



UrbSecurity APN

IAP REPORT

August 2022



Contents:

- Re-thinking urban security
- Overall approach to challenges
 - External expertise
 - Cooperation with other networks
- Cities approach - case examples
- Final Notes

Re-thinking urban security

Safety and security are becoming key strategic goals of any **urban policy**. By nature, urban security will always be under a strong regulatory framework defined at regional, national, and even in some cases at EU level, but at the city level, local authorities can play an important role to bring these measures to the ground, promoting safety and quality of life.

More than financial resources the challenge now is how to design the actions that can promote this change and fine tune public action.



The elaboration of an adequate **urban design** that responds to the problems of citizens' safety is the result of a multidisciplinary synthesis of information and contributions. Urban design alone cannot be considered as a guarantor of safety, but a key factor contributing to its improvement.

Principles of **security by design** should be embedded in every urban project, as a way of assuring that we are not creating new security issues for the future. Following the rules set by the **CPTED** guidebook (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), such as long distance visibility or mix uses, it's possible to avoid security problems from the design phase.



On the other hand, there is strong evidence that addressing the cause of the

problems from the socio-economic perspective can be quite effective, even with small investments. Working with **local minorities** and **communities** has been helping to build the necessary bridges to build a fruitful dialogue between citizens and local authorities regarding security issues. This dialogue within the ULG's was crucial to collect their contributions for the final IAP.

Moreover, this dialogue had the participation of **local police** forces which was kind of new to all cities involved. Despite the obvious advantages, so far the cooperation has been scarce and puntual.



By participating in transnational meetings and ULGs, it was possible to address many new cooperation areas and plan future actions to increase it even further.

This is in fact one of the most important **spillovers** of the project since it opened a new channel of communication between the police and the city that interested both parties.

Another key dimension of urban safety is **social behaviour**. Instead of launching a set of rules to tackle the problem, current approaches tend to use nudging techniques to persuade citizens in a positive way. Nudging is cost effective and can be easily implemented in a short period of time, proving to be quite effective in minimising several sources of urban insecurity in the public space.



No doubt that cities have been using **nudging techniques** for long, even if they don't call it that way, but the potential of the tool to address other issues than crime, issues that are usually overlooked, deserves a specific approach. The APN provided the right environment and methodology to address nudging in a more systematic way and it's reflected in the final IAP's.

Overall approach to challenges

There are no predefined recipes, but there are good practices that are systematised in numerous case examples. It is up to society, as long as it is better organised, civilised and informed, to naturally have the propensity to design and build a good and safe urban environment.

For instance, **greening** and other forms of **urban revitalization** have proven to be effective in tackling safety issues. In brief, more than a regulatory problem, urban safety and security is a transversal factor that should influence all other areas and become transversal to local policies.

Joining these pieces together will definitely create more impact than simple isolated measures that address a specific security measure.

From the baseline study, it became clear that many of the challenges found were shared across cities. This opened an opportunity to explore and exchange ideas on how to tackle the problems.



However, this process was highly affected by the pandemic restrictions as all meetings have to be done remotely, with the exception of the last transnational meeting held in Parma. In that meeting it became obvious that the meetings online could never match the personal interactions that are provided by a presential meeting.

Despite these hurdles, the collaborative tools setup for the remote meetings work fine and allow teamwork to be developed during the two-days meetings. Consequently, many of the actions on the final IAP's are a direct result of these collaborative sessions.



Final transnational meeting in Parma (May 2022)

On the contrary, local participation was less affected by the restrictions, and despite some different rules in each region, it was possible to conduct in person meetings with local stakeholders. Therefore the local participation process was much more effective, despite the natural difficulties to engage them during the pandemic.

As the rules started to ease out, more interactions could be organised, resulting, overall, in a good level of participation. Contributing to this success is the topic itself, since it concerns everybody, and everyone has ideas for possible solutions, creating lively and interesting discussions that enhance the

contributions to the IAP.



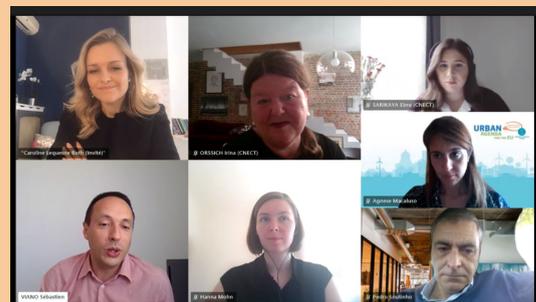
ULG meetings online (Longford) and presential (Leiria)

External Expertise

Special guests were invited to each meeting to address the respective topic, providing expert views and participating in the following discussions with the network members. One of these topics was nudging, proving a masterclass about nudging to partners, a relatively new topic that required external help. It provides cities with not only an initial knowledge on how to implement it while avoiding the typical pitfalls of the process. This methodology proved to be effective as many cities have used different nudging techniques in their IAP's.

Cooperation with other networks

Another key element of the IAP development process is the collaboration with other networks and initiatives, to better frame the foreseen actions. The most influential collaboration was conducted with the **Urban Agenda**

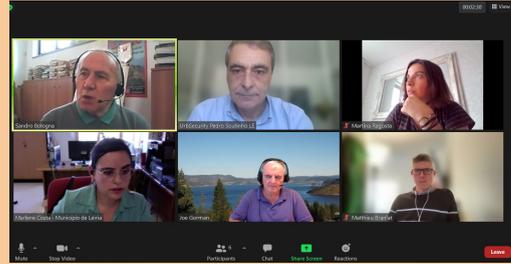


Partnership¹ for “Security in public spaces”, with whom there were several interactions, namely cross-participation in meetings. The main exchanges

¹ <https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda/security-public-spaces>

were around Action 5 and 6 of their action plan, actions where the promotion of social cohesion and inclusion go hand in hand with security by design. The UrbSecurity APN also provided inputs to the following outputs available online².

Another important collaboration was lined up with **IMPETUS**, a project to promote the adoption by cities of new security-related technologies. (impetus-project.eu).



Several exchanges were promoted to discuss the available technologies but also the ethics behind it, such as data protection and individual freedoms, for instance by using edge computing instead of cloud and observing GDPR compliance.

It was an important knowledge exchange since many of the cities in the network are planning big investments in their CCTV surveillance systems. It's a problem of sustainability, since as more and more cameras are installed it becomes impossible to manage the system only by humans, but AI technologies can be much help in tackling the matter in a more efficient and effective way.

As a result of this collaboration partner cities were invited to join **COSSEC**, a “Community of Safe and Secure Cities” that intends to build and transfer knowledge across EU cities.

² [“The importance of social cohesion for urban crime prevention”](https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda/security-public-spaces/library/action-5-final-report-imp)

<https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda/security-public-spaces/library/action-5-final-report-imp>
[ortance-social-cohesion-urban-crime-prevention](https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda/security-public-spaces/library/action-5-final-report-imp)

[“10 Rules of Thumb for Security by Design”](https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda/security-public-spaces/library/action-5-final-report-imp)

<https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/urban-agenda/security-public-spaces/library/action-5-final-report-imp>
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Parma and Mátészalka's CCTV control rooms

Cities approach - case examples

Despite the similarity of **challenges** found across cities, their size and local environment is completely different, and ultimately the solutions proposed. In a consortium that ranges from Giannitsa, a small town in the municipality of Pella (Greece) to a capital city with over three million people as Madrid, the key aspect of the implementation was to focus on a specific area of the city/region, trying to find solutions for the current problems that could bring concrete changes.

The main goal was to turn the IAP not only a strategic tool but also a document with concrete actions, capable of promoting a real change in the situation. In this direction, taking, for instance, the above examples, while **Giannitsa** addressed the perceptions of safety in the streets, implementing a campaign with students from local schools to sensitize drivers and shop owners for the occupation of sidewalks and other public spaces.



Giannitsa (Pella) street campaign and schools participation

A pilot was implemented through the SSA, proving the action to be quite effective, particularly because the message was sent in a positive way, and not as a matter of law.

On the other side of the spectrum, **Madrid** focused in the area of Puerta del Sol, one of the main squares of the city, crossed by thousands everyday.



Madrid, Puerta del Sol - security by design removing physical barriers

Here the main concern was to coordinate the urban design of the space to have in mind security issues, such as terrorist attacks or controlling mobs,

establishing a collaboration channel with city officials to tackle the problem, for instance removing physical barriers and “blind” spots, following the CPTED rules. Different situations led to different approaches but with a common goal, to fill in the existing gaps in planning for safer cities.

Other cities, such as **Mechelen** and **Parma**, focused their development in public parks, trying to address the many complaints of citizens regarding their safety. “Perception” is not easy to measure or change, so Parma focused on participation, bringing key stakeholders to the decision process of the renovation of Parco Ducale, by building a discussion forum from architects to city officials, from citizens to local police forces to devise the best design solutions.

Works will start soon with the assurance that several contributions were made to create a safe environment in the park for citizens of all ages. **Mechelen** looked for technological solutions that could increase safety in their city parks. New access control systems and new activities in these parks were tested and developed using the SSA mechanism and a full implementation plan was transcribed into the IAP.



Redesigning city parks. Mechelen Park t' Hofke and Parma Parco Ducale

Another group of cities (e.g. Leiria, Longford and Mátészalka) were more concerned with their city centres, and how to change citizen perception

towards these areas. Most city centres have grey areas in terms of safety, such as dark alleys or deserted areas, particularly at night, creating a feeling of uncertainty and unsafety that drives people away from most central areas, particularly at night.

For instance, to tackle the security issues in the city centre, **Longford** focused on the integration of different policies already in place in the city, while adding over it a programme of revitalization that included, for instance testing the installation of urban art (their SSA), redesigning walkways or improving lightning to prevent anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour crackdown in Longford walkways underway



The goal is to change people's perception of overall safety in the city. In fact, mainstream and social media coverage tends to focus on high profile, negative news stories, incidents and events. To counter this negative perception, a set of activities were foreseen in their IAP to build community spirit and outline positive interventions and events in the city that can help to make a safer urban environment.

Leiria has a similar problem with some areas of the city centre and on the streets connecting to the railway station where people feel concerned to walk during the night. The city implemented a vast regeneration programme on the banks of the local river some years ago but still not enough to change the situation.



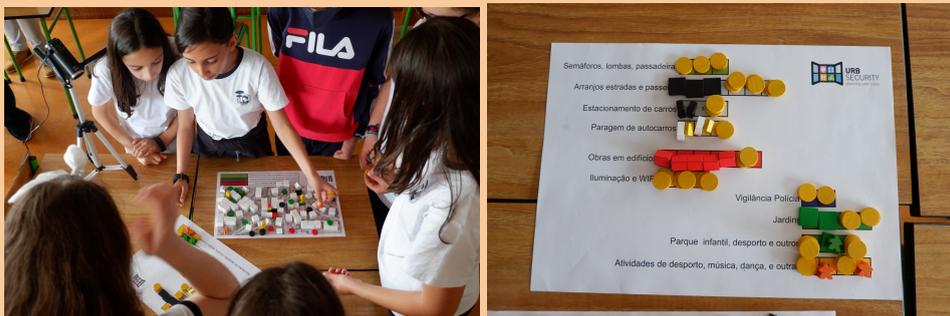
So, the city focused on building a stronger participative process that could

look at the many different aspects of the problem, engaging local stakeholders in several meetings with many contributions for the final IAP. To achieve this a collaboration with a university research team, provided a serious game specifically designed for urban planning.

Each participant has a certain amount to invest and puts their choices over a physical map of an area of the city to prioritise intervention spots and define the possible actions to tackle the problem. This process was completely new to the city and proved to bring good results and a practice that was praised by the mayor as a good practice to be used in future projects of the city.³



Leiria - focus area with identified problems and proposed solutions



³ A brief note about the game was published in the URbact website: <https://urbact.eu/planejar-para-seguran%C3%A7a-urbana-com-jogos-o-caso-do-projeto-urbsecurity-e-m-leiria>. Leiria's team also produced an english version of the game's instructions to be used by any city that wishes to implement this methodology, available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1zKBndkMmkaCM8mYZvmBmqUN7mGuPN7Ex>

Leiria - children also took part using a simplified version of the game

On the other hand the city of **Mátészalka** (Szabolcs 05 region) tried to balanced hard investments, currently being applied in the revitalization of the city centre, such as public lightening or renovation of sidewalks, complemented by several soft investments in awareness-raising activities to increase citizen engagement in urban policies regarding safety and security.



Mátészalka (Szabolcs 05) - building an urban safe environment for all

In that direction, the IAP also foresees promoting a constructive dialogue with local minorities (namely Roma people) in order to build trust and find solutions for the current sources of insecurity in the city, particularly in specific spots such as parks or transportation hubs.

Another approach was taken by **Unione della Romana Faentina**; as a regional body, the main focus was to promote changes in the **governance model** of the whole region regarding safety and security, including the engagement and commitment of the local community under a coherent system.

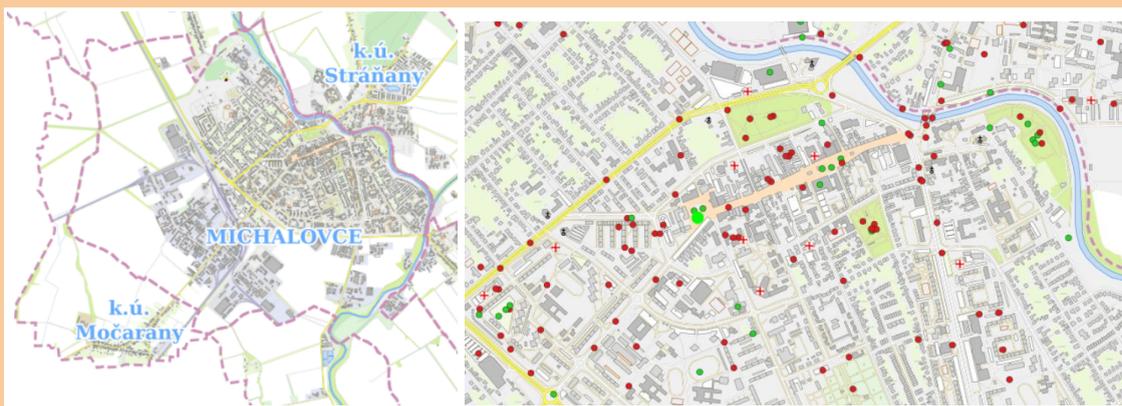


From one side, the IAP development focused on establishing a coordinated effort to improve the overall safety of the region and not only the city of

Faenza. Increasing coordination across different bodies, promoting a dialog with the local police, bringing new stakeholders from local communities are among the main objectives of the IAP. It will also try to expand previous experiences on citizens participation in the region, such as neighbourhood watch groups, civic assistants or voluntary associations. The main goal is to build up a coordinated policy across the whole region and capacitate actors to integrate the overall security system.

Another interesting approach was taken by the city of **Michalovce**, in Slovakia. The city was developing a document called “Manual for safer areas” with the set of rules for future investments in urban renovation. However, the city wanted to hear citizens and assess their sense of security in several public areas, and input these contributions into the manual.

To achieve this the city developed a software tool called “Opinion map”⁴ which worked as a social survey of residents that not only could express their complaints, and propose as well what in their opinion could be the possible solutions.



Michalovce's opinion map; red vs. green dots standing for safe vs. unsafe areas

This data was analysed and their contributions were integrated in the manual

⁴ The tool is available online (although only in slovakian for now) at:
<https://michalovce.web-gis.sk/>

and the IAP. Assessment of security is never easy, but this simple tool provides cities with a systematic approach to the problem, helping to prioritise interventions and build up on citizen participation to build a safer city environment.

The potential of the tool is enormous as all surveys are done in digital format so it's quite easy to adapt to all sorts of assessments. In that sense the tool was presented during **Urbact City Festival** held in Paris, last July, (together with Parma, under the "Greening" parallel session .



UrbSecurity team at the UCF in Paris (July 2022)

Final notes

The final IAP's reflect a true process of participation and integration of the various dimensions of urban security by using the URBACT methodology. As the UrbSecurity APN is coming to an end there are a few outcomes worth noting.

First, the **local impact** was quite positive and gave cities an opportunity to try new things and develop a fruitful dialogue with key stakeholders, some of them for the first time. This is the case of **local police** forces that are not usually engaged in these types of activities. However, all initial concerns prove to be totally wrong as the level of their **commitment to the project** was

surprisingly high, setting the ground for a more intense collaboration in future. A new door was opened and hopefully will be followed through.

Another important aspect to retain, is the positive impact in **small-medium size cities**. In phase 1, it seemed difficult to match their needs with the complex security systems of big cities. However, through exchanges and cooperation with other partners they were able to produce quite consistent IAP's with concrete and direct actions, which is another proof of the advantages of working together under an URBACT APN.

Finally, reading all IAP's⁵ together remind us of the long journey initiated still in pre-covid times, that ran through the pandemic, and came out on the other side with a few **solid steps** to consolidate their action plans that responded to their actual needs. "Planning Safer Cities", which became the network strapline, can now be implemented in a systematic and integragrate way, uncovering the potential of a thorough integrated approach. Hopefully, this may create roots for building safer and more inclusive cities.

Elaborated by Pedro Soutinho, Lead Expert

⁵ All IAP's available at:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zKBndkMmkaCM8mYZvmBmqUN7mGuPN7Ex>