through two of its individual members, namely Debashish Nayak, presently Adviser, Heritage programme, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, and Guillermo Rodriguez, Head of *Casa de la India* in Valladolid who had a meeting of mind, when they met through the

Centre at the second *EuroIndia Forum* in Goa. They stage managed the coming together of their two cities till the climatic Valladolid Summit. Throughout this hazardous process, both sides could count on the unstinting good services provided by the Secretary General and his team.

These two key persons joined the Centre in their individual capacity in order to leverage the Centre's means as insiders, while working for the tie-up through their well regarded organizations in their respective cities. For *Casa de la India*, which is daily promoting Indo-Spanish relations, the Centre's Euro-Indian networking made all the difference. Same for Ahmedabad, which could sign meaningful agreements with three excellent European partner-cities in 6 months.

**Milestones in their two-year relationship** are given below (for pictures, log on [www.the-euroindia-centre.org](http://www.the-euroindia-centre.org)):

**February 2007:** Debashish Nayak, presently Adviser, Heritage programme, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, attends the first *EuroIndia Forum* in Goa and presents its pioneering work.

**October 2007:** The Ahmedabad Commissioner, I.P. Gautam, takes part in the first *EuroIndia mission* of cities to Europe that visited Frankfurt, Lyon and La Rochelle to survey four forum topics: water supply, solid waste management, transportation and heritage conservation. This mission is an eye-opener for Ahmedabad on the high asset value of the built heritage of the old walled city of Ahmedabad and on the need to scale up local conservation efforts accordingly.

**December 2007:** Our Secretary General on his visit to Ahmedabad suggests that the City capitalizes on such a grand plan with the creation of a much-needed national urban heritage institute, prompting the Municipality to search for European partners with a proven track record in the field.

**April 2008:** At the second EuroIndia Forum in Goa, Ahmedabad signs a co-operation agreement on heritage conservation and energy saving with La Rochelle, which has an impressive track record for both heritage conservation and exploitation with over 3 million tourists per year. Ahmedabad also meets Halle of Germany and Valladolid of Spain, with a similar track record.

**October 2008:** An Ahmedabad delegation led by the Mayor, visits La Rochelle, as part of a UNESCO mission. A special mission is organized thereafter by the Centre to Valladolid and Halle, where two more co-operation agreements are signed, one on heritage conservation and tourism promotion and the other on vocational training through internships.

**December 2008:** The Valladolid Mayor makes his first official visit to Ahmedabad.

**January 2009:** Both Ahmedabad and Valladolid become members of the Centre.

**January 2009:** The Valladolid Municipality offers to host the first *EuroIndia City*

*Summit* on 4-6 October 2009, to which an Indian mission to Madrid and Paris is added to enhance value for Indian delegates from 7 to 9.

**February 2009:** Ahmedabad offers to organize an exhibition on their architectural heritage for the opening of the *EuroIndia Summit*.

**August 2009:** The Secretary General of the Centre visits Ahmedabad to prepare their European mission and addresses the Municipal Council, the business community and the media to help raise awareness and funding, with the local support of CII, the Centre's main Indian Partner.

**September 2009:** Inspired by the EuroIndia Centre's initiative of city to city collaboration, particularly during the fund raising initiatives for the Valladolid summit, real estate developers of Ahmedabad got together to form the 'Ahmedabad Heritage Foundation' to promote the cause of preserving the ancient walled city area. This is the first time in Indian history that developers realized the value of branding a city to promote their new properties and therefore looked at urban heritage as an asset and not a liability that it had been seen to be so far, making its conservation and renovation economically worthwhile.

**2 October 2009:** Ahmedabad Mayor leads a powerful delegation of corporators and business delegates to attend the Summit and progress their co-operation agreement with Valladolid. Both Mayors garland the statue of Mahatma Gandhi to commemorate UNESCO International Day of Non-Violence as well as Mahatma Gandhi's birthday.

**4-6 October 2009:**

On 4<sup>th</sup>, An official function is organized at *Casa de la India* for the handing over of a magnificent gift by the citizens of Ahmedabad to their Valladolid counterparts of a specially crafted facade of a traditional haveli, which is presided over by the Spanish Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the two Mayors, followed by the official inauguration of the Ahmedabad heritage exhibition. Besides, Debashish Nayak lectured the students of the Valladolid school of architecture on the Ahmedabad heritage conservation programme.

On 5<sup>th</sup>, the delegation takes an active part in the *EuroIndia Summit*.

On 6<sup>th</sup>, the Valladolid Chamber of Commerce organizes a B to B meeting for the Ahmedabad business delegates and Summit participants.

**7 October 2009:**

*Casa de la India* provides for a field visit of Madrid and a lunch reception for the official Indian delegation hosted by its Municipality.

**September-December 2009:**

Two engineers from Ahmedabad are working as interns at the Heritage Conservation

Dept. of Valladolid city council under an exchange scheme launched in the framework of the co-operation agreement.

### **21-25 de November 2010**

A Spanish delegation representing the City Hall of Valladolid, the University of Valladolid and Casa de la India visits Ahmedabad to inaugurate the Valladolid Historical and Urban Heritage Exhibition. The delegation is also invited by the honourable Mayor of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation for a cultural evening and dinner. During their stay they have meetings with different organisations and institutions like NID (National Institute of Design), Ahmedabad University, CEPT University of Ahmedabad etc.

### **27-28 April 2011**

The course “Architecture, heritage and sustainable development in Europe and India” takes place on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of April at Casa de la India. Mr. Debasish Nayak from the City Hall of Ahmedabad, Prof. Jay Thakkar and Prof. Rajan Rawal from the CEPT University Ahmedabad, Prof. Isabelle Milbert from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and several Spanish speakers as experts on this topic deliver lectures on sustainable urban development, energy efficiency etc. The course is open to students, researchers, professors and professionals.

### **2011-2012:**

In reciprocity, a heritage exhibition of Valladolid city is being planned in Ahmedabad. A joint working group of architects is working on the project.

Also the University of Valladolid Masters Degree in heritage conservation will hold part of its course in Ahmedabad in 2011-2012 and Indian students would be allowed to join the course in India under a special scheme which will allow some of them to travel to Valladolid and complete their Masters degree there.

A complete picture file is available on [www.the-euroindia-centre.org](http://www.the-euroindia-centre.org)

**Conclusions:** One may safely foresee that this flying start between the two cities is a mere prelude to a very ambitious partnership that can only go from strength to strength as it widens and deepens between the two cities based on personal affinities and shared interest and expand to new areas and to other sister cities, regions or States, with the two cities playing a role model worth emulating. No doubt that the contemplated MoU to be signed between *Casa de la India*, *Spain-India Foundation* and the Centre can only give us the required means to extend our reach and services for the benefit of players in Spain and beyond: Valladolid offered Halle help to organize their own Summit in 2010 and will also do so for Leuven who is hosting the Summit in 2011.