Reducing social exclusion by bridging digital divide

Dear collegue(s),

With regard to the new framework of the programme URBACT IV, we would like to propose you a partnership for a grant project. The municipality of **Mollet del Vallès is willing to lead a proposal to tackle the social exclusion by bridging digital divide**.

URBACT IV will support transnational networks of European cities to:

- co-design and implement integrated action plans to address the challenges of sustainable urban development;0
- adapt and reuse good urban practices;
- design investment plans to replicate elements of innovative urban action.

Within URBACT, the network will be made up with 8 – 10 cities of all sizes and it will last 2,5 years. The activities to be carried out will be classified in 4 phases: Activation (elaboration of a Base Line Study and a Roadmap for the participants); Planification (planning activities and networking); Implementation (pilots); and Finale (elaboration of an Integrated Action Plan for each participant).

In addition, the programme gathers training at programme level: summer university, Urbact toolbox, online courses, knowledge hub, city festival, policy labs, thematic reports.

Call documents: https://urbact.eu/get-involved

Schedule: The call is open and ends on 31 March 2023. The action planning networks should then start in June 2023.

The challenge

Social inclusion is a citizenship right. At the same time, it is a cross cutting issue in municipalities that can be measured from different angles: gender, age, country of origin, job situation, etc. Thus, Inclusion plans should count on those kpis that measure social exclusion so to design tools and actions oriented to improve inclusion and integration.

On the other hand, social exclusion is directly connected to digital divide. It prevents citizens from getting connected to public administration, gathering information, progressing in their professional careers, and socializing. Since the COVID crisis, digital socialization has become a major issue because it eases interaction and thus, inclusion.

From our point of view, the digital divide could be considered as all the opportunities lost by citizens due to the lack of access and/or knowledge of technology or digital resources. This also involves ensuring a proper digitalisation process for citizens (citizenship digital rights), providing them enough tools or knowledge to identify potential fraud, addictions, or other related issues.

Some issues related to digital exclusion:

- Access to software.
- Equipment (hardware).
- Gather information about current situation and kpis (statistics and studies) and good practices and lessons learned done so far.
- Citizenship approach to digital transition.

General Objective

Digital transition as an element to boost the transformation of the municipalities: improve accessibility and change the way to interact with citizens. Reducing digital divide is also a tool to reduce exclusion and enhance integration.

Thematic areas

- Accesibility
- Digital rights
- Relationship public administration/citizens
- Communication
- Workforce
- Training in digital competences
- Digital security
- Administrative procedures
- Retail commerce (familiar or self-employment retail)

Proposed Activities

Apart from the activities at consortium level which are eminently networking and exchange of good practices, we propose some activities to be carried out at local level:

- Analysing and studying the challenge: Gathering relevant information so to establish not only a correct base line but also provide a starting point built on previous work (URBACT III and UIA).
- Training citizenship: Citizens should be at the centre of these activities, involving them and by allying with those entities from the 3rd sector (associations, foundations, etc.) that are already working in this challenge. In this sense, Train the trainers' activities, mentoring, tutorials can be implemented.
- Creating new ways to deploy trainings based on the previous studies and statistics.
- Realign current resources of the municipalities to boost citizens' digitalisation.
- Rethinking software tools use
- Digital security training
- Improving and creating Communication and marketing campaigns to get close to citizenship.

Please note that the activities proposed is only an example of the ones to be carried out by each partner and they will work in detail once the project will be awarded. However, bear in mind that a kick-off meeting will be organised in Mollet del Vallès by summer, if the project is approved.

Budget of the project

There is no budget calculated yet, but URBACT funding per project is up to 850.000€. In the coming weeks we will inform you about this issue.

Timeline

9 January 2023	31 March 2023	June 2023	December 2025
Open call for networks	Deadline to apply	Approval of networks and start of activities	End of network activities