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# NEWSLETTER

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NeT-TOPIC

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FURTHER INFORMATION:  
[www.urbact.eu/net\\_topic](http://www.urbact.eu/net_topic)

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NeT-TOPIC

# WHAT IS NeT-TOPIC AND URBACT II?

## WHAT IS NeT-TOPIC?

NeT-TOPIC is a Thematic Network within URBACT II, a European exchange and learning programme that enables cities to work together to build solutions to major urban challenges.

NeT-TOPIC is composed of **European peripheral cities in transformation**, with shared problems including industrial decline, territorial fragmentation and social polarisation. Located near to major cities, they are transforming into more attractive urban areas: focusing on developing their own urban identity, offering a greater quality of life, improving citizen integration and social cohesion to fulfil a new role within their metropolitan areas.

One of the biggest challenges these cities face is the use and **promotion of new tools and approaches related to territorial governance and local, regional and national urban planning processes to improve urban transformation processes**. The network provides these cities with a platform to reflect on changes in the city model to increase the strategic value of its territory.

NeT-TOPIC's network aims to foster the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices among its partners. The project seeks to enhance the role of peripheral cities in territorial governance and urban planning processes to achieve the new city model they desire.

## THE URBACT II PROGRAMME

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme that promotes sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. URBACT helps cities to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT comprises 181 cities, 29 countries and 5.000 active participants. URBACT is jointly financed by ERDF and the Member States.

## WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS NEWSLETTER?

This newsletter intends to provide information on the network and its evolution: on the implemented and upcoming activities as well as on the conclusions reached. It will also include other sections such as interviews with relevant stakeholders, the network partners' city profiles as well as information on relevant issues related to the project themes.

## LEAD EXPERT'S NOTE

NeT-TOPIC deals with the transformation of cities belonging to metropolitan areas in order to adapt them to the new demands for uses and activities in the process of post-industrialisation and to new tertiary activities. This is a key process for the new economy derived from competitiveness, but also from the internal demands of its urban systems. In the new economic context cities should be capable of being at the centre of new transformation scenarios. These scenarios are opportunities to establish or expand private, public and mixed investment in cities, in new fields of activity. The character of urban, socio-economic promotion, but also the need to position the cities on the map of the new economy, are some of the foundations of these key policies on urban transformation. The processes deriving from these models of relation between the local and the global, in the urban scale of peripheral cities in metropolitan contexts, can be further scoped, much more so if we approach the most common spaces, zones and places of transformation. All partners belonging to our network are engaged in the transformation of their cities, trying to evolve from monofunctional to multifunctional cities with new urban identities. Indeed, members of NeT-TOPIC want to share and exchange new findings from their own practices of urban transformation.

**Fernando Barreiro (Barcelona)**  
*Lead expert of NeT-TOPIC*



# LAST MONTHS

## APPROVAL OF THE II PHASE AND KICK-OFF MEETING

After the six months Development Phase (21st April-21st October 2008) and the approval of the Final Application, NeT-TOPIC has entered the Implementation Phase (October 2008-April 2011).

The kick-off meeting organised in Barakaldo, Spain, last 4-5th February was the starting point for the Second Phase. The local coordinators and urban officers met in the partner city to define next tasks and steps to be carried out in this Phase.

In order to foster the exchange of experiences and best practices among its partners and to produce new knowledge, the network plans to carry out some activities during this Second Phase:



*The kick-off meeting was the starting point for the Second Phase*

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

#### · 3 Open Thematic Seminars:

- "Urban fragmentation due to roads and communication infrastructures" and "Recovering and conditioning abandoned and obsolete industrial areas", Sesto San Giovanni, May 2009.
- "Transformation from a monofunctional city into a multifunctional city" and "Development and consolidation of the urban identity", Salford, October 2009.
- "Enhancing new forms of urban and metropolitan governance", Nanterre, July 2010 (to be confirmed).

#### · 2 Workshop-labs

- Haidari, beginning of 2010
- To be confirmed

#### · Final event

- L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, April 2011, where all the network conclusions will be presented.

### MAIN PUBLICATIONS

- 3 Thematic Seminar Publications: compilation of the Seminar's interventions and conclusions.
- Recommendations and Guidelines on how to carry out urban planning processes.
- Electronic Bank of Urban Transformation Processes.
- 5 electronic newsletters.

### OTHER OUTPUTS

A part from that, all partners will also:

- Constitute a Local Support Group (composed of relevant related local stakeholders).
- Elaborate a Local Action Plan.

During the kick-off meeting, the host city organised a tour around the city, giving project partners an opportunity to visit the main urban transformation processes in Barakaldo. Projects such as Urban Galindo, Retuerto or Ibarreta-Zuloko are some examples of the significant urban transformation the city has carried out over the last years.

# LAST MONTHS

## NeT-TOPIC FIRST THEMATIC SEMINAR

### DRIVING FORCES OF URBAN COHESION

Recovery of abandoned and obsolete industrial areas and avoidance of fragmentation and urban division in peripheral cities of metropolitan areas

*Sesto San Giovanni, 20-21st May, 2009.*



Last 20-21st May the city of Sesto San Giovanni organised the first NeT-TOPIC thematic Seminar. The event, opened by Giorgio OLDRINI, Mayor of the city, intended to reflect and debate on how to overcome urban fragmentation due to roads and communication infrastructures and how to recover and condition abandoned and obsolete industrial areas.

In practice all cities belonging to NeT-TOPIC suffer from fragmentation and lack of urban cohesion and territorial integration as a result of the road and railroads infrastructures that cross their areas. At the same time, their industrial background supposes the existence of areas and urban spaces that need to be recovered and reintegrated in the diversified and complex new post-industrial city model, if the city wants to find and develop a new city pattern, with more cohesion, identity and quality of life for their inhabitants.

The Seminar aimed to gather experts from different fields in order to have a global perspective of the themes dealt with. Thus, Mr. Fausto CURTI, Town Planner from the Politecnico di Milano; Silvia MUGNANO, Sociologist from the Università degli Studi Milano-Bicocca; Ms. Veronique HENDERIX, Project Manager at Leuven City Development Agency; and Marina DRAGOTTO from AUDIS (Associazione Aree Urbane Dismesse) participated in the event.

Previous to the organisation of the event, project partners, with the coordination of the Lead Expert, Mr. Fernando Barreiro, prepared a "Position Paper" on the seminar's theme that intended to be a real framework to ensure a clear focus of the event.

Three cities from the network with a significant experience on the theme dealt, Sesto San Giovanni, Barakaldo and Siemianowice Slaskie presented their case studies in the open session. These NeT-TOPIC cities have carried out some specific operations in order to solve fragmentation problems due to infrastructures or obsolete industrial areas.

On the second session on 21st May, closed for NeT-TOPIC partners, the network members presented their specific cases and best practices in relation to the themes dealt with and carried out a debate moderated by Mr. Fernando Barreiro, Lead Expert of the network.

All interventions, as well as the main conclusions of the Seminar and the previous Position Paper, will be available in short in a Publication on the event.

For more information, please consult: [http://urbact.eu/net\\_topic](http://urbact.eu/net_topic) or contact: [redtrace@l-h.cat](mailto:redtrace@l-h.cat)



NeT-TOPIC

# LAST MONTHS

## NeT-TOPIC COLLABORATES WITH THE PROJECT "BRASIL MUNICIPIOS"

The NeT-TOPIC project was invited to present their Thematic Network in the First Meeting of Mayors organised within the framework of the project Brazil Municipalities which took place last 12.02.09 in Brasilia.

The project, co-financed by the EU and the Inter-American Development Bank, aims to strengthen the municipal public management by means of enhancing the capacity of municipal administrations in the planning, management and assessment of public municipal policies and governmental projects, by developing the institutional capacity and promoting intermunicipal partnerships. Within this framework, *Brasil municipios* has expressed its interest in knowing the urban experience of NeT-TOPIC & TRACE networks.

123 mayors and municipal secretaries from Brazil attended the event, at which the EU, the Brazilian Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management and the Inter-American Development Bank were also represented.

More information:

[http://urbact.eu/net\\_topic](http://urbact.eu/net_topic)

<http://www.urbantrace.eu>



PROJETO  
BRASIL  
MUNICIPIOS

*The project aims  
to strengthen the  
municipal public  
management*



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## SECOND NeT-TOPIC THEMATIC SEMINAR

**“Transformation from a monofunctional city into a multifunctional city”**

and

**“Development and consolidation of urban identity”**

*Salford, October 2009.*



Next 21-22nd October, Salford will organise the second Thematic Seminar within the framework of the NeT-TOPIC network. This second event will be focus on the transformation from a monofunctional city into a multifunctional city and the development and consolidation of an urban identity.

Quite often peripheral cities in metropolitan areas have been associated to the image of industrial, fragmented, dormitory towns, etc. As a result of its location and the urban territorial systems in which these cities are nestled, the land of the intermediate cities has often been used for the industrial sector (now in recession), infrastructures (which split the city), and residential areas (which need integrated rehabilitation). Faced with this situation, the cities need to adjust the land uses to their socio-economic and territorial area trends, and therefore they need to develop a city model change process. This means that these cities face the challenge of transforming from peripheral cities into central cities, from residential into day time cities (university, administrative or business centres), from industrial into technological/knowledge/service cities, i.e., from monofunctional into multifunctional cities...

The second seminar intends to gather speakers who are experts on the themes as well as to present the cases of some NeT-TOPIC cities with an important experience on the issues dealt with: Salford, Haidari and Kladno. After the industrial decline, the host city, with an important history of industrialization, has recently embarked upon a massive transformation: regenerating areas that have been affected by population and industrial decay. The city is moving towards multifunction: leisure spaces, high quality housing and employment opportunities.

Programme available in short. Those interested in participating in the Seminar or receiving more information, please contact: [redtrace@l-h.cat](mailto:redtrace@l-h.cat)



NeT-TOPIC

# INTERVIEW

## FAUSTO CURTI

Town Planner and Professor  
at Politecnico di Milano  
Department of Architecture  
& Urban Planning

Mr. Fausto took part in the first  
NeT-TOPIC Thematic Seminar as a  
speaker.

**1) In your opinion, what are the main challenges peripheral cities in metropolitan areas have to face in order to change their city profile and achieve a new identity?**

To build up an increasingly polycentric metropolis. To this purpose peripheral cities should drive the metropolitan crowd avoiding the mere sprawl of banal activities (basically residential), and gathering development through a strategic project able to catch some pivotal function capable of interacting (in terms of functional complementarity or synergy) with the network of the surrounding towns. This basically requires efficient intercity commuting and relevant infrastructure investments, and calls for inter-communal compensation policies and fiscal pooling.

**2) How can new urban spaces be constructed/reconstructed (physical recuperation of the city) integrating social and economical aspects?**

The first answer could simply be: it depends on local ecology, climate, history or culture. In physical terms this requires authenticity, i.e. a careful adaptation from the old to the new. Hardly ever a radical change in the aesthetic character of the city led by impressive flag projects instils a stable innovation through the whole city.

Also in socio-economic terms the performance of regeneration projects has a lot to do with urban identity and social capital. So there is no unique way, nor are there any clear-cut guidelines, to jointly reach social equity, environmental sustainability and economic growth: on the contrary, in most cases there are trade offs between these main objectives, at least in the same period.

We can try to address the topic suggesting to look ahead and to invest more in future generations. An improvement of the quality of the built environment (beauty, social mix, ecological richness and health, comfort, accessibility and safety of collective spaces, energy saving urban design, and so on) may increase the present costs of urban renewal but will enhance the prospective attractiveness of the city for creative people and for innovative activities. In other words: to design regeneration projects while keeping in mind that the long-lasting value of the urban fabric relies on the maintenance of urban quality, especially in European cities with a great but fragile urban heritage.

**3) Could you please mention some examples of best practices or good examples of urban regeneration in metropolitan peripheries?**

Good examples of urban regeneration in Italian metropolitan peripheries are unusual. It is possible to indicate Sesto S. Giovanni, in the N-E periphery of Milan: a former mono-sectorial industrial city that has been able to change its economic and functional profile towards post-industrial activities. Or San Donato, S-E of Milan. A small town that hosted a well designed business centre of Eni (the national corporation for hydrocarbon) that succeeded in diversifying its economy and improving public spaces. Or Scandicci, near Florence, which relaunched the role of the town centre (redesigned by R. Rogers) with a new tramline linked to Florence. Or Salerno, near Naples, where a variety of urban projects were started in the nineties in order to regenerate the city. Or Casalecchio di Reno, near Bologna, town which undertook an integrated policy of urban regeneration, autonomous but harmonious with the growth of Bologna.

More generally, the linear system of cities along the Emilia route (Parma, Modena, Reggio, Bologna) has carried out a disjointed set of urban regeneration policies that work quite well together because of the historically balanced structure of the city system and the original tradition of good public government and local welfare that supports a diversified productive district of small and medium firms.



# CITY PARTNER PROFILE

## BARAKALDO

**Barakaldo**, with almost 100.000 inhabitants, is one of the main cities in the North of Spain. It is located in the Basque Country within the Historical Territory of Bizkaia. It is the reference point of the region at the left bank of the Nervión River.

After the crisis of the 80's that ruined the city, the General Plan of Urban Planning (PGOU 1999) projected the transformation of the old steel & iron industrial city into a new commercial and services city. The plan foresaw the maintenance of non-polluting medium industries and proposed alternative uses with a high added value. Its residential land increased up to 433 Has. after the consolidation, in 10 years, of 80% of the planned city.

However, the successful management of its urban planning has not solved some problems inherited from its condition of industrial city in the periphery of Bilbao. Therefore, at the space of the old iron & steel factory, Ansio, where Barakaldo wanted to build a new central area – linking its neighbourhoods – the Bilbao Exhibition Centre (BEC) was built up. This new equipment occupies a space even bigger than the old steel and iron industry that was removed. Thereby, the land has been released for the residential expansion at the expense of perpetuating the fragmentation in Barakaldo.

This fragmentation was aggravated with the construction of big infrastructures accessing to the metropolitan area of Bilbao as well as with the maintenance of the railway traffic of goods in urban areas of Barakaldo: between the urban centre and the expan-



Urban Galindo,

2000



Urban Galindo,

Nowadays

sion Urban-Galindo; or in opportunity areas in Lutxana-Burtzeña. Here it would be necessary to bury the railway and to innovate in the management in order to develop –in time of crisis – some pending projects of the General Plan of Urban Planning 1999 such as the Business Park Lutxana-Burtzeña and the Residential Area Sefanitro-Puerta de Bilbao, instead of polluting uses next to residential areas.

On the other hand, in this non-developed area, the supramunicipal government has not built up the planned accessing infrastructures with strategic interest for Barakaldo, particularly, the bridge over the Nervión river, which would link the city with Bilbao at Erandio – providing an alternative access to important municipalities in the metropolitan area – or the bridge that would connect to Bilbao at Zorrotzaurre.

Participating in the **NeT-TOPIC** project, Barakaldo aims to maintain and foster its **identity** as a reference city in the region of the left margin of the Nervión river, improving its quality of life and the **communications between its neighbourhoods**; looking for complementarities with other cities in the

Metropolitan Area of Bilbao. The city also intends to promote institutional collaboration in order to implement some essential projects such as the **tramway**, which connects the different neighbourhoods and links with the Left Margin-University and Bilbao; the **burying** of the railway; and the construction of **bridges** that would help to break the eternal sociological barrier of the Nervión River.

Furthermore, Barakaldo aims to reveal the processes of urban transformation of the General Plan of Urban Planning 1999, showing both its achievements – best practices in the management of its transformation – and its deficiencies –those operations not finished yet or with underlying problems– and thus accomplishing the aim of the Local Action Plan (LAP\_NeT-TOPIC\_Brk). Therefore, Barakaldo will provide the Local Support Group (ULSG\_NeT-TOPIC\_Brk) with tools based on new technologies that allow the **learning of debate** on the implemented operations so it could be an **experimental platform for citizen participation** that could be applied – if the fixed objectives are achieved – in the elaboration of the next General Plan or Urban Planning and its management.



# CITY PARTNER PROFILE

## SESTO SAN GIOVANNI

The city of Sesto San Giovanni is part of the Milan metropolitan area, one of the most densely populated and most highly urbanised areas in Europe. The city has about 82,000 inhabitants over an area of 11.8 sq. km. (some 7,000 inhabitants per sq. km., like the city of Milan). From a physical point of view, the city of Sesto San Giovanni suffers the presence of the vast land abandoned in the last decades of the last century near the centre of the city and the presence of the railway line, which roughly divides the urban area in two parts.

Last July, the City Council approved a new strategic urban plan (called Piano di Governo del Territorio), which defines a long-term, metropolitan-scale, integrated and shared strategy to shape the future of the city, providing a general frame for the implementation of urban projects and policies. The Piano di Governo del Territorio proposes to transform the city from a fragmented factory-town to a prosperous urban community centered in a park system designed to foster new development and amenities (library, art museum...) while integrating and reconnecting Sesto neighbouring communities. In fact, the new city model has to redesign the remaining vast area of industrial, disused and polluted land now lying near the centre, using these areas to unify the separated parts of the town and to re-launch its future long-term economic role. But the old city itself also needs to enhance its quality. The renewal of old housing neighbourhoods over the last decade was realised by private fragmented projects. The future interventions on the built environment should be integrated in the general vision of the new Sesto San Giovanni.

Implementing this long-term strategy, the city has to improve the territorial governance ensuring the involvement of other public authorities and the involvement of private actors on the other hand. Nevertheless, the city needs to promote citizen participation during the urban planning processes to create an integrated and shared strategy in order to shape the future of the city. Regarding the citizens, Sesto San Giovanni has to define and meet the needs of its residents tackling the demographic changes -population ageing, immigration, mono-nuclear families - in a changing market. Although the city has a good level of general services, there is a lack of amenities and attractions, and a lack of services targeted at new population groups. Sesto San Giovanni has to provide a better link between residents' demands and new services in the social and educational field on one hand, and the private and financial sectors on the other. All these needs have to be accommodated within the urban projects that are being elaborated for the town in such a way that both the quality of the physical environment and, therefore, the quality of life for its residents is raised, and a competitive and successful economy is provided.



In fact, the future Sesto San Giovanni in fact will be hopefully a prosperous city but the downside of this image is the risk to create an expensive and selective city which excludes and rejects vulnerable groups. The challenge is to regenerate the city avoiding social exclusion, marginalization and social polarization. New projects have to guarantee an overall enrichment and development of the town, with a better quality of building, public spaces and services.

Regarding NeT-TOPIC, the exchange of experiences with other European partners should grant a deeper comprehension of city problems and wider possibilities (best practices, political and technical tools, guidelines and recommendations) to solve them. The development of a Local Action Plan will enforce a more participative urban planning process, continuing the experience of the strategic evaluation process implemented by the Piano di Governo del Territorio.

Furthermore, the city of Sesto San Giovanni offers two great and interesting opportunities for testing NeT-TOPIC's political and technical tools, at a local scale and at a metropolitan scale.

Firstly, the city council of Sesto San Giovanni is actually evaluating the Renzo Piano's masterplan for the Falck steelworks area (an abandoned industrial area of 1,5 million of sq. m.), that should complete the transition from an industrial city to a technological and services city. Furthermore, Sesto San Giovanni urban planning must deal with the Milan EXPO 2015, that should promote the competitiveness of the whole Milanese metropolitan area.



NeT-TOPIC

# URBACT NEWS

## 2ND URBACT II CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The URBACT II Programme has opened a new Call for Proposals for the creation of 12 new Thematic Networks and 3 new Working Groups. Apart from the 16 Priority Topics defined for this Call, all proposals shall refer to two major current challenges: the economic crisis and its consequences and climate change and its effects.

The call is open from June 16, 2009 until September 25, 2009.

More information:  
URBACT PROGRAMME  
(<http://urbact.eu/>)

## URBACT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The URBACT Annual Conference will be organised on the 25th November in Stockholm. The annual conference will bring together URBACT partners, cities, regions, Managing Authorities, experts, etc., in order to exchange experiences in the context of the Programme. Beyond the URBACT themes, the Annual Conference will address the challenges faced by European cities today: the consequences of the crisis and the impact of the climate change. A roundtable on sustainable development and green growth, involving also non-EU cities, will also be organised.

More information:  
URBACT PROGRAMME  
(<http://urbact.eu/>)

## OPEN DAYS

The 2009 edition of the OPEN DAYS, under the motto 'Global Challenges, European Responses', will take place on the 5th-8th October in Brussels. This edition will focus on four main themes: "Restoring growth: Innovation in Europe's regions and cities"; "Regions and climate change: Europe's way to sustainable regional development"; "Territorial cooperation: Working together across borders" & "Achieving results, looking ahead: EU Cohesion Policy's evaluation and future prospects".

For more information:  
OPEN DAYS  
([www.opendays.com/](http://www.opendays.com/))

# CONTACT & LINKS



**NeT-TOPIC**

URBACT PROGRAMME

<http://urbact.eu/>

TRACE NETWORK (EUROPEAN CITIES IN TRANSFORMATION)

<http://www.urbantrace.eu/>

BRASIL MUNICIPIOS

<http://www.projetoBrasilmunicipios.gov.br/>

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IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY  
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

<http://www.idea.gov.uk>

EUROCITIES

<http://www.eurocities.eu>

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<http://www.nanterre.fr/>

SALFORD CITY COUNCIL

<http://www.salford.gov.uk/>

Haidari City Council

<http://www.haidari.gr/>

BARAKALDO CITY COUNCIL

<http://www.barakaldo.org/barakaldo/jsp/index.jsp>

SESTO SAN GIOVANNI CITY COUNCIL

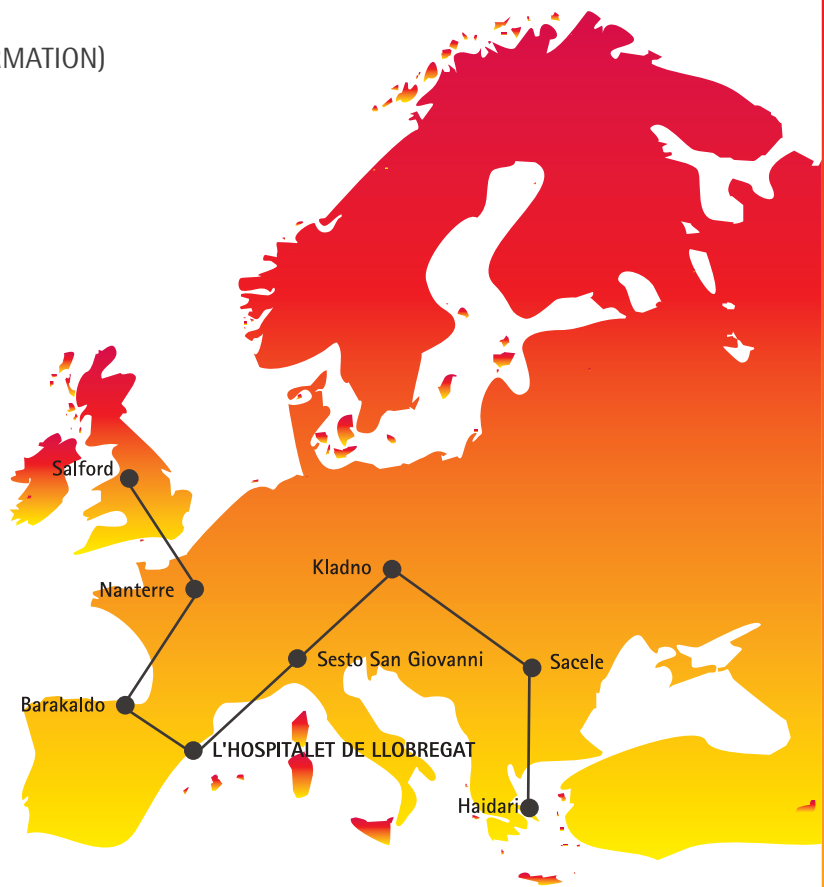
<http://www.sestosg.net/>

SACELE CITY COUNCIL

<http://www.municipiulsacele.ro/#>

KLADNO CITY COUNCIL

<http://www.mestokladno.cz/>



Ajuntament de L'Hospitalet



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Sacele  
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