

Synthesis of the ULSG survey

First insights in the implementation of ULSGs among partners from Call 1 and Call 2 projects

TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Foreword - Methodology	2
2. ULSG Composition	5
3. Setting up and Running ULSGs	6
4. ULSG Activities at local level	7
5. ULSG and Linkages with transnational activities	8
6. Difficulties and Challenges	10
7. Impact at local level and Sustainability	12

Synthesis of the ULSG survey

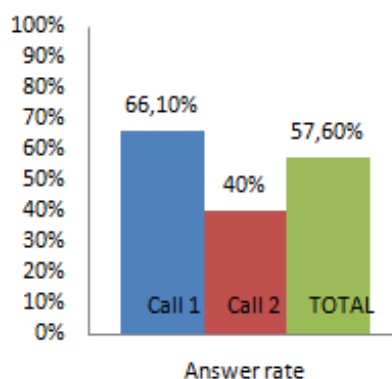
1. Foreword - Methodology

This report presents the results of a double process set up at programme level to collect quantitative and qualitative information on the ULSGs set up by partners as requested by the programme:

- the collection of the lists of ULSG members among URBACT partners (on the basis of a template including fields such as name, institution, type of institution, gender, languages spoken, email address)
- an online survey dedicated to ULSG coordinators in all partner cities (2 different questionnaires for Call 1 and Call 2 partners, focusing on how they had set up their ULSG, what activities they were developing, possible difficulties they may have faced, etc.)

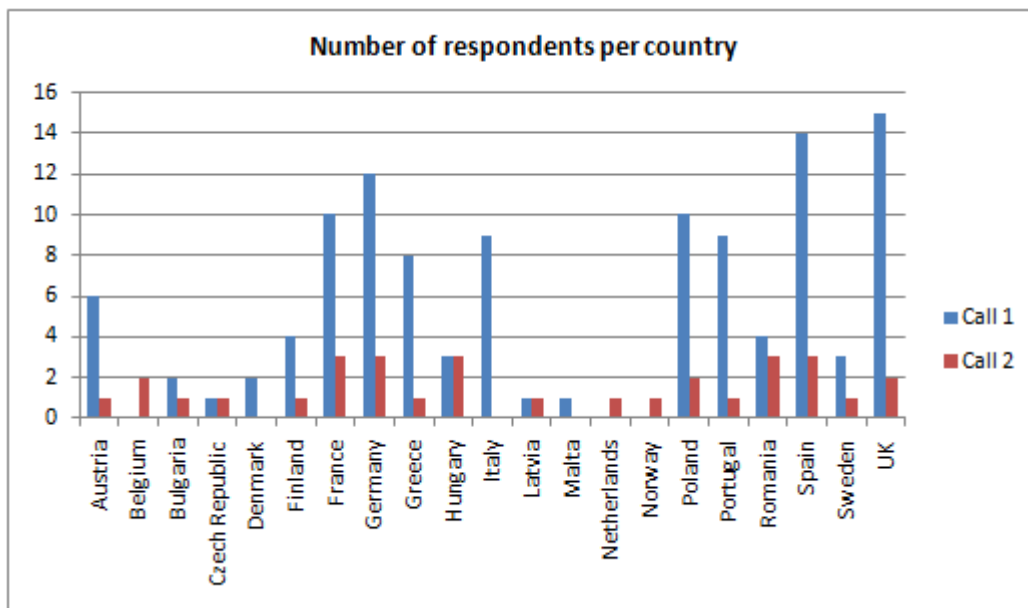
IDES Consultants, the consultancy office selected to support the Secretariat with the coordination of ULSGs at programme level, was in charge of collecting and analyzing the data.

A total of 156 partners took part in the survey, out of 269 partners. This rather high response rate (58%) allows us to have a good grasp of the dynamics that are currently operating in the ULSG set up by both Call 1 and Call 2 partners. Partners from 1st call projects have proved more reactive than those of the 2nd call. This reflects the different stage reached by the projects, as the latter were just starting their implementation phase when the survey was first launched in October 2010.

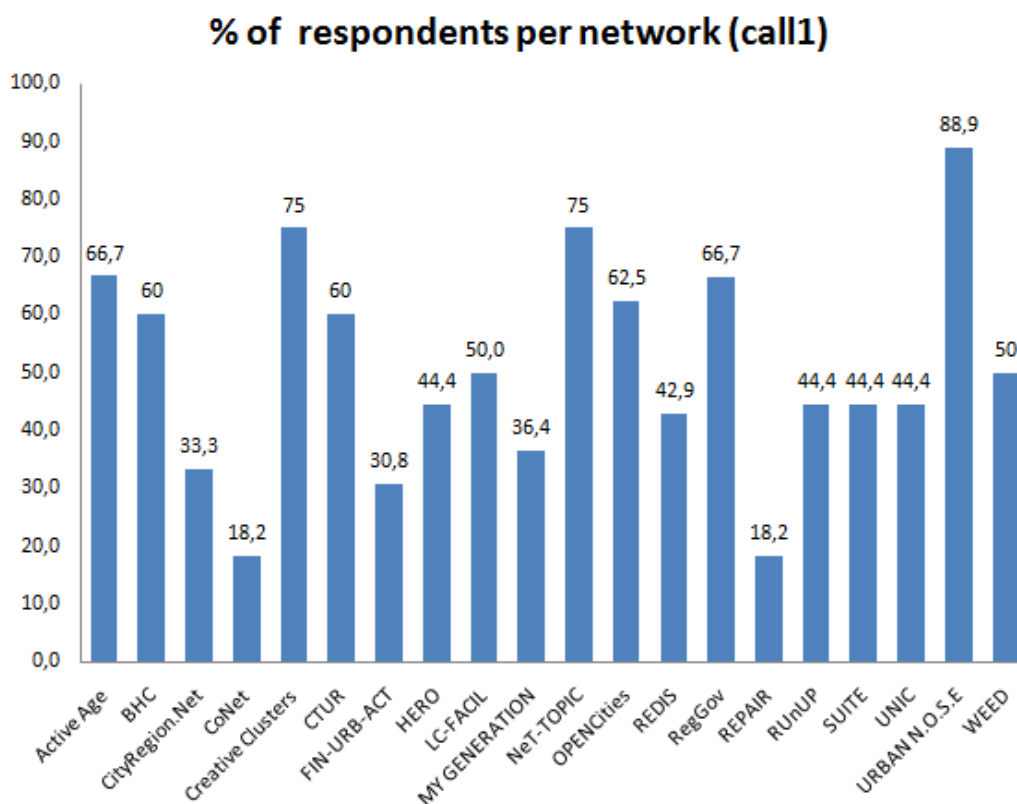


The distribution of respondents per Member States also reflects the geographical coverage by the projects created under both calls. The higher numbers of respondents can be found in the countries with the most numerous URBACT partners.

Synthesis of the ULSG survey

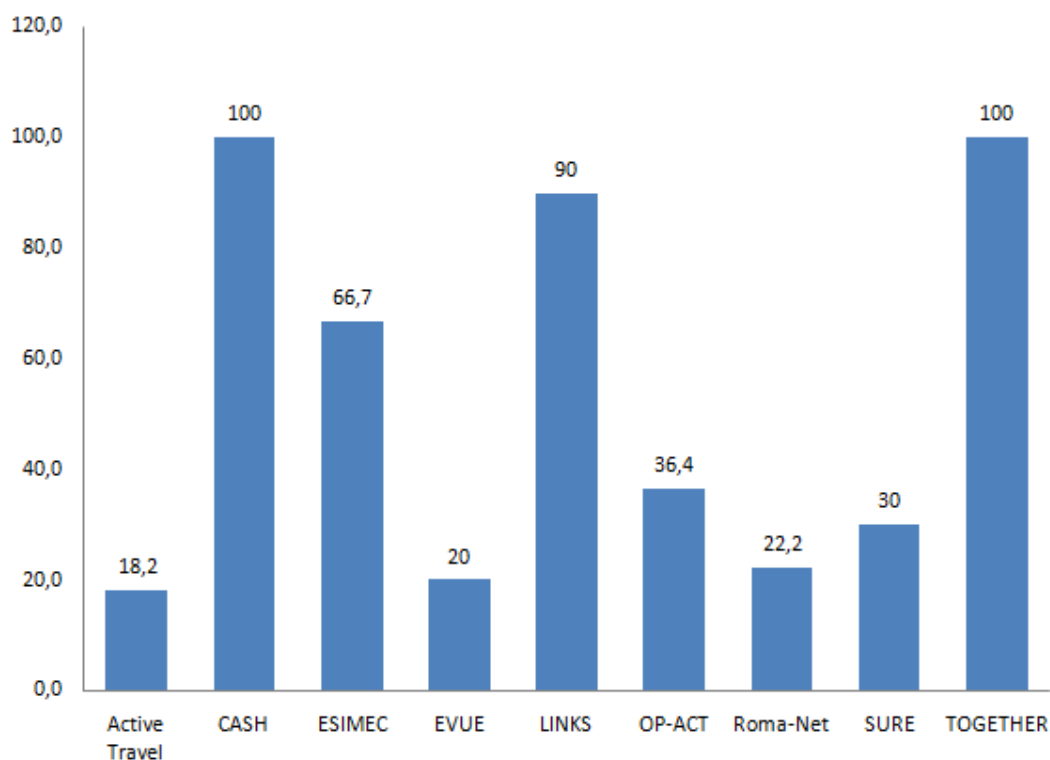


Another interesting entry point is the participation per project, which reflects the level of commitments from partners involved in a project.



Synthesis of the ULSG survey

% of respondents per network (call2)

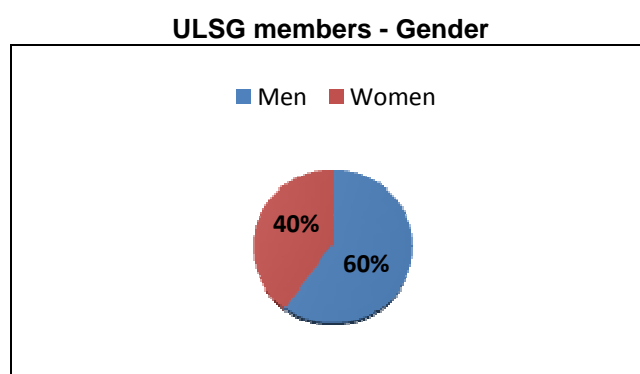


Synthesis of the ULSG survey

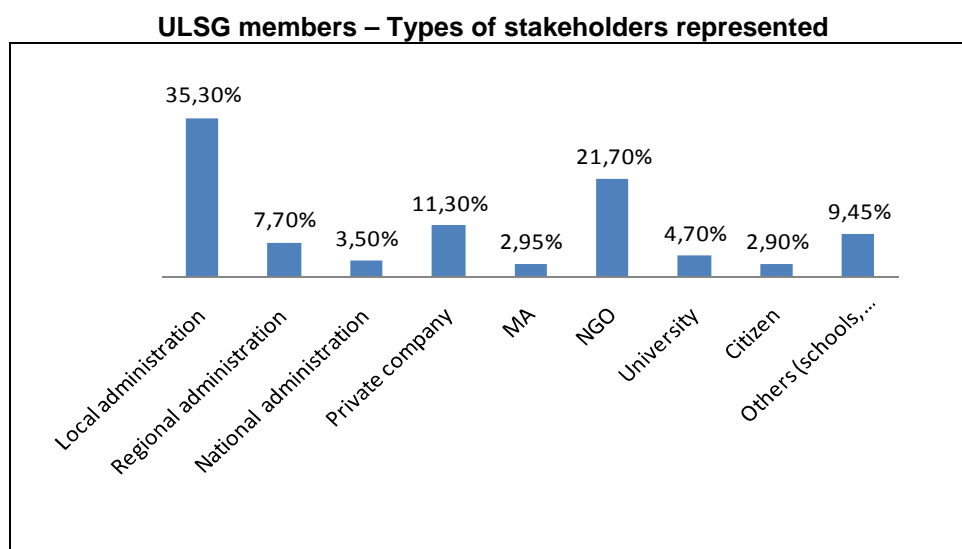
2. ULSG Composition

As a result of the collection of lists of ULSG members from partners (255 partners had provided the requested information when this report was drafted), it is possible to draw a general profile of the ULSGs set up so far.

The total number of persons involved in the 201 ULSGs collected amounts to 3.204 members. The size of ULSGs ranges from small groups with 6-8 members to much wider groups involving 20-25 members. On average, ULSGs gathers between 10 and 15 persons, with a slightly higher proportion of men.



ULSGs involve a great variety of stakeholders. As one could expect, there is a significant predominance of Local Authorities with over 1/3 of ULSG members being representatives of the local administration. But the civil society is rather well represented, with about 1/4 of ULSG members, even though citizens as such account for a very small part of this representation (less than 3%). One should also underline that the private sector comes next, with more than 10% of ULSG members.

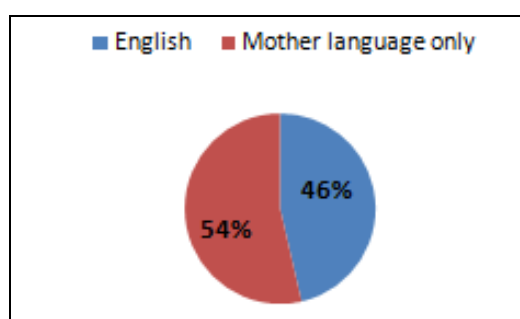


Synthesis of the ULSG survey

The weakest point regarding the composition of the ULSG seems to be the low participation of elected representatives. They account for 5% only of the ULSG members (included in the “Local administration” category in the graph above).

Last but not least when it comes to linking ULSGs with transnational exchange activities, it appears that almost 50% of the ULSG members do speak English, which is relatively high considering the very nature of such groups.

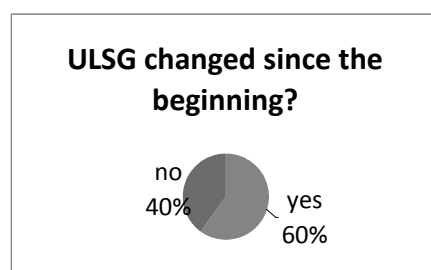
Languages spoken



3. Setting up and Running ULSGs

Through the survey to local coordinators, it appears that a majority of ULSGs were not building on an existing entity or group that was operating prior to the URBACT project (70% of respondents). In most cases, the local authority has set up the group, defining the stakeholders to be represented and inviting people to seat on the ULSG in relation with the issues to be addressed and also the local context. In some cases, local coordinators report the use of an open call for participants to widen the participation, which is an interesting practice.

It is interesting to note that the composition of the group has been evolving over time, which reflects a dynamic process that develops along with project implementation. In most cases, it goes along with a better identification of the stakeholders that should join in the perspective of the Local Action Plan to be produced.

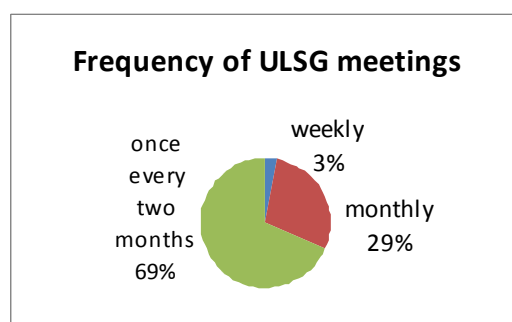


Synthesis of the ULSG survey

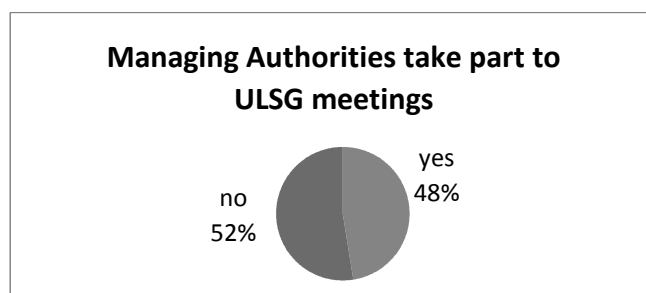
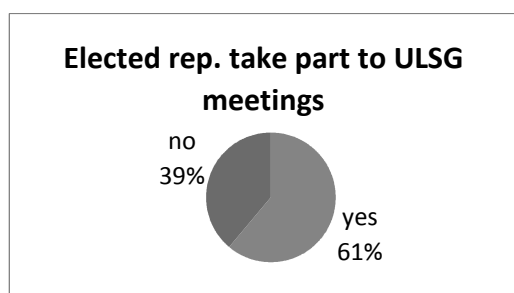
When it comes to the organization of the ULSG, it appears that a majority (70% of ULSG) are composed of 2 layers: a core group, involved in the management of the project and in the production of the Local Action Plan, and an enlarged group of persons involved in brainstorming, consultation type of activities.

4. ULSG Activities at local level

At local level, ULSGs meet every 2 months on average, even though some partners report meeting only 2-3 times a year. The local ULSG coordinator, that is a member of the local administration in most cases, is usually in charge of animating the meetings. Among the partners who took part to the survey, 10 % report that meetings are facilitated by an external consultant.

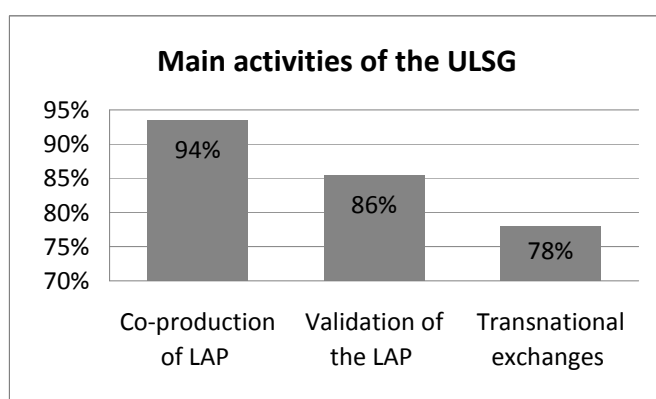


It is interesting to underline that, even though they are seldom official ULSG members, both elected representatives and Managing Authorities do take part to meetings in a significant proportion. Over 60% of partners report the participation of elected officials to the ULSG meetings (higher among Call 2 partners). This figure is slightly below 50 % in the case of Managing Authorities, but remains a positive result considering the difficulties encountered by partners in involving their MA (refer to the 2 Reports on the involvement of MA in the URBACT programme).



Synthesis of the ULSG survey

Within the URBACT programme framework, a major task of the ULSG is the production of the Local Action Plan that should result from the project at partner level. In this perspective, the survey provides very positive insights regarding the activities of the ULSG: over 90% of partners who took part to the survey declare that the co-production of the Local Action Plan is the main activity of the ULSG. The validation of the Local Action Plan to be produced also ranks high among the ULSG activities, along with the preparation of input for transnational exchanges.

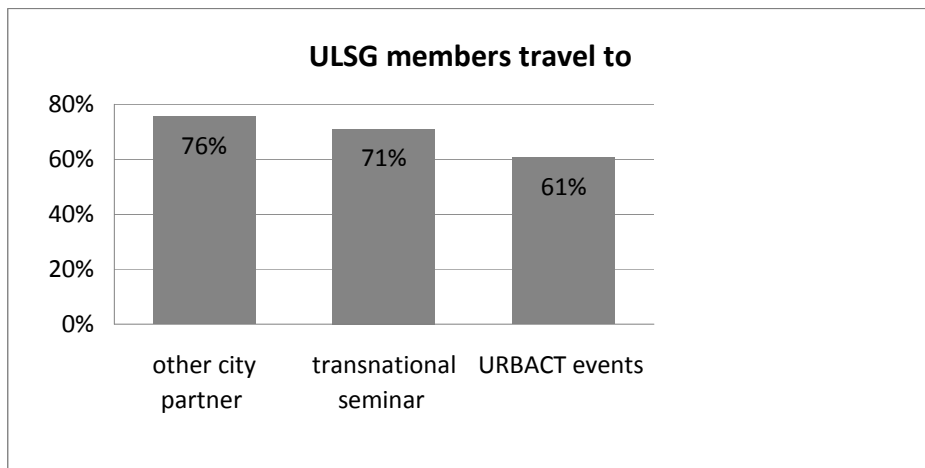


5. ULSG and Linkages with transnational activities

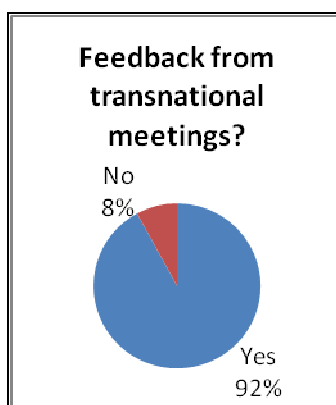
Whereas the programme requirements to run a ULSG and to produce a Local Action Plan could result in partners focusing mainly on local activities, it is interesting to see that ULSGs do actually link to transnational exchange and learning activities at project level.

Linking with the transnational activities occurs through the preparation of input for network seminars, as seen in previous section, with 78% of respondents stating that this is a major activity of the ULSG (mainly through draft LAPs and case studies). This is also achieved through the participation of ULSG members to network seminars (in 70% cases) and also to events organized by the URBACT programme (Annual conference, City Labs, etc.). It is interesting to note that ULSG members do also travel and visit partner cities (some projects' work plans include bilateral partner visits).

Synthesis of the ULSG survey



The transnational seminars taking place at project level also impact the activities of the ULSG at local level, as most ULSGs are keen on ensuring the link between the local and transnational levels. In a large majority of cases, the ULSG meets before the transnational seminars (82%) and after the seminars (90%). It is to be underlined that 92% of partners who responded to the survey declare receiving feedback from transnational meetings and other project activities.

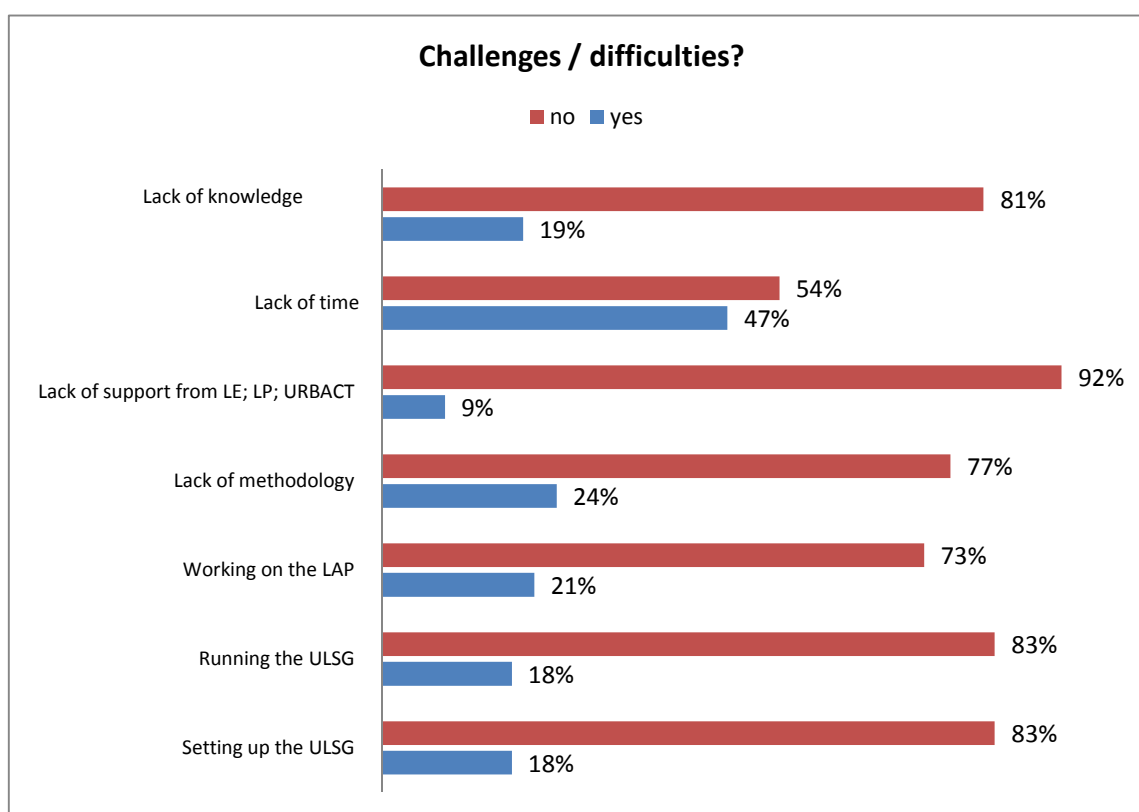


In this regard, the translation of documents may help even though about half of the ULSG members do speak English. As a matter of fact, about 60% of local coordinators who took part to the survey declare translating URBACT documents into their national languages, so as to ensure a better dissemination of the project level information/ outcomes at local level.

Synthesis of the ULSG survey

6. Difficulties and Challenges

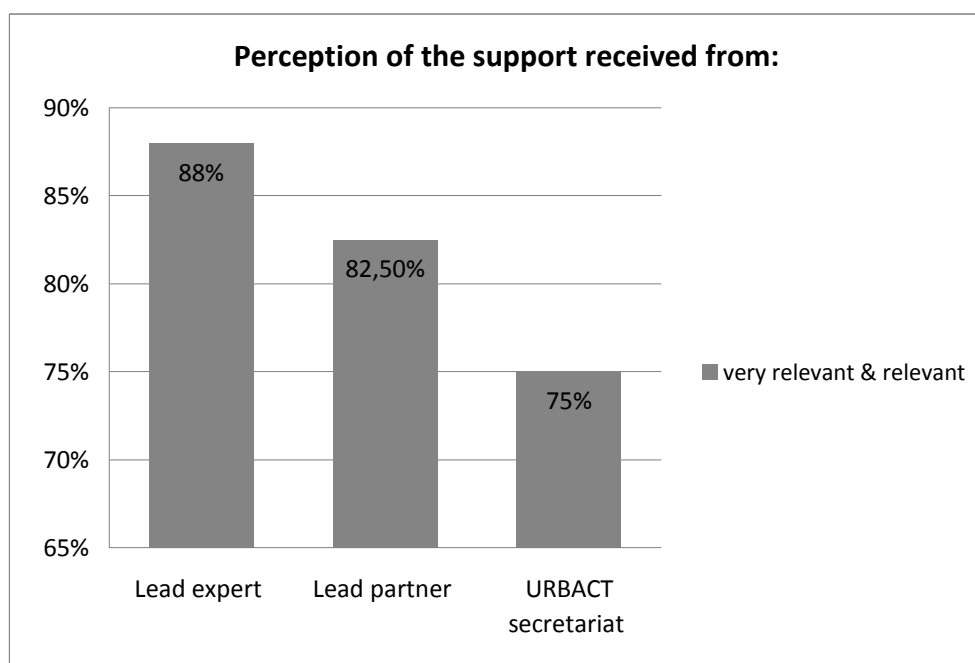
Project partners were asked whether they had faced difficulties in relation with the programme requirement to set up and run a ULSG. As shown in the graph below, the lack of time clearly appears as the most commonly shared concern for respondents to the survey, with 47% reporting it was a difficulty. The second most frequently reported problem (although rather far behind, put forward by 25% respondents) relates to a possible lack of methodology. Other issues are also put forward, such as difficulties in running the ULSG or even setting up the group, but these are reported by 18-21% respondents only.



In the open part of the question, some partners report difficulties related to developing a clear vision of the ULSG mission and to motivating the members (lack of involvement illustrated by the low number of meetings). Finding a facilitator for the meetings was also a problem in some cases. It is also mentioned the fact that the commitment from members to stay on board is not always secure on the long term. The language issue is reported a few times. Last but not least partners also underline the difficulties related to the production of a “realistic and relevant Local Action Plan”.

Synthesis of the ULSG survey

In order to support partners in fulfilling the requirements related to ULSGs, the programme has provided a number of guidance documents (especially the ULSG Toolkit, translated in all the languages of the programme) and training sessions: Training sessions and Thematic Pole meetings dedicated to Lead partners and Lead experts, as well as ULSG seminars dedicated to ULSG members in 11 Member States. Lead partners and Lead experts are also in charge of monitoring and supporting partners with the implementation of the project activities, including the ULSG. Through the survey, it appears that this support is overall very well perceived by partners across projects:

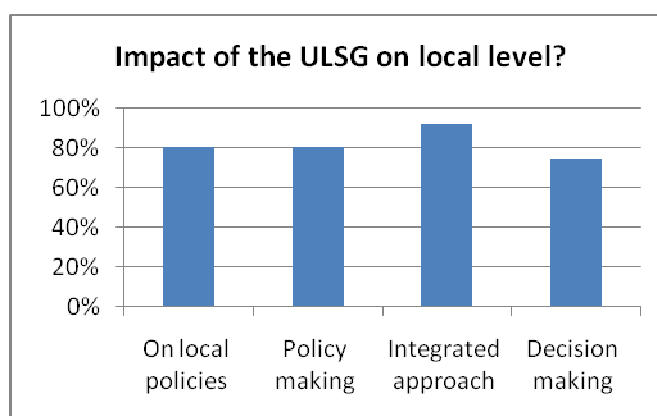


Synthesis of the ULSG survey

7. Impact at local level and Sustainability

In the survey, the question was raised of the impact of ULSG activities at local level. Even though projects were still ongoing, a significant number of partners reported positive impacts in terms of local governance with 80% of respondents putting forward the impact in terms of local governance and more especially policy-making and decision-making processes.

Interestingly enough, as it is a core objective of the URBACT II programme, over 90% declare that the ULSG has fostered the integrated approach to urban development.

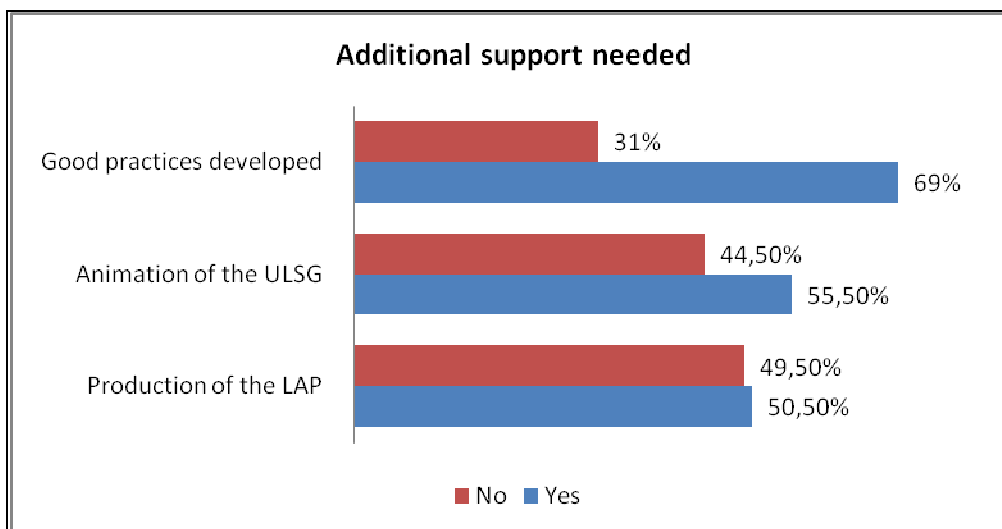


Among the partners who took part to the survey, over 85% foresee that the ULSG will continue to exist and operate after the end of the network, which echoes the positive perceptions outlined by the survey regarding ULSGs in general. In a vast majority of cases (about 90%), it is expected that the ULSG will work on the implementation of the Local Action Plan, while 56% consider that the group will work on a different subject.

As a result of this survey, and building on the additional work done by IDES consultants through qualitative interviews with ULSG coordinators, it will be important to work on the needs for additional support to provide the ULSG members with.

When asked about their needs in terms of support from the programme in the coming months, partners seem to prioritize 3 aspects: the exchange of good practices in running ULSG across projects, animation of the ULSG community at programme level, and finally support related to the production of Local Action Plans. These are interesting possible dimensions to explore in the near future.

Synthesis of the ULSG survey



In the perspective of the 3rd call, it will also be useful to think about ways of improving the framework for the participation of local stakeholders through the ULSG.