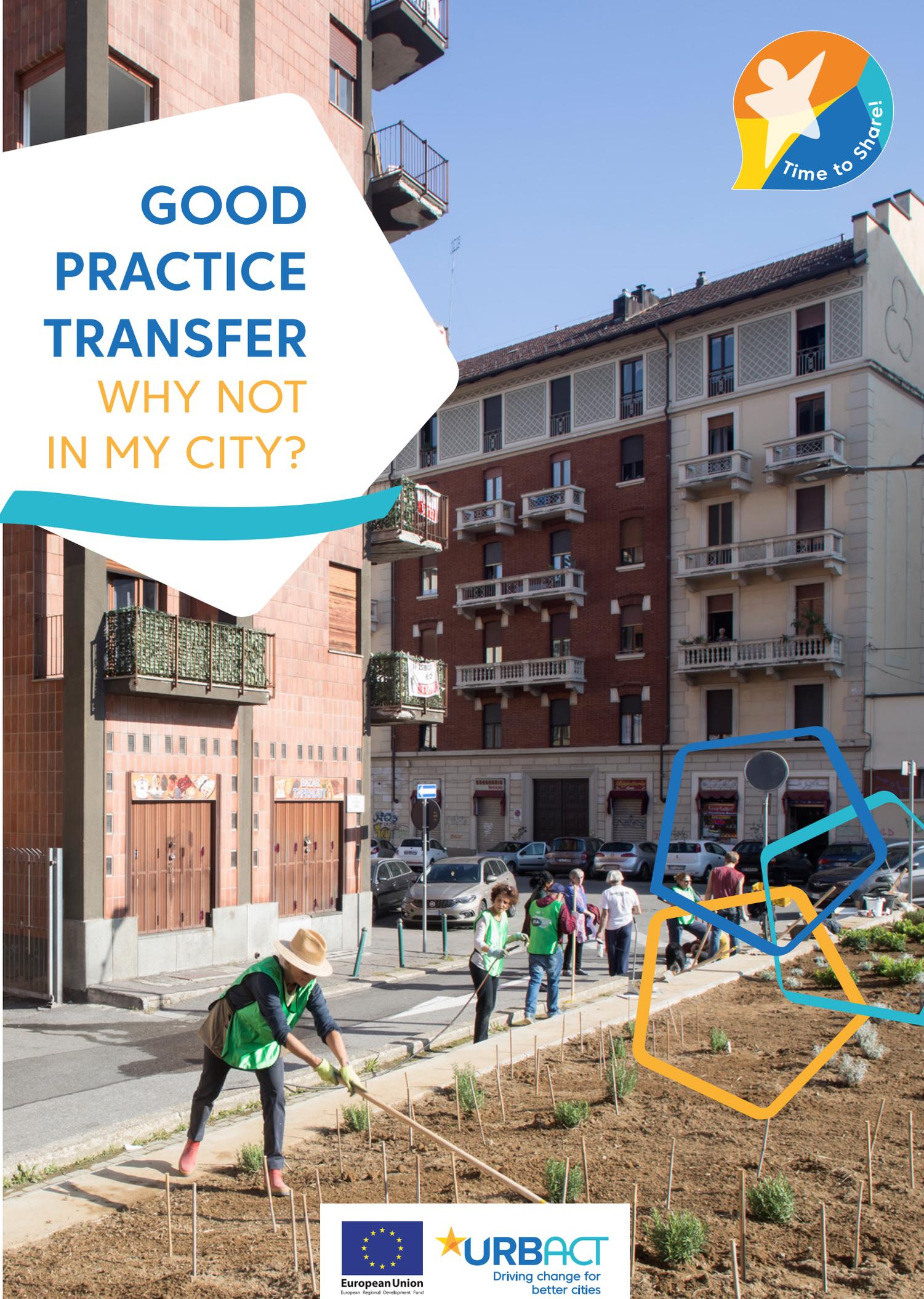




# GOOD PRACTICE TRANSFER

WHY NOT IN MY CITY?



# GOOD PRACTICE TRANSFER - WHY NOT IN MY CITY?, URBACT III, June 2021

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**GOOD  
PRACTICE  
TRANSFER**

**WHY NOT  
IN MY CITY?**

# Foreword



## **Elisa Ferreira,** EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR COHESION AND REFORMS

We have all heard about those 'best practice' cities who have found innovative and workable solutions to some urban challenges – Copenhagen and bicycle use; Vienna and affordable housing; and I'm sure many of you have thought: "Ah, but that couldn't work in my city because...".

Europe abounds with plenty of inspiring, innovative, approaches for improving quality of life in our cities. But inspiration alone does not drive change. We also need practical ways of translating those good examples into different circumstances and local contexts. Europe's motto is 'United in diversity', yet it is precisely this diversity that needs to be taken into account when transferring Good Practices.

The URBACT Transfer Networks have been doing just that: getting under the skin of what makes a Good Practice 'good', breaking it down into its constituent parts, and adapting it to fit a different context.

This publication bears witness to the efforts of those cities to 'Understand, Adapt, and Re-use' effective practices. Whether it concerns the adoption of an online city platform that rewards recycling, as the Hungarian city of Zugló transferred from Santiago de Compostela (ES); or how the city of Cork (IE) revolutionised its approach to public space, health and planning, by adapting the Playful Paradigm from Udine (IT), the results are evident.

The stories here come from cities of all sizes, and involve cities from more and less developed regions of Europe. It is encouraging to see how the principles of sustainable urban development that are enshrined in Cohesion Policy are implemented in practice: a clear place-based approach to solving problems on the ground, participatory mechanisms, involving citizens, NGOs and businesses and integrated policy approaches cutting across city departments and different levels of governance. This effectively demonstrates how the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter for sustainable urban development can take place, and how to make the best use of the upcoming framework supporting investments in and with cities under Cohesion Policy.

The New European Urban Initiative that will come into force aims to streamline support for cities to build or reinforce their capacity to act, to support innovative approaches and ensure knowledge is shared. URBACT is already looking at how the transfer process can be applied to the Urban Innovative Actions, to make more cities benefit from these promising developments. I am confident that the URBACT programme will continue to support cities in reaching those goals through European territorial cooperation.



**Inspiration alone does not drive change. We also need practical ways of translating those good examples into different circumstances and local contexts.**



The Parco Ort9-Sergio Albani urban garden strengthening social inclusion in the southern area of Rome, URBACT RU:RBAN Network, summer 2020



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Good Practice exhibition at URBACT City Festival in Tallinn (Estonia), 2017



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# Good news... Good practice transfer between cities works!



By Eddy Adams,  
URBACT Programme Expert

Back in the mists of time, well actually around 2015, I remember our URBACT team talking about why cities kept bumping into the same problems. Linked to that, we also wondered why more cities didn't share effective urban solutions with others. From there, it was a short step to looking at our effective network model and considering how it might help cities transfer good practices more effectively.

Since then I've been at the heart of this process, helping to shape the approach, working with our city partners and, with them, learning a lot along the way.

## Where we started

It turns out we knew quite a bit at the start. One was that **transnational networks were effective ways to build cities' capacity**. By providing a structured space for peer learning, URBACT had already established its strong reputation. Another was that the combination of a Lead Partner city alongside a Lead Expert usually worked well. Underpinning this was **a clearly-defined URBACT method, and a well-developed set of tools, designed to enable participative integrated approaches**.

We'd learned all of this from the Action Planning Networks (APNs) that had been URBACT's evolving core business since 2002. But the Transfer Networks were another

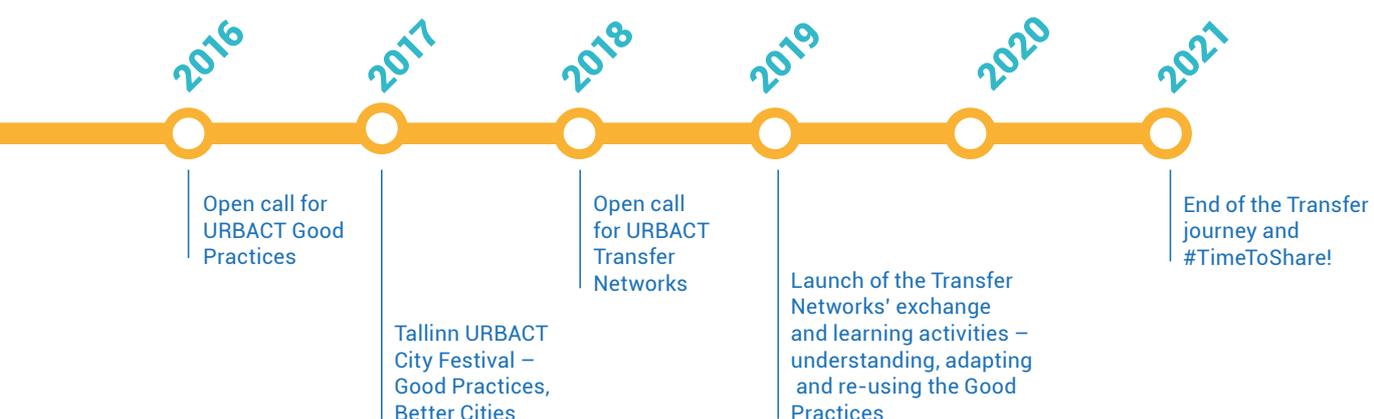
proposition. Instead of coming through the door with a shared challenge, as APN partners do, these partners entered with one city already holding a **tested solution**. We didn't know how this would affect the network chemistry. On a more basic level, we didn't even know if cities with Good Practices would step forward – then commit to three years giving their knowledge away.

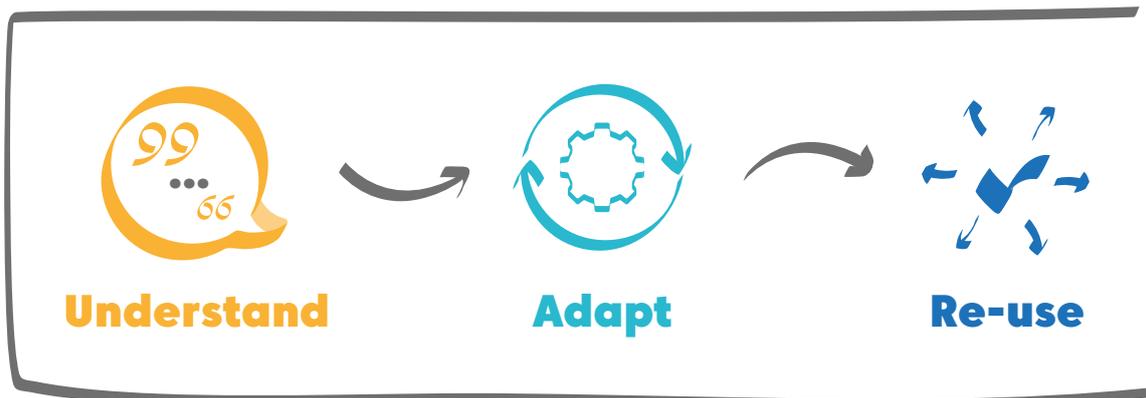
Transfer Networks focus on the adaptation and transfer of established Good Practices amongst EU cities. Each of the 23 networks are led by a city that has been awarded the URBACT Good Practice label.

For more inspiration, visit the URBACT Good Practice database, organised according to the three dimensions of Just, Green, and Productive cities, in the New Leipzig Charter adopted at the end of 2020.



Another question at the front of our minds was how these Good Practices would be transformed in other local contexts. Our transfer mantra, 'Understand, Adapt, Re-use' reflected this and underlined the importance of **forensically analysing the Good Practice, in order to fully understand the scope for adaptation and re-use**. Finally, we wondered whether the transfer process required specific tools.





## What we learnt

As the first wave of URBACT Transfer Networks end, we have the answer to these key questions. Most importantly, **we know that these networks have been successful**. The 23 networks have involved **161 cities** from **25 countries**, with **37% of cities new to URBACT**. In terms of results, at least **76% of transfer cities are confident that the target Good Practice will be re-used**.

What else have we learned? It's clear that **Lead Partners have benefitted from sharing their Good Practice** in a number of ways: raising their profile across Europe and identifying improvements based on the scrutiny of their peers. As for the network chemistry, **the learning was rarely, if ever, one-way and the collaborative culture of all URBACT networks remained**.

As a bonus, we learned some things that we didn't anticipate. One was the reworked relationship between the Lead City and the Lead Expert, where the former is the deep knowledge holder. Consequently, the **Lead Expert assumes more of a process and coaching role**. Another important finding was the value of **modularising the Good Practice, breaking it into component parts**, which assisted the adaptation and transfer process.

The biggest unknown, of course, was Covid-19! At their mid-point these networks had to make dramatic adjustments to their working methods, as international travel ground to a halt. With the active support of the URBACT Secretariat, they have embraced a new generation of online tools to maintain their momentum and finish the job. There is no doubt that this has been tough for many, but these lessons have been valuable. In future, transnational collaboration will never be the same, and the Transfer Networks have pioneered many of the working methods which are here to stay, as we travel less.

It is perhaps the emerging repertoire of digital tools which have become the hallmark of these networks. For although there were some distinctive process tools applied pre-Covid (for example the BeePathNet Bootcamp and the BioCanteens story boards) these were not peculiar to the transfer process.

## What's next

Looking ahead, the European Commission aspires to bring Europe closer to its people. These networks provide a good example of how we might do this as they have engaged school cooks, beekeepers, young entrepreneurs, refugees, teachers and others in their communities. This publication lifts the lid on their city stories, and hopefully they will inspire you to try them in your city. If you want to read more about how to do this, let me recommend the URBACT Transfer Network Study\*.

In the meantime, thanks to all of our heroic network participants and we look forward to seeing your adapted Good Practices continuing to thrive.



\* [urbact.eu/lessons-urbact-study-transfer-networks](http://urbact.eu/lessons-urbact-study-transfer-networks)

# Music bringing people together for social change

**Brno, Czech Republic**

Population 380 000



[urbact.eu/onstage](http://urbact.eu/onstage)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (Spain)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Aarhus (Denmark), Katowice (Poland), Adelfia (Italy), Valongo (Portugal), Grigny (France)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Brno, the Czech Republic's second largest city, has relatively low unemployment rates, low poverty, and low early school-leaving. Nevertheless, the city has identified 16 neighbourhoods where social exclusion is a particular risk, home to a total of about 15 000 citizens, most of whom are Roma people – the city's major ethnic minority. Experts estimate that 78% of Roma children leave school early, compared with a regional average of 2.7%.

Even before ONSTAGE, the municipality co-financed a music programme provided by local organisations and ran high-quality affordable music schools (ZUŠ) for children throughout the city.

The trouble was, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds rarely enrolled. Bringing music to everyone to enhance social cohesion was a little-known concept. Learning from L'Hospitalet was a chance to change this.



First performance on violin and cello

### Inspired by... 'The music school', L'Hospitalet de Llobregat (Spain)



The Municipal Music School and Arts Centre (EMMCA) promotes urban social cohesion, diversity and academic achievement through music, focusing on economically deprived areas with high levels of unemployment and poverty.

Since it opened, the centre has been fighting urban segregation and exclusion by creating a symphonic orchestra, big bands, pop-rock, or jazz groups that bring people together and facilitate cultural exchanges. Providing education for all ages, EMMCA improves students' skills and abilities, with positive effects on their results in mathematics and other subjects too.

## NEW MUSIC ACTIVITIES FOR SOCIAL COHESION

Municipal and regional representatives, non-profit organisations and schools came together in a new URBACT Local Group (ULG) to investigate L'Hospitalet's music school EMMCA, as well as Brno's social exclusion problems and policies.

As a result, the city funded ONSTAGE programmes in several targeted deprived areas. Despite the slowing of activities due to Covid-19, group violin, cello and guitar lessons began in two primary schools – and in September 2020, 37 students signed up for guitar lessons, four times more than the year before. "In only a short period of time we have proven that this project is meaningful for Brno and can make positive changes." highlights Andrea Barickmanová, ULG Coordinator.

Non-profit organisation IQ Roma Servis joined up with a school to create a free choir open to all members of the local community. Meeting first in-person, and later online, their repertoire ranges from pop music and gospel to traditional Roma songs. Elsewhere, musical instruments were bought for a kindergarten in one of the most deprived areas of the city.

The project had a real impact on the understanding and use of music for social change. Rostislav Vintr, a guitar teacher involved in the project, explains from his perspective: "The goal of this project is not 'to get children accepted to the conservatory', but to positively influence children... with integration into society and also show them 'different values'."

**"In just two years of the project ONSTAGE, Brno has been learning new ways to use music education as a tool for social cohesion. And it has been an amazing journey, challenging and rewarding at the same time, with surprising twists that even the best laid plans of mice and men couldn't have envisioned."**

Pavla Lukešová, Project Coordinator, City of Brno

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

For Brno's teachers, seeing L'Hospitalet's group-based 'El Sistema' teaching method in practice was a real eye-opener – as were opportunities to exchange with partners cities such as Grigny (a suburb of Paris, France).

Local guitar teacher José del Castillo Blasco observed that: "This trip to France was all about learning! Firstly, learning with my own eyes how this whole concept of music for social change and better cities works. Secondly, I took so many ideas about how to teach some things in groups in a better way."

## WHAT'S NEXT

All Brno's ONSTAGE programmes now have well established foundations with committed students and teachers. "We would like to see this moment not as the end of the journey but as its beginning. We will look for ways to continue on the innovative and exciting path we have already taken," concludes Andrea Barickmanová.

Brno is also now set to transfer its adaptation of the Music School Good Practice to up to seven more cities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, thanks to the 2021-22 URBACT National Practice Transfer Initiative.



Buying guitars for the second piloting music programme, 2019

# A playful approach to improving the city

**Cork, Ireland**

Population 210 000



[urbact.eu/playful-paradigm-0](http://urbact.eu/playful-paradigm-0)

GOOD PRACTICE CITY: Udine (Italy)

TRANSFER CITIES: Klaipėda (Lithuania), Larissa (Greece), Katowice (Poland), Esplugues de Llobregat (Spain), Novigrad-Cittanova (Croatia), Viana do Castelo (Portugal)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Cork is Ireland's second largest city, and a busy port, located in the south-western corner of the country. Cork is a hub of industry in the region, hosting headquarters of several major multinational companies.

Before joining the URBACT Playful Paradigm Network, 'play' for Cork City Council was predominantly about the construction and management of playgrounds. A holistic understanding of play did not exist beyond a handful of practitioners.

Although this was Cork's first URBACT experience, the city already had a strong relationship with Udine through the World Health Organisation's Healthy Cities network.



Play street activation on a Cork City street closed due to a partial building collapse

## Inspired by... 'The Playful Paradigm', Udine (Italy)

Udine introduced play as a flexible, innovative element of healthy and sustainable placemaking. The approach encourages all stakeholders – from the public sector, businesses and non-profit associations – to share ownership of social progress aiming 'to make the healthy choice the enjoyable choice'.

As a result, 'playful' places – such as the Municipal Toy Library and its public park, the Energy in Play annual fair, the Travelling ToyBus, World Games Day and Pi Day – have contributed to healthy, sustainable development of urban spaces, promoting social inclusion.



## EXPERIMENTING, IMPROVISING AND EVOLVING PLAYFUL STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE LIVES

Cork engaged a part-time Play Development Officer and 26 certified volunteer 'Play Leaders'. Actions developed include: new pop-up play areas in the city centre, parks and libraries; play-based resources for use in city festivals; a toy-lending service in local libraries; and 'street-play packs' for neighbourhood events.

But more than individual actions, the project led to a shift in approach. "We now understand that play as a tool has great power to deliver positive change" reflected Denise Cahill, Healthy Cities Co-ordinator. "As a methodology for inclusion, it has no equal: anyone can play, at any age. Play has measurable impacts, can help form novel partnerships and yield surprising results [which] can be achieved with relatively low levels of investments."

Using play unlocked new forms of creativity amongst local groups to help tackle important societal challenges. For example, 'playful placemaking' workshops along the River Lee were a resounding success. Community organisations, local authority departments and residents – who previously had not worked together – co-developed playful ideas for public spaces, forming a new River Lee Placemaking network.

Playful Paradigm was also the catalyst to close 2.5 km of a riverside road on four Sundays and to install outdoor play equipment to transform the space into an accessible 'multi-generational playground'. The initiative was extended over three months during summer 2020 and people began to increasingly reclaim the space as their own. This area has now been permanently pedestrianised.

**"The Playful Paradigm was transformative for the partners in the URBACT Local Group, citizens and institutions in our city. Translating our learnings into action through experimentation has led to significant changes in local, regional and national policy, resulting in new and fruitful partnerships between organisations."**

Martin O Donoghue, Chair of Lets Play Cork

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) brought Cork City Council together with public bodies and associations across health, education, culture and sports. The sense of shared ownership and entrepreneurial approach sparked unexpected opportunities and partnerships.

Transnational meetings between network partners enabled participants from Cork to bring home specific ideas and skills. For example, representatives of the city library and an early childhood programme were able to visit a toy library in Paris, leading to adoption of a similar model in Cork. Another workshop, in Viana di Castelo (PT), gave the Cork local group the confidence and theoretical basis to create the new River Lee Placemaking network described above.

"Great credit is due to the facilitators and ad-hoc experts who guided us through the theory, presented examples and organised study visits, so that the paradigm shift, could and did occur," commented Denise Cahill.

## WHAT'S NEXT

The ULG has evolved into a steering group called 'Let's Play Cork' that has already started advocating for the concept of the 'playful city' to become a core objective of the City Development Plan and is also contributing to a 'Manifesto of EU Playful Cities'.

The city is also looking at specific investments based on the lessons of the project. Notably, the City Council has earmarked the riverside road for a EUR 4 million project to permanently pedestrianise it.

Additionally, Cork is now set to transfer the Playful Paradigm Good Practice to more Irish cities, supported by the URBACT National Practice Transfer Initiative 2021-2022.



Street activation with playbags

Credit: Darragh Okane permission granted to use

# Helping global talents feel at home

## Debrecen, Hungary

Population 202 000



[urbact.eu/welcoming-international-talent](http://urbact.eu/welcoming-international-talent)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Groningen (Netherlands)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Magdeburg (Germany), Parma (Italy), Bielsko-Biala (Poland), Debrecen (Hungary), Zlín (Czech Republic), Leuven (Belgium)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Debrecen is the economic, cultural, and scientific centre of eastern Hungary – and the country’s second largest city. With a booming economy, the city allocates considerable resources to promoting international investment and developing local businesses. Recently Debrecen announced more than EUR 2 billion in foreign direct investment and 8 000 new workplaces.

Hosting several multinationals such as BMW, Continental and Thyssenkrupp, and the oldest and largest university in the country, Debrecen has a fair amount of international

talent – and employment opportunities. Several separate initiatives were available to help international professionals and students on arrival in the city and during their stay.

However, support was lacking in some areas. For example, many expatriates struggled to find suitable affordable housing, or understand key municipal information in Hungarian. Traditional approaches to economic development were all about developing infrastructure, rather than focusing on people.

### Inspired by... 'Internationalisation for a sustainable future', Groningen (Netherlands)



Several complementary initiatives are coordinated and managed by a multidisciplinary team with local and international members to actively manage processes of internationalisation along four key dimensions: housing, work, city living and communication. These include:

- online and offline platforms that improve access to local housing and housing support;
- internship programme and network events to connect local SMEs and international knowledge migrants;
- ‘city living’ projects to make the cultural and physical life of the city more accessible to new residents;
- matchmaking between locals and international residents to provide language support and social integration; and
- a new website providing English-language information about the city.

This programme helps the town to attract, retain and integrate new residents while maintaining a high level of social cohesion and liveability.

## MAKING LIFE EASIER FOR INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTS

Debrecen's involvement in WIT was managed by the city's economic development centre, the municipality-owned company EDC Debrecen. To enable the municipal government to make data-driven decisions, EDC launched an initial survey to identify internationals' needs.

Through interviews, and 450 survey answers, EDC gathered perspectives on Debrecen's safety, public transport and culture etc. This showed international residents appreciated the calmness, green areas, and social life, but lacked centralised information in English and international cultural events. Specific questions to international students also helped analyse potential future skills in the workforce and their match with the city's growing number of multi-national corporations.

Istvan Kovács, thematic expert at EDC Debrecen explains the philosophy they adopted, inspired by Groningen: "Given the linkages of this project to wider inward investment and

economic development strategies, we felt it was really important to engage with individuals on a one-to-one basis. We want to continue to grow our economy and integral to that is relationships with people, whether that be multinational companies, workers, or students."

Language was confirmed as a serious barrier for many internationals trying to settle in Debrecen. So, supported by the Vice-Mayor, the URBACT Local Group (ULG) and EDC Debrecen decided to develop a website in English with practical information on topics ranging from jobs and housing to cultural programmes.

EDC Debrecen also identified other websites where English versions would be useful, for example on public transport, city works, the Christmas Fair, and other events. The local theatre started providing English subtitles, and other foreign languages will be introduced into the city's cultural programme.

**"According to our questionnaire, which confirms what we learned from WIT partner city, Groningen, we needed an international portal where all important information is collected to help living in Debrecen. We were inspired by many other international portals, especially the one from Groningen."**

Istvan Kovács, EDC Debrecen

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

A new ULG brought together stakeholders linked to the city's Investment Strategy and others such as expat relocation services. This helped Debrecen to develop a new motivation to change the city's mindset towards internationalisation – and played an important role in looking at how they could help make life easier for expats in their city.

Learning from Groningen and partner cities at WIT transnational meetings, EDC Debrecen developed a valuable peer learning approach locally, working with stakeholders individually on specific questions.

## WHAT'S NEXT

The strong stakeholder relations developed through WIT have played a key part in convincing local leaders to also focus on the social aspects of economic development. Building on this, EDC Debrecen will continue to pursue longer term goals, such as improving support for affordable accommodation, and encouraging local companies to recruit international talent.

Mariann Mocsár-Vámos, Project Coordinator at EDC Debrecen, is optimistic about the future. "Our long-term goal is to promote the internationalisation of Debrecen, and to keep contributing to its urban and economic development. We should make Debrecen as attractive as possible for international talent to stay."

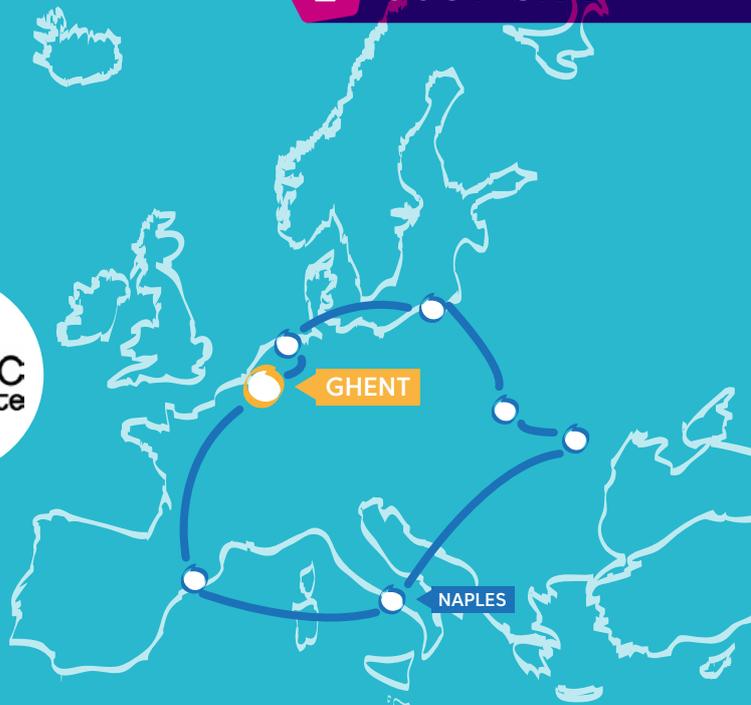


International Food Day at the University of Debrecen to promote the diversity of people and cultures

# Bringing the commons to life

## Ghent, Belgium

Population 260 000



[urbact.eu/civic-estate](http://urbact.eu/civic-estate)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Naples (Italy)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Gdańsk (Poland), Barcelona (Spain), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Ghent (Belgium), Iași (Romania), Prešov (Slovakia)

## SETTING THE SCENE

The large Flemish city of Ghent has a strong tradition of participatory governance. It created a Participation Unit in the 1990s to encourage a bottom-up approach to planning and decision-making. More recently, citizen initiatives and civil servants co-wrote Ghent's 2017 Commons Transition Plan for a sustainable and ethical economy.

Over time, diverse legal instruments were introduced to support such efforts, including subsidy agreements, permits for using public space and an annual Temporary Use Fund. However, unlike in Naples, there was no uniform regulatory framework supporting the wide array of citizen initiatives that emerged – and complexity in the city administration was still hampering communication with citizens.

After positive experiences with the URBACT Refill Network, Ghent decided to join Civic eState with the aim of untangling this complex mix so that citizens and civil servants can find their way.



Engaging the community inside the former church

## Inspired by... 'Lost & Found', City of Naples (Italy)

This democratic governance model enables the city and citizens to co-manage public assets – such as land, buildings, water, services, schools, knowledge, and cultural and natural heritage – for collective enjoyment, and preservation for future generations.

The core policy instrument is an 'Urban Civic Use Regulation' of common goods with participatory decision-making. As a result, over 250 projects have benefited from free and shared spaces, resources, knowledge and skills in Naples.



## NEW LOCAL PROJECTS IN AN OLD CHURCH

Ghent set out to investigate Naples' policy tools, focusing on inspiring their own approaches to making abandoned buildings available to community initiatives through participatory processes.

An URBACT Local Group was formed, involving local citizens and organisations – including those involved in writing the city's 2017 Commons Transition Plan. Local enthusiasm and political interest was strong, with active participation from the Vice-Mayor.

Meanwhile the administration brought various city departments together within a cross-departmental task force, encouraging a more streamlined, strategic and inclusive approach to citizen engagement. This group included the city's legal team, who researched the applicability of Naples' Good Practice.

The group decided to apply the inspiration and learning from Naples in a pilot project to give the abandoned neo-Gothic St Joseph's church, set on a main commercial street, back to the neighbourhood. "We understood instantly that if the transfer was to succeed, we needed to adapt the Good Practice legally to a local context and ensure that it was relevant for [our] pilot project," highlights Yoko Gesels, City of Ghent's Legal Team.

In March 2019, the city bought the church and, following inspiration from partner cities, planned immediately to hand over its management to someone in the community. Candidates would be assessed on their plans for community-oriented management of the building.

Following Covid-related delays, Ghent made the church building temporarily available in a city tool called 'room finder', giving citizens access to the building for their own projects up to 12 times a year.

**"We have been able to analyse Naples' city legislation for the participatory management of buildings that was developed totally from the bottom up. Then we have been able to visit similar initiatives in other partner cities and examine the rules they have in place. This has enabled us to see what we can take and apply in our own city."**

Eleke Langerhaert, Project Coordinator,  
City of Ghent

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

The creation of the city's cross-departmental task force for citizen engagement was a key highlight. As Eleke Langerhaert, Project Coordinator, highlights: "An important added value [of CIVIC eState] is that you also develop the horizontal cooperation within the city." Indeed, some representatives of the city's participation and legal departments met and started working together for the first time through the project.

Despite marked differences in the sizes and experiences of Civic eState partner cities, the City of Ghent managed to transfer the main principles on which the Good Practice is based in the open call launched for the Saint Joseph Church."

## WHAT'S NEXT

Ghent is already working on a plan to further improve their support to citizens' initiatives, including a new incubator to provide legal and administrative support. It is also looking for ways to improve inclusiveness, such as a citizen panel for neighbourhood budgets.

More than simply funds and regulations, there is a new willingness to involve civil servants appropriately in these processes. "Collaboration in the cross-departmental task force works really well – so well that the city would like to keep it in place after the project has ended," concludes Eleke Langerhaert.



# Co-creating a commitment to inclusion and tolerance

## Hamburg, Germany

Population 1 845 000



[urbact.eu/rumourless-cities](http://urbact.eu/rumourless-cities)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Amadora (Portugal)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Hamburg (Germany), Messina (Italy), Alba Iulia (Romania), Warsaw (Poland), Cardiff (United Kingdom)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Transfer focused on the city's Altona district and this story is presented largely from the perspective of Altona, rather than Hamburg as a whole.

The District of Altona is part of the greater City of Hamburg, a major trading crossroads on the North- as well as Baltic Sea with both a long history of immigration and a growing, diverse population. Around 14% of the city's residents are from first or second generation immigrant backgrounds. Unfortunately, the city has seen a disturbing rise in xenophobic populism and hate speech in both traditional and social media.

In Altona, a group of stakeholders was already co-developing an anti-discrimination strategy, including a set of principles to be known as the 'Altona Declaration'. Joining URBACT RUMOURLESS CITIES Network was a chance to add inspiration and momentum to this campaign.



Poster promoting the "Declaration of Altona"

## Inspired by... 'Don't feed the rumour', Amadora (Portugal)

This initiative helps deconstruct stereotypes and prejudice, building social cohesion by tackling discriminatory attitudes.

Thanks to trained anti-rumour agents, an 'anti-rumour network', and a viral communication strategy, Amadora increased residents' positive attitudes to immigrants. The campaign helped disperse rumours such as "immigrants are linked to crime and radicalisation", "immigrants live off grants from the state" and "foreign children only bring problems to the schools".



## BUILDING AND PROMOTING AN ANTI-RUMOUR DECLARATION

The existing stakeholder group in Altona formed an expanded URBACT Local Group (ULG), bringing political leaders and residents. They started asking residents about concepts such as social cohesion, community, democracy and equality, confirming a common desire to live in a society where people stand together and take care of each other.

To co-create the Altona Declaration, a series of 17 anti-discrimination statements were posted online and promoted at events. A thousand people voted, selecting the top seven statements that formed the body of the declaration.

“Through political leaders co-creating this declaration with residents of Altona we are developing an assertive commitment to the values it embodies and developing ownership at all levels...which will form the backbone of the community and campaign activities,” observed ULG Coordinator, Adelina Michalk.

A public democracy conference encouraged citizens and local organisations to take ownership of the declaration and develop ideas for spreading its messages and values. Former footballer and President of Hamburg sport club Marcell Jansen acted as a figurehead for the campaign to raise its profile among target communities of interest.

Unfortunately, Covid-19 was tough for a campaign so strongly reliant on face-to-face activities. Work with schools was stopped, and Altona’s biggest cultural festival – potentially a powerful catalyst for promotion – was cancelled. This forced a creative rethink and a shift towards digital communications, including a campaign kit for civil society organisations.

Thankfully, the Mayor of Altona was personally committed, speaking at the launch event and referring back to the declaration in a public statement condemning discrimination after hate mail was sent to the Altona mosque.

**“With its Good Practice, Amadora clearly demonstrated how important it is to close ranks between politics, administration and the public. There we also took the suggestion to win over well-known people as advocates.”**  
Adelina Michalk, ULG Coordinator

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Hamburg/Altona found the regular peer review opportunities during transnational meetings particularly useful for taking on board practical tips and ideas for anti-rumour strategies. This included a ‘Gallery Walk’, where partner cities used visual images to capture their progress and exchange learning.

One notably valuable technique transferred from Amadora was the active involvement of ‘ambassadors’ to convey key messages to sections within the community. These elected officials, civil servants, and influential citizens assumed a pivotal role as the local campaign was rolled out.

## WHAT’S NEXT

Altona is committed to exploring further ways to communicate and embed the declaration in the life and institutions of this district of Hamburg. For example, politicians have agreed to display a plaque of the declaration prominently on the town hall.

A crucial target group are now schools and young people who will be invited to visit and discuss the values and ideas set out in the declaration. “These principles need to become embedded in the social context of future generations to underpin the evolution of a diverse and cosmopolitan Altona of the future,” concludes Adelina Michalk.



Ms. Dr. von Berg, Mayor of Hamburg-Altona, and Marcel Jansen, former member of the national German soccer-team and current president of the prominent Hamburg Sport Club

# Empowering neighbourhood partnerships for sustainable local development

**Lille Métropole,**  
France  
Population 1 150 000



[urbact.eu/comunitylab](http://urbact.eu/comunitylab)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Lisbon (Portugal)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Bari (Italy), Aalborg (Denmark), Sofia (Bulgaria), Ostrava (Czech Republic), Lublin (Poland), The Hague (Netherlands), Lille Métropole (France)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Lille is a former textiles base in northern France whose economic fortunes brightened on becoming a high-speed train (TGV) and Eurostar rail hub. More recently it was selected as World Design Capital 2020.

Despite the city's long history of investing in deprived neighbourhoods, the metropole's positive transformation still left many people behind. Several local areas have struggled to become autonomous, or cooperate further with the wider community. Strong segregation has persisted.

Lille joined URBACT Com.Unity.Lab Network to learn from Lisbon and add value to their own regeneration policies. "Lisbon managed to subsidise projects for 2-3 years and then they'd become autonomous. After 40 years of urban policy here we still did not know how to do that!" highlighted project coordinator Lea Retournard.



Priority area Haubourdin

## Inspired by... 'An integrated toolbox for deprived neighbourhoods', Lisbon (Portugal)



Lisbon's Local Development Strategy for Priority Intervention Areas uses targeted bottom-up approaches to tackle urban poverty and empower local communities.

A key feature is a large funding programme for small and micro grants to support new social initiatives, local partnerships and small-scale interventions in priority areas. Community members are encouraged to cooperate rather than compete for the funding.

This funding is supported by other tools including neighbourhood mapping and a co-governance model promoting employment, education and social-territorial cohesion.

## ↪ A NEW MODEL FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Lille decided to transfer Lisbon's grants system to two pilot neighbourhoods within the metropole where most inhabitants live below the poverty line. "We already had grant models in place. But there is a lot of competition for these between local organisations – and much wasted energy. The Lisbon model means they have to cooperate – and that was very attractive for us," points out project coordinator Valentin Mousain.

They set up an URBACT Local Group (ULG) involving city, intermunicipal and regional government as well as social centres and other associations in the two target neighbourhoods – Lomme and Haubourdin. Learning from Lisbon and Com.Unity.Lab partner cities, one of the first activities was to analyse their traditional call for proposals, in order to design a simpler, more sustainable and cooperative approach.

The ULG also commissioned a mapping of existing initiatives and stakeholders – to focus on the latent potential in the neighbourhoods and not just the obvious challenges.

A first trial version of a 'Projects Factory' was launched – aiming to stimulate ideas and connections for small-scale innovative projects – and the region agreed to fund grants. Applications are open and flexible; ULG members will decide criteria and deadlines. One key condition is that only joint collaborative projects are eligible.

To support this process, the ULG was planning and organising workshops in 2021 to initiate local partnerships. One of the first initiatives in preparation involves retirees living in nearby social housing looking after a school's garden.

## ↪ URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

For the two project coordinators, inspiration from partner cities was a real highlight. They particularly remember the inspiration they took from two study visits that took place before Covid-19 when they were able to learn about local initiatives in Aalborg (DK) and the use of a local supermarket as a focus for local connections in a neighbourhood of The Hague (NL).

The visit to Lisbon was also inspirational. It helped make some of the ideas that partners in Lille already had more concrete. It also helped city representatives to make a more convincing case to decision-makers higher up the chain to try the suggested approaches.

Peer reviews, site visits and URBACT expert support all helped understand the models in Lisbon and other partner cities. They also helped cities identify their respective strengths. For example Lille's strong track record in mapping particularly interested Sofia and Ostrava, stimulating exchanges between the three cities.

**"A key message was that small things really matter. Sometimes we are focusing on big solutions, big projects, but sometimes something simple in everyday life may matter more.... Lisbon said: 'you don't need big amounts of money, just make it easy for people to work together'."**

Lea Retournard and Valentin Mousain,  
Project Coordinators, Lille Metropole

## ↪ WHAT'S NEXT

Lille has laid the foundations for a community-led grant scheme that it expects to help social inclusion projects in priority neighbourhoods for years to come.

The immediate next steps are to continue developing the 'Projects Factory' with the ULG, secure more funding, and accompany new neighbourhood projects as they are launched. In time, Lille hopes to involve residents in projects too, and transfer decisions for project selection to the ULG.

The project coordinators are also hoping to encourage replication of the model in larger disadvantaged areas across the Metropole.



On the rooftop of the "Coopérative Baraka", a 'transitional Third Place' in Roubaix (Lille Métropole)

# Sharing stories in person and online to strengthen a suburban community

**Pori, Finland**

Population 84 000



[urbact.eu/come](http://urbact.eu/come)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Újbuda (Hungary)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Gheorgheni (Romania), Forlì (Italy), Varaždin (Croatia), Pori (Finland), Plasencia (Spain), Warsaw (Poland)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Pori, an old industrial city on Finland's west coast, focused this project on its eastern suburbs, which sprang up in the 1950s-1970s in proximity to a copper factory.

In addition to the industrial area, other notable features of the local built heritage include two concrete suburbs, a beloved shopping centre which was demolished in 2019 and a former shortwave radio station, owned by the city and maintained by an arts collective 'T.E.H.D.A.S.', that has organised events and exhibitions at the station since 2011 and has also created a sculpture park next to it.

"There seemed to be a need for something like the Good Practice of Budapest as the area was going through changes and developments that I myself had been completely oblivious to," highlights Ville Kirjanen, the URBACT Local Group (ULG) Coordinator.



Story-telling exhibition by Artist collective Phaser Crane

## Inspired by... 'Weekend of Open Houses', Újbuda district, Budapest (Hungary)



During this annual festival, 50-60 houses and institutions in Budapest open up to the public. Launched as a community-building initiative in 2011 celebrating the city's 100-year-old buildings, the event has become a tradition attracting up to 20 000 people.

Weekend of Open Houses is a joint effort by citizens, NGOs, public institutions and district municipalities. Its main aim is to draw attention to local buildings, their architectural value and history in order to initiate discussions about revival and strengthen residential communities. Since 2016, the event has been structured around a specific theme or location.

## OLD RADIO STATION BRINGS A COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Project coordinators Niilo Rinne and Ville Kirjanen started researching and mapping the local heritage, finding “unexpected architectural gems” including a postmodern retirement home and kindergarten designed by the architects Raili and Reima Pietilä.

Nevertheless, the most obvious starting point for a local festival was the old shortwave radio station that broadcasted the voice of Finland around the world from 1940 to 1986. For the coordinators, this building and its surrounding green area “seemed like an unused connecting tissue between the suburbs – an urban green space full of history and legends to be discovered to stimulate community spirit”.

They built a website to be a platform where not only the official history and unofficial stories and legends, but also the present and ideas concerning the future of the radio station can be shared. Locals in east-Pori still remember when the power of the shortwave transmissions would

cause radio programmes to play out of their refrigerators, radiators and even pots and pans!

By 2020, the group felt ready to create a community festival highlighting the built environment of the neighbourhood, its character and stories, and introducing the radio station and its potential as a social and cultural space the people could claim as their own. Sadly, due to Covid-19, these plans had to be cancelled.

Instead, a socially-distanced pop-up exhibition showcased the station's history in September 2020 and finally a two week long Story Café in May 2021 opened up new spaces in the radio station and created a place for histories, stories and art to be shared.

“As I was watching our Project Coordinator be interviewed about the history exhibition by national and local news I allowed myself to feel a strange, warm sensation of optimism!” remembers Ville Kirjanen.

**“The chance to visit the other partner cities in the Transfer Network provided insights we hadn't even considered and taught us something about ourselves. We saw different approaches to the Good Practice and how we might approach our own community-driven festival.”**

Ville Kirjanen, ULG Coordinator

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Pori launched its ULG with a public presentation at the closure event for the local shopping centre. ULG meetings brought together local residents, teachers, artists, researchers and city officers.

All the work started after kick-off talks in Warsaw with Come in! partner cities. But Ville Kirjanen was particularly grateful for the patient support received throughout the project. “New to the game, our confidence grew as Újbuda explained to us the purpose and tools of URBACT, and when we struggled they explained it again, and when we were still a bit insecure they explained everything yet again!”

## WHAT'S NEXT

The transfer process is by no means over – this was just the beginning – and the local group members together with the arts collective T.E.H.D.A.S are still committed to further develop the radio station and surrounding area as a shared space that brings people together to celebrate the built heritage and take part in active citizenship.

“We will continue to develop both the cultural use and the digital dimension of the radio station and hope to reach an audience even beyond the boundaries of Pori and Finland” concludes Ville Kirjanen.



**The Story Café - bringing together people, history and art - attracted nearly 800 visitors during its 15 days of being open**

# Awakening a town's volunteering potential

## Pregrada, Croatia

Population 6 600



[urbact.eu/volunteering-cities](http://urbact.eu/volunteering-cities)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Athienou (Cyprus)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Altena (Germany), Radlin (Poland), Capizzi (Italy), Altea (Spain), Arcos de Valdevez (Portugal), Pregrada (Croatia), Athy (Ireland)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Pregrada is a small town in north-western Croatia. Rich in architectural heritage, an important coal plant opened up there in the 1950s. In more recent years, the town has seen a declining and ageing population.

Although Pregrada had many active volunteers, and close links between relevant boards and the council, there were no local overarching groups, strategies or action plans for a formalised approach to volunteering.

Meanwhile, the town did a lot of different activities with young people, but was looking for ways to encourage them – and local and regional businesses – to do more to help others in the community.

The URBACT Volunteering Cities Network was an opportunity to create a stronger, more participatory model for solving social problems, including a governance structure around volunteering.



Working with the Red Cross during Covid-19

## Inspired by... 'Volunteering council', Athienou (Cyprus)

The Municipal Council of Volunteering (MCV) supports volunteering as a way to connect people and services, with the aim of providing for the basic needs of people facing poverty and social isolation.

Launched in 1970, Athienou's volunteering council now involves up to 200 volunteers at a time. They run four programmes: caring for the elderly; community help and entertainment; nursery care; and social welfare support. There is a focus on inter-generational collaboration, providing direct help to those most in need.



## A NEW CROSS-SECTOR VOLUNTEERING COUNCIL

URBACT first-timers Pregrada set out ambitious goals to adopt Athienou's Good Practice. Supported by the mayor and council, the committed local team took risks, evaluating and exchanging with Volunteering Cities partners, and learning along the way.

A new URBACT Local Group (ULG) brought together all stakeholders relevant to volunteering and social support – from the city, civil society, schools and companies – as well as citizens of all ages. This provided strong foundations for building Pregrada's own 'Municipal Council of Volunteering'.

The group helped to formalise existing partnerships, involve more citizens as volunteers and to spark new ideas for common projects and cooperation. Barriers between people and sectors were replaced by a comprehension of common goals to tackle social problems in the community and a better understanding of the contributions that different stakeholders and groups can make.

"By taking part in Volunteering Cities, the Town of Pregrada heads in the direction of strengthening the participation of its citizens in decision-making processes... strengthening the inter-generational solidarity, involving the youth in creating and executing local policies, volunteering, and involving local entrepreneurs in finding solutions for social problems in the community," highlights Marija Marjanović, Project Coordinator.

By creating a Municipal Council of Volunteering, Pregrada is in a better position to create a safer, more inclusive local environment, starting with "the little volunteers in our kindergarten, volunteering clubs in elementary and high school, the Children City Council, the Youth Council, non-institutional support of public services, town's associations, and the local government."

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

The experience of Volunteering Cities was not about creating a new concept of volunteering that did not exist at all within the town. Rather, it was a process of awakening, developing and harnessing the energy and disparate activities already within the community to do more and to have more impact.

For Marija Marjanović, "All the achievements of the City of Pregrada in the transfer of the Good Practice come from the strong motivation, commitment and ambition of the ULG."

The ULG members grew closer through regular meetings, coordination of local activities and participation in the European-level transnational exchanges. In addition to formal meetings, members kept engaged and motivated thanks to informal coffees and dinners, carrying out project tasks between meetings.

Maria João Rauch, URBACT Lead Expert, also highlights that "this engagement enabled the city to perform extremely well and go beyond the Good Practice".

**"Participating in this project on international level, greatly enhanced our local one. We created a solid foundation of the Town of Pregrada as a modern European town for everyone."**

Marija Marjanović, Project Coordinator

## WHAT'S NEXT

Building on the Volunteering Cities ULG, an advisory body on questions of social inclusion and solidarity will continue to support Pregrada City Council. Still aiming to involve main stakeholders in the community and local government, the board started nominating members in December 2020.

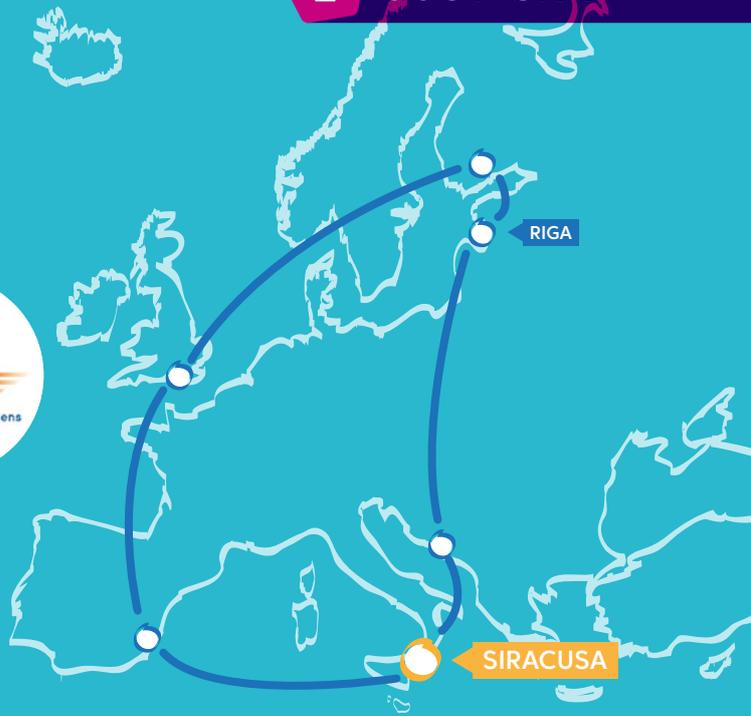
"The main goal is to give our ULG a formal configuration. By accomplishing that, we will fulfil the aim of the project to transfer a more participative governance model for social cohesion in our community," concludes Marija Marjanović.



# Building municipality-NGO cooperation

**Siracusa, Italy**

Population 120 000



[urbact.eu/active-ngos](http://urbact.eu/active-ngos)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Riga (Latvia)  
**TRANSFER CITIES:** Siracusa (Italy), Brighton & Hove (United Kingdom), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Santa Pola (Spain), Espoo (Finland)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Siracusa is a medium-sized city on the coast of Sicily. The city is relatively under-developed in terms of its utilities and mobility infrastructure. With its social services increasingly hit by public budget cuts, the municipality wanted to cooperate more closely with various social and economic actors, and involve NGOs in promoting social inclusion and citizen participation.

Meanwhile, NGOs had limited opportunities and resources. They needed better physical spaces to carry out recreational, cultural and social activities, training courses, and citizens' services; better knowledge and skills to face social challenges.

A solution for Siracusa was to feed the Good Practice from Riga – and other 'ACTive NGOs' partner cities – into its development of three public spaces: Citizen's House, on an abandoned floor of a school in a disadvantaged neighbourhood; Officine Giovani in the historic centre of Ortigia; and the Urban Centre, a recovered space designed as an interface between the administration and local community in planning local policies.



Urban Center before



Urban Center after

### Inspired by... 'NGO house', Riga (Latvia)

Set in a refurbished school building, NGO House is a place for civil society organisations to develop sustainable cooperation with the municipality; receive educational, technical, administrative and informative support; and organise various events and activities.

In addition to providing physical meeting spaces, NGO House boosts citizen awareness of local affairs and participation in municipality-related activities. This contributes to a democratic and inclusive society based on solidarity, sustainability and equal access to civil, social, economic and cultural rights.



## THREE NEW NGO SPACES INSPIRED BY RIGA

Although Riga and Siracusa are very different, both are learning to create synergies between NGOs, citizens and institutions: this is where Riga provided an invaluable model. “The NGO House in Riga inspired us... The Good Practice made us reflect and work to achieve a similar result in our city,” highlights Francesco Italia, Mayor of Siracusa.

Riga’s NGO House relied on substantial public funds for its large structure and dedicated staff, but this was not a part of the model Siracusa could copy. So while the municipality provided three civic spaces, it decided to step back and collaborate with local associations to co-develop and manage the spaces. Adopting this new ‘Open Innovation’ approach was a process of learning and empowerment, both for NGOs and the municipality.

**“Thanks to local and transnational meetings, I’ve experienced what cohesion and exchange means. For the first time I got to grips with the realities of the other partner cities and was aware that I was a European citizen, committed to a purpose that goes beyond the idea of our city.”**

Salvo Antoci, ACTive NGOs stakeholder

## WHAT’S NEXT

The immediate next step for the municipality and House of Associations and Volunteers is to plan an innovative grand opening with local residents pending appropriate Covid-related arrangements.

In the longer term, Siracusa’s challenge will be to establish more structured cooperation between institutions and NGOs in order to change the nature of local services, based on a systematic involvement of citizens and associations.

“We’re learning that involving citizens in civic challenges frees up energy and skills, makes them feel like actors for change. It is exciting and inspiring!” concludes Caterina Timpanaro, ULG Coordinator.

“In Siracusa, it was not possible to provide for the involvement of financial and human resources made available in Riga, but we could count on an active local support group, partly already experienced with the Citizens’ House,” continues Nunzio Marino, project manager of ACTive NGOs.

As a result, the URBACT Local Group (ULG) successfully co-designed a new ‘House of Associations and Volunteers’ and a comprehensive governance model which linked the three civic spaces. This was formalised through a Protocol of Understanding signed by the municipality and Mayor of Siracusa, together with 27 active local organisations. In this way, Siracusa adapted Riga’s NGO House example to its own local reality.

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Despite their diverse contexts, all ACTIVE NGOs partner cities benefited from sharing methodologies, tools and knowledge – including Riga.

From Santa Pola (ES), Siracusa learnt the value of ‘mapping’ as an effective tool in the short and long term, helping improve and expand the project. Dubrovnik (HR) proved that public administrations can use physical resources to create strategic locations and channel various funds, which Siracusa found “very inspirational”.

Meanwhile, Brighton (UK) showed the value of holding recreational activities, from coffee mornings to football matches – fundamental both for ULG commitment and activities with residents. This inspired Siracusa to plan similar activities when they open their own NGO House.





# Rewarding re-use and recycling

## Zugló, Budapest, Hungary

Population 125 000



[urbact.eu/tropa-verde](http://urbact.eu/tropa-verde)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Santiago De Compostela (Spain)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Guimarães (Portugal), Dimos Pavlou Mela (Greece), Urban Community Nice Côte d'Azur (France), Opole Agglomeration (Poland)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Zugló, one of Budapest's 23 districts, has a reputation for clean, safe streets and good transportation. Attracting a diverse mix of residents, the area is seeing considerable development, including new housing for young families. But this increasing population density means growing levels of waste to deal with.

The district's waste is managed by a company (FKF) publicly-owned by the City of Budapest. Before Tropa Verde, FKF already ran two modern Re-use and Educational Centres, where people could drop off useful old objects and which were frequently visited by school groups.

However, still about half of all collected waste went to a huge landfill site, and another sizeable proportion was incinerated. Only about 10 percent of municipal waste was collected separately by households and recycled by various companies. Tropa Verde was a chance for Zugló to take a fresh approach to encouraging citizens to recycle more.



## Inspired by... 'Tropa Verde, rewarding recycling!', Santiago de Compostela (Spain)



Tropa Verde is a multimedia platform that encourages environmentally responsible behaviour. Using a game-based web platform, citizens drop off selected waste at 'green points' and win recycling vouchers that can be exchanged for rewards from the City Council and local retailers.

Santiago De Compostela started the project after a 2015 survey showed a reluctance to recycle due to habit and a lack of information. In the first two years, citizens carried out a total of 16 000 'recycling actions' in social and civic centres and green points. Recycling soared: more than 115 local sponsors delivered 800 rewards, from hotel nights to beauty treatments.

There are also workshops, street actions and other promotional activities. School campaigns have collected more than 3 000 electric appliances, and thousands of litres of used cooking oil.

## A NEW NETWORK OF TROPA VERDE RECYCLERS

First, a survey of citizens' attitudes, habits, motivations and needs gave Zugló a basis to plan their new recycling reward scheme, adapting Santiago de Compostela's Good Practice to their own context. Next, they developed a clear online map enabling residents to find the right recycling facility for a range of waste items.

With support from the web company who developed Santiago de Compostela's original 'Tropaverde' platform, Zugló launched its own local platform, accessible via the now international tropaverde.org. Just like Santiago de Compostela's, this links in to an awards, or hulladék.pont, system, involving a whole network of local partners.

At designated 'green points', citizens can get a coupon with a code in exchange for the recyclable or reusable items they drop off. There are also rewards for composting. Points can then be redeemed on Zugló's Tropa Verde

platform – and spent in shops and organisations who have agreed to sponsor the programme.

For László Szilágyi, Project Manager: "The rewards system is a really important way of engaging with both businesses and citizens about the environment."

To further promote the initiative, the municipality of Zugló launched a campaign to promote recycling jointly with FKF. And there have been environmental education events in festivals, children's camps and schools. Other efforts have included a competition to collect batteries and used electronic devices, and a partnership with the Jane Goodall Foundation to collect used mobile phones.

As the project supports a much wider environmental management strategy, Zugló has benefited from strong political involvement, with the Deputy Mayor, a key advocate for the activities throughout.

**"We got very good support in the learning process from the Lead Partner. First, the adaptation of the web platform was quite easy with the help of their expert. Second, they showed us many organisation and communication skills and practices."**

László Szilágyi, Project Manager, Tropa Verde

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Meetings with partner cities – including an event in Budapest in June 2018 – were great opportunities to exchange experiences and learn from each other, which enabled Zugló to identify similar problems in waste management and learn new skills to tackle them.

Partners in Zugló were also grateful to "the URBACT experts who also gave us very helpful methodological support."

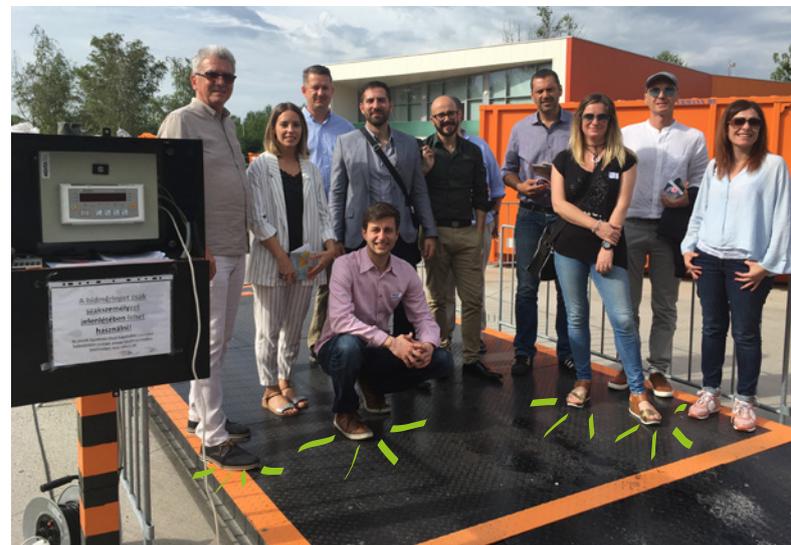
The new URBACT Local Group was particularly active in awareness-raising, thanks to their diverse members from cultural and sports institutions, the city's philharmonic orchestra – and even Budapest's Zoo, which is in Zugló.

## WHAT'S NEXT

The aim is now to get more residents involved post-Covid and hopefully to roll out the programme across all districts of Budapest.

"We are planning to extend this programme to the whole capital, because FKF has many recycling plants outside of Zugló, and many other opportunities can appear in the metropolis to promote recycling." László Szilágyi.

The hope is that each area will set up its own URBACT-style local group, involving local sponsors across the city to promote the circular economy.



Tropa Verde partners visiting Budapest's Awareness Raising and Re-use Center



# Enriching the urban jungle with bees

## Bydgoszcz, Poland

Population 350 000



[urbact.eu/beepathnet](http://urbact.eu/beepathnet)

GOOD PRACTICE CITY: Ljubljana (Slovenia)

TRANSFER CITIES: Cesena (Italy), Amarante (Portugal), Bydgoszcz (Poland), Nea Propontida (Greece), 12<sup>th</sup> District of Budapest - Hegyvidék (Hungary)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Bydgoszcz is the eighth largest city in Poland, part of the Bydgoszcz–Toruń metropolitan area, set on the Brda and Vistula rivers in northern Poland. It is an increasingly important economic centre, but the city is well known for its water, Art Nouveau buildings, and urban greenery – including the largest city park in Poland (830 ha).

The city has a dynamic approach to sustainable development as part of its efforts to improve the quality of life of the city's inhabitants. Against this background, Bydgoszcz wanted to link its agricultural land and green spaces with ecological education and took a particular interest in Ljubljana's approach to connecting sites in the city that are bee-friendly and where apiaries can be visited.



## Inspired by... 'Bee Path', Ljubljana (Slovenia)



Connecting the main locations of the city's beekeepers, Bee Path is an education trail for tourists and residents, from schoolchildren to the elderly. Ljubljana opened its path in 2015 to help visitors discover the city's beekeeping culture, the importance of bees for our survival and food safety, and the benefits of honey in our diets.

The initiative involves various stakeholders, including educational, cultural and health institutions, businesses, NGOs, and beekeepers. With two-thirds of Ljubljana's area made up of rural land, Bee Path is part of the city's work to shorten food supply chains and ensure food sovereignty.

## NEW ACTIVITIES AROUND BEES AND HONEY

Bydgoszcz municipality formed an URBACT Local Group (ULG) mixing around 30 beekeepers, teachers, entrepreneurs, researchers, local tour guides and interested individuals. The group identified 16 places in the city with apiaries and melliferous potential to appear on their own Bee Path map – from a roof on the university to the botanical garden.

“The fact that the precious spots in Bydgoszcz are recognised as a Bee Path is of incredible joy for us!” highlight Katarzyna Napierała and Natalia Majewska, Project Managers, City of Bydgoszcz.

The City started to test and promote the quality of Bydgoszcz honey and used World Bee Day to implement a campaign on the ‘Urban reality of bees and people – let’s create a more bee-friendly world’, including photos at bus and tram stops, and messages on billboards. A

local biologist produced a brochure on proper human behaviour towards bees and an exhibition.

But for ULG Coordinator, Justyna Olszewska, a highlight was local teachers becoming enthusiastic about teaching children about bees. They developed a new educational programme “With Bees Throughout the Year”, which provides children the opportunity to learn about bees, beekeeping and related topics around health, plants and nature.

Edyta Mazurkiewicz-Szreder, who now helps run a ‘melliferous and sensory garden’ at her school remembers her journey: “Bees? No, I did not notice them! Well, everything changed last year... Ania Izdebska asked if I would like to participate in the project. And the rest is history... Ideas began to appear!” Ania Izdebska also developed a ‘beehive on wheels’ that could be used in other schools.

**“The Slovenian Team have paved the way... they shared their ideas with us, they told us where they started. How in small steps, but consistently they reached what they can now boast about. After returning home, we really wanted to create something similar in our city”**

Bydgoszcz ULG participants

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Visiting Ljubljana in April 2019 – together with stakeholders of BeePathNet’s other partner cities – members of Bydgoszcz’s ULG were truly inspired by how they too, could create their own story around bees, linking to history, architecture and natural values.

The project managers and ULG Coordinator are full of praise for the “constructive and creative” work of the ULG to turn the inspiration from Ljubljana into local reality. “We are happy to have found so many bee-enthusiasts and educators... For us, the possibility of co-creation with the citizens is the only right way for the city to grow.”

## WHAT’S NEXT

The city hopes to install the popular bee educational programme across the whole education sector, from kindergarten up. There are also plans that Ania Izdebska with the local tourist office will create a ‘Bee Quest Game’ that will complement the town’s existing game for visitors.

“Now we have had the inspiration, we get the aspiration as well – to have our citizens environmentally-aware, to make most of them bee-friends and to get our Bee Path popular and crowded!” conclude Katarzyna Napierała and Natalia Majewska.

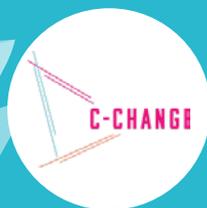
Finally, the city also plans to explore further business opportunities and promotion, to take advantage of the growing interest in the project – including in other towns in the region.



# Arts and culture driving climate activism

## Mantua, Italy

Population 48 000



[urbact.eu/c-change](http://urbact.eu/c-change)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Manchester (United Kingdom)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Wrocław (Poland), Gelsenkirchen (Germany), Sibenik (Croatia), Águeda (Portugal)

## SETTING THE SCENE

The small town of Mantua is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with fine architecture, which has a thriving creative scene and hosts hundreds of cultural events, including Italy's most important literature festival.

At the same time, addressing climate change is a key political priority for the city. "Maybe what will spur us on to protect what we love is a gentle push, a positive message told in the right way, connecting with our values and our emotions," said Emanuele Salmin, Fundraising and EU Projects Office, Mantua municipality.

The municipality wanted to encourage more cross-departmental projects. Having worked with a group of cultural stakeholders in a previous URBACT network, they discovered a strong interest in the links between art and culture and the environment, corresponding with the aims of C-CHANGE.



Awareness-raising during Mantua's C-Change Season

## Inspired by... 'Culture for climate change', Manchester (UK)

The Good Practice is the Manchester Arts Sustainability Team (MAST) – established in 2011 to explore how the arts and culture sector could contribute to the city's first climate change strategy.

From an initial focus on understanding and reducing operational impacts, MAST members now also deliver a range of activities to engage and inspire others to act on climate. MAST currently has 50 members. As a member of the Manchester Climate Change Partnership, MAST also plays an active role in city climate change strategy.



## EXCITING NEW CLIMATE-THEMED CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Environmental experts joined city hall staff and councillors involved in environmental policy, cultural events, venues and heritage in Mantua's new URBACT Local Group (ULG) – a twist on the MAST model. They conducted a survey on environmental practice in local cultural venues and provided support such as training on sustainable events and an online tool to track audience travel impacts.

Whilst encouraging the ULG to be independent, the municipality took on two roles: as sector ambassadors, pushing for sustainable solutions for cultural events and venues; and as fundraisers, securing over EUR 50 000 for additional C-CHANGE activities in the first year.

The cross-sectoral approach sparked a wealth of ideas and actions to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, including small-scale activities – from reusable cups to bio-gas buses – at cultural events. The group also directly contributed to a new 'plastic-free' city strategy, environmental criteria in the city's UNESCO management plan, and green public procurement processes for cultural events.

"C-CHANGE opened a door to something we hadn't considered before: the role arts and culture could play in connecting with the people in our city on climate and inspiring them to act," remarks Emanuele Salmin.

Mantua enjoyed a C-CHANGE season of Covid-adapted events in summer 2020, including: children's workshops; an installation on greenhouse gas emissions; a photography exhibition; an amateur photography competition; and children's radio programmes. These events also reduced their own environmental impact, for example Festival Letteratura rethought the food it serves to its volunteers, and Woodstock MusicAcustica reduced waste and energy use, even changing its name to the C-Change Carbon Free Acoustic Music Festival.

Meanwhile, inspired by Manchester, small groups of stakeholders delivered carbon literacy training to their own communities.

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

An "inspirational" trip to Manchester introduced Mantua to members of MAST. They discovered examples of climate awareness raising, from a live energy display in a studio lobby, to sustainable food-sourcing on menus, and Carbon Literacy certificates.

Meanwhile, the other partner cities brought further inspiration. For example, children's workshops using recycled instruments were inspired by Portuguese partner Águeda.

According to Emanuele Salmin, the ULG was made up of "passionate, committed people, who ultimately made C-CHANGE a success beyond our expectations,"

"We were guided throughout, as a city and as a group, by our URBACT Lead Expert, Claire Buckley – always there with the right suggestion at the right time. Claire was able to bring the benefit of her experience with MAST from its very early days." concludes Emanuele Salmin.

**"Through C-CHANGE, we were able not only to learn from Manchester but to benefit from peer learning and exchange with the other C-CHANGE cities, all, like us, trying to adopt a similar approach.**

Emanuele Salmin, Fundraising and EU Projects Office, Mantua Municipality

**Zero Beat & Mantova Chamber Orchestra workshop on using recycled instruments**



## WHAT'S NEXT

Already looking beyond C-Change, the ULG took on a new identity as ARC3A in summer 2020. ARC3A's journey as a unifying force for supporting the crucial role the arts and culture sector has for improving climate resilience has only just begun.

In addition, Mantua is now set to transfer its adaptation of the C-CHANGE Good Practice to up to seven more Italian cities, thanks to the 2021-2022 URBACT National Practice Transfer Initiative.



# Creating a municipal farm to supply local canteens

## Troyan, Bulgaria

Population 22 000



[urbact.eu/biocanteens](http://urbact.eu/biocanteens)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Mouans-Sartoux (France)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** LAG Pays des Condruses (Belgium), Vaslui (Romania), Trikala (Greece), Rosignano Marittimo (Italy), Torres Vedras (Portugal), Troyan (Bulgaria)



## SETTING THE SCENE

Troyan is a town in the hills of central Bulgaria known for its strong plum brandy and with strong ambitions for its agri-food sector. Its 2014-2020 Municipal Development Plan already prioritised organic farming, support for young farmers, and conservation.

Troyan aimed to deliver fresh organic products to its school canteens and started working with a research institute to plan the development of organic fruit and vegetable production – including locally-adapted plum and apple varieties. To support this, in 2018, the town announced that 15 hectares of publicly owned land would be dedicated to a municipal farm, with areas for vegetables, fruit trees and cattle grazing.

Troyan joined the URBACT BioCanteens Network network to help develop an operational process to carry out their innovative plans.



Inside one of the three greenhouse tunnels... organic food is growing!

## Inspired by... 'Collective school catering', Mouans-Sartoux (France)



A sustainable initiative for a territorial agri-food policy that connects food, health and environmental issues.

To overcome a lack of local organic food, a municipal farm was created and two farmers hired to grow vegetables for school canteens. Public procurement rules were also changed so that local producers could answer calls for bids.

Mouans-Sartoux now serves daily school meals – covering 85% of the needs of the three local schools – that are 100% local and organic.

## A NEW MUNICIPAL FARM

After her first visit to Mouans-Sartoux, former Project Coordinator Elena Valcheva said, "We cannot be expected to do all that in 2 years!". Two years later, it is clear that the city of Troyan has ticked most of the boxes of its Transfer Plan and in particular one of the most ambitious parts: the implementation of a new municipal farm from scratch.

Troyan's municipal farm is the first of its kind in Bulgaria. To achieve this, the town took a step-by-step approach – initially aiming to provide half of the vegetables required in local canteens, then expand production later. This process was supported by an URBACT Local Group (ULG) involving heads of all city schools and kindergartens, civil servants and parents' association representatives.

In March 2019, a meeting with Rozalina Rusenova, Deputy Mayor, confirmed the new farm's overall infrastructure: three 200 m<sup>2</sup> greenhouse tunnels, with an irrigation system and space for a fourth tunnel; and farm building facilities including a hall, storage space, refrigeration chambers and a preparation room for end products.

**"The success of Troyan is in part due to the transfer process in the framework of an URBACT network arriving at just the right time to boost and implement an ongoing policy orientation toward healthy and sustainable food in the city."**

Teresa Georgieva and Nadezhda Terziyska,  
Project Coordinators

## WHAT'S NEXT

While work with the school kitchens and on the municipal farm continues to develop, Troyan is starting to apply new ideas and perspectives on public procurement to improve supply to school canteens.

Further next steps include an initiative to support the preparation of meals inside school canteens, and expanding the supply of local, healthy organic food to the municipality's elderly residents.

Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic and the cold 2019 winter slowed the municipal farm's development, good progress has been made. Local farmer Maya Genkova was recruited to run the farm – including both production and educational visits.

"When the vegetable production will be ready, they will be introduced into the central kitchens' menus. The kids will have field trips to the farm to see what they eat and how it has been grown," enthused Nadezhda Terziyska, food technologist in a newly equipped central kitchen.

One of the first actions was the establishment of the organic fruit orchards, whilst the first vegetables were planted in greenhouses at the end of 2020. These are expected to supply fresh organic fruit and vegetables to all 500 children in the town's kindergartens during the course of 2021.

The organic certification process was also launched with the National Food Agency – an essential step before serving the food in school canteens. This process started smoothly despite Troyan's approach being the first of its kind in Bulgaria.

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Beyond the inspiration and guidance provided by Mouans-Sartoux, one of the most valuable network activities was a workshop on public procurement. This helped Troyan understand what it is possible to achieve with the right plans, procedures and award criteria. This training was set up after BioCanteens partners completed a questionnaire to identify common problems.

The transnational meeting Troyan hosted in July 2019 also had an important local benefit in reinforcing support for the municipality's agri-food strategy. Network partners met Mayor Donka Mihaylova and visited the new fruit orchard and kitchens.



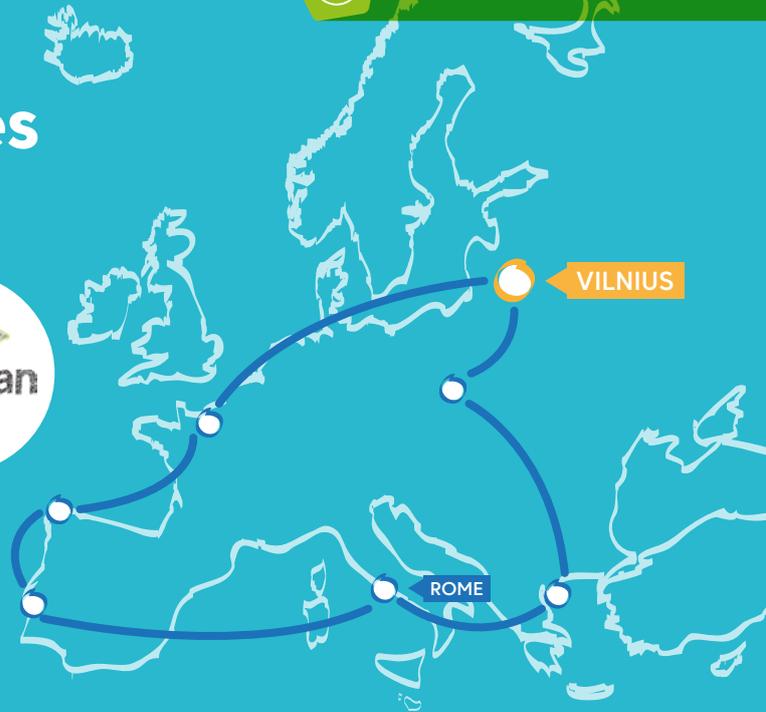
Building a new municipal farm from scratch



# New urban gardens bringing communities together

**Vilnius, Lithuania**

Population 589 000



[urbact.eu/rurban](http://urbact.eu/rurban)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Rome (Italy)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Vilnius (Lithuania), Caen (France), Kraków (Poland), Thessaloniki (Greece), Loures (Portugal), Coruña (Spain)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Lithuania's capital is particularly green, with 44% of its territory dedicated to forests, parks and squares. However, while family garden allotments persist from Soviet times, understanding of shared community gardens is still limited.

The municipality owns various public spaces, including grounds of schools and kindergartens, but most vacant space in Vilnius is privately or state-owned. This has challenged the municipality's capacity to promote urban agriculture.

The shared urban garden initiatives that have existed so far have done so without city support. Meanwhile, most community groups lack the funding and permanent staff necessary to commit to gardening projects.



## Inspired by... 'Resilient urban and peri-urban agriculture', Rome (Italy)



The city of Rome developed a participatory urban gardening project targeting more than 50 hectares. Working with NGOs, citizens, disadvantaged people and minorities, the initiative fights social exclusion and poverty, and allows brownfield recovery, promoting a sustainable, eco-friendly approach.

The city also uses the initiative to improve governance processes, in which social and intercultural dialogue has a pre-eminent role to play. Alongside employment policy, the approach also acknowledges factors such as housing, health, culture and communication.

## NEW POLICIES FOR SHARED GARDENS

The RU:RBAN Network gave Vilnius the knowledge to promote urban gardening as a way to fight social exclusion, and bring neighbours – even in high-rise ‘sleeping districts’ – together. To this end, a new URBACT Local Group (ULG) including the Ministry of Environment was set up.

The group focused on a key component of Rome’s practice – a clear set of regulations for communities to know how and where to start an urban garden. It was not a process of copy-paste, but of understanding and adapting. “When we started to dig deeper into Rome’s regulations, of course we saw we couldn’t just do what Rome did, it was a totally different story,” explains project coordinator Aušra Sičiūnienė.

Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of the ULG, the City Council approved a new set of rules and regulations for urban gardening in March 2021. In addition, the municipality released a guide to urban gardening which gained national media attention as part of a broader environmental awareness drive.

In terms of implementation, they started with one existing community garden and built from there. Gradually, the number of urban gardens in Vilnius started to grow. Furthermore, the model is now formally included in the city’s urban development policies.

Another interesting aspect was that they linked the development of community gardens with ecological education and vegetable growing in kindergartens – an activity appreciated by partner cities during their study visit.

**“During this URBACT RU:RBAN Network journey, we experienced the establishment of several new, really successful urban gardens in Vilnius. Not as many and not as big as in Rome, but little by little this initiative is growing!”**

Aušra Sičiūnienė, Project Coordinator, Vilnius.

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

The members of Vilnius’ ULG benefited collectively and within their own specific fields from the experience and ideas of Rome and the other partner cities. This included gardeners sharing seeds and participating in Gardenizer trainings. It also involved “totally fascinated” city planners learning how Rome developed urban farming at a huge scale, right down to the smallest details of their financing model.

“The whole format was really easy to understand for everyone. URBACT projects are very inspiring, down-to-earth and community-oriented,” enthuses Aušra Sičiūnienė.

ULG members also gained valuable knowledge about new communication tools, including through trainings in Riga where they learnt to use tools such as ‘vox pops’ and understand the value of their story for others.

## WHAT’S NEXT

Solving land ownership issues will remain a key challenge for the spread of urban gardening, requiring ongoing dialogue with private and state owners. To free up more land, Vilnius will also start discussions with the National Land Authority to allow communities temporary use of state-owned land for their urban garden initiatives.

As for its own land, the city will now be proposing the option of including an urban garden whenever it discusses green area renovation plans with communities. The municipality also expects to continue making further improvements to relevant legal procedures to facilitate urban gardens.

The municipality has also started a new strategic long-term program – CITY+ – aimed at recreating a sense of community in the former Soviet districts. One of the important aspects is to create a feeling of ownership by allowing citizens to have their own plot and therefore an opportunity to create their small urban gardens.

With around 60% of the city’s population living in these buildings, Vilnius’ new urban garden trend looks set to continue.

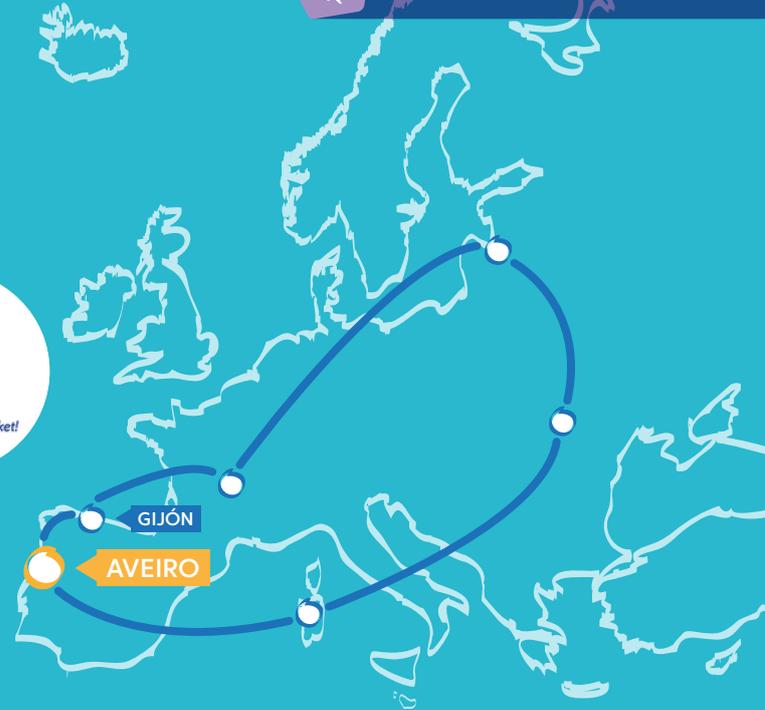




# A card to simplify smart access to local services

## Aveiro, Portugal

Population 78 000



[urbact.eu/card4all](http://urbact.eu/card4all)

GOOD PRACTICE CITY: Gijón (Spain)

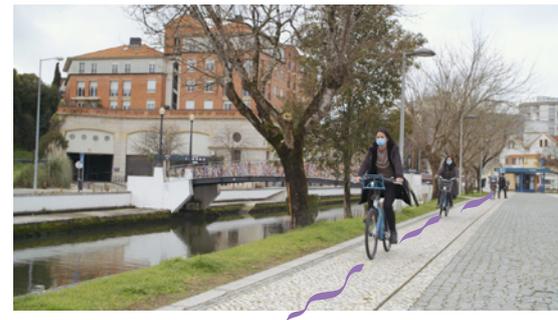
TRANSFER CITIES: Suceava (Romania), Clermont-Ferrand (France), Jūrmala (Latvia), Sassari (Italy), Aveiro (Portugal)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Aveiro is an industrial city with an important seaport on the western coast of Portugal and also known as ‘the Portuguese Venice’. More recently, it has become known as a digital cluster, a territory of innovation with a strong knowledge economy, dynamic university, centre for telecoms R&D, and innovative firms in the digital and traditional sectors.

However, the increasing development of new digital solutions had created a complex system of providers, interfaces and information sources for various services around the city, which was increasingly hard for local people to navigate.

The municipality has been wanting to simplify citizens’ access to public services and transform Aveiro into a smarter, more open, resilient and inclusive society. In 2018, it launched an Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) project ‘Aveiro STEAM CITY’, supporting the adoption of 5G and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies. One year later, Aveiro joined the URBACT Card4ALL network focused on the implementation of innovative services and technologies through a Citizen Card System.



Bike sharing system: a future service that will be included in the common card

### Inspired by... ‘Citizen Card’, Gijón (Spain)



A smart card that gives residents access to services and public facilities across the city, from transport to cultural activities and digital services. It thus promotes social inclusion, local trade, urban mobility and sustainable living.

The citizen card also helps improve citizen participation, setting up citizenship profiles to better match people’s needs with public policies – and so improve quality of life.

Since its launch in 2002, Gijón’s Citizen Card has become both a coordination and loyalty mechanism, and an integrated tool for local people to access and pay for public services.

## INTEGRATED SCHOOL CARD AND IMPROVED ONLINE SERVICES

Aveiro has started by introducing a common card for all students across its different schools. All services provided by the municipality and schools can be managed and paid with it. This includes the cafeteria, school supplies, photocopying, even access to the buildings and school-day excursions. Crucial preparatory actions included mapping different systems to ensure compatibility and ease of use.

Almost simultaneously, the municipality also activated new online services, with a wide range of options. Different linkages, payments loading, single sign-in and a number of other key elements discussed in URBACT CARD4ALL Network are already in place.

Beyond this, municipal departments are still working together to create a broader citizen card system covering almost all sectors of local life, including: mobility (bikes, buses, ferry, parking...); education and sports; culture (libraries, museums, theatre...); tourism; IT; and 'the front office' that deals directly with citizens. Each department acts as an intermediary with their own external service providers and concession holders, encouraging strong cross-sectoral cooperation.

The network and the wider activities enjoy strong support from local politicians – and a clearly identified demand from citizens.

**“We are looking to ensure that all our European projects and wider economic development activities are joined up, which is why our CARD4ALL involvement at the local level is not isolated, but strategically linked to our wider work around tech.”**

André Cester Costa, Head of Economic Development and Entrepreneurship, Aveiro municipality

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

To reach this point, Aveiro and its stakeholders exchanged regularly with fellow partner cities, and learned directly about Lead Partner Gijón's Citizen Card system, including technical tools required for its development. This has already informed key elements of Aveiro's new online public services and the emerging citizen card plans.

Local developments have been coordinated through an URBACT Local Group (ULG) comprising two different groups of stakeholders. The first engages all existing service providers on a practical and technical level. The second is a municipal cross-departmental group linking with wider economic development activities.

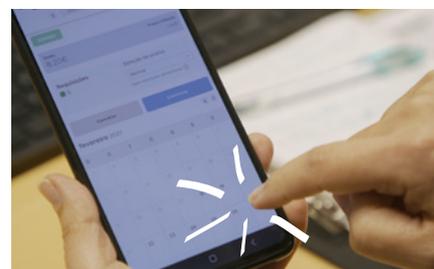
The integrated approach supported by the ULG has been particularly valuable in helping the work with CARD4ALL fit into Aveiro's constellation of ongoing projects, creating synergies and building on existing policies.

## WHAT'S NEXT

The card's success in the future will require technical capacity, financial and human resources – including a municipal team of ICT developers and technical experts – which is not always easy to maintain in Portuguese municipalities.

Despite these challenges, the city is now working with more public service providers to add the library, museum, bus and bike sharing system to a new citizen card, further simplifying life for residents.

“Change is needed but it's not always understood by all the stakeholders or even the citizens. To get a seamless transformation it is needed to find a balance between the maintenance of systems and the introduction of new and disruptive functions”, says Maria Ângela Oliveira e Cunha, Economic and Entrepreneurship Division, Aveiro municipality. “This is a long process, and the steps should happen continuously, in a sensitive way, with the involvement of citizens”.





# Shifting mindsets to involve local communities in urban regeneration

**Birmingham,**  
United Kingdom  
Population 1 140 000



[urbact.eu/urban-regeneration-mix](http://urbact.eu/urban-regeneration-mix)

GOOD PRACTICE CITY: Łódź (Poland)

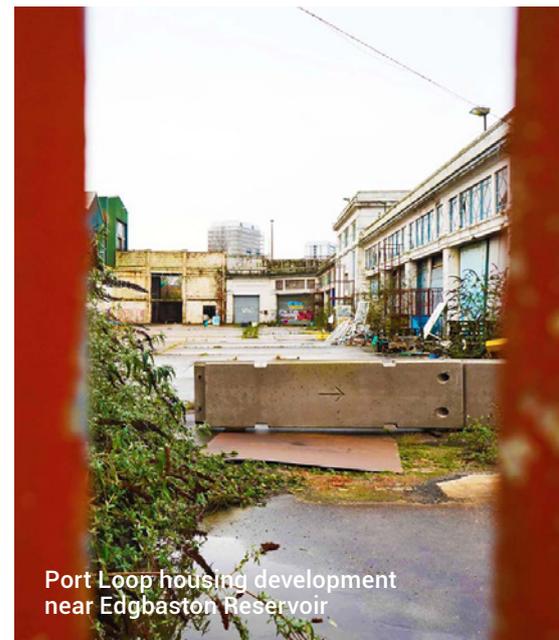
TRANSFER CITIES: Baena (Spain), Zagreb (Croatia), Braga (Portugal), Bologna (Italy), Toulouse Métropole (France), Birmingham (UK)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Birmingham’s population is growing rapidly: a predicted 80 000 more homes will be needed by 2032. However, when drastic national austerity measures were introduced after the 2008 financial crisis, severe budget cuts led to a 50% cut in Birmingham City Council’s workforce. The Regeneration Team was among the first to be disbanded.

From 2010 nearly all regeneration projects stopped – apart from ‘housing renewal’, which is driven by private developers and focused on capital investment, with little funding for associated social projects. Quantity took precedent over quality. Little space was left for social experimentation or risk-taking.

In 2017, an Urban Innovative Actions-funded project ‘USE-IT’ enabled a fresh approach, with an innovative partnership adding ‘human-centred’ interventions to a Housing Master Plan. This partnership laid the foundation for Birmingham to join the URBACT URBAN REGENERATION MIX (REMIX) Network – a great opportunity to learn from Łódź.



Port Loop housing development near Edgbaston Reservoir

### Inspired by... ‘Revitalising historic districts’, Łódź (Poland)

A collaborative model of urban regeneration that strengthens relations between the main stakeholders, including various city departments and increasing residents’ participation and promoting their equal involvement.

In this way, the City of Łódź revitalised a historic area enabling:

- Physical transformation: modernisation, conservation and insulation of 25 nineteenth century, mostly city-owned, multi-dwelling buildings;
- Economic activities: transforming some dwellings into commercial premises;
- Social activities: including a Residents Club, and social, artistic and cultural projects.



## PUTTING RESIDENTS AT THE HEART OF REGENERATION

Birmingham tried out the Łódź model for themselves in a pilot project to bring a playing field back into use next to Edgbaston Reservoir.

Whilst in Łódź a city administration mediator works with the community during the regeneration process, Birmingham went a step further, appointing community representatives in the target area – where some had lived for decades. Once trained, they become permanent ambassadors, communicating with the City Council, and understanding their challenges. This enabled Birmingham to rebuild trust in a community who had previously opposed all council plans.

The project introduced a Community Economic Development Planning (CEDP) approach, encouraging local economic development that generates human wellbeing. The power to drive change rests within the

community of residents, local businesses, and local service providers including councils, community groups and voluntary sector organisations with a direct stake in the area's economic health.

Birmingham and Łódź discussed at length the recruitment and training of city employees for the new approach, highlighting the need for leaders who are not afraid to take risks. Birmingham City Council continues to explore and train new staff in greater risk-taking and paves a way for new openness for innovation.

Cooperation with the local community grew around the sports field project, and residents ended up co-producing an alternative Community-Led Master Plan for the whole Reservoir – instead of campaigning against plans that did not necessarily meet their needs.

**“The Łódź team has been extremely helpful in explaining both the benefits and difficulties of their approach. The openness resulted in much deeper understanding of the foundations that need to be laid for the best practice to be introduced.”**

Karolina Medwecka-Piasecka, Birmingham's URBAN GENERATION MIX Coordinator

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Setting up an URBACT Local Group (ULG) proved a very powerful mechanism to significantly improve the city's engagement with residents. The council forged new links with members of the community. This successful community leadership around Edgbaston Reservoir has provided a powerful catalyst for the local authority's Housing and Planning teams to alter their approaches for future regeneration projects, fully embracing the principles of inclusive growth.

Observing and discussing the changes happening in Łódź also gave Birmingham several specific ideas the city could adjust and adapt to its own conditions.

## WHAT'S NEXT

The community-led ULG has gained momentum as a force for change and is set to continue far beyond the project. Local stakeholders want to continue working together, strengthening their capacity.

The experience from the Edgbaston Reservoir is already being rolled out across wider East Birmingham with a population of over 240 000. A multidisciplinary team has been set up to deliver a newly launched 20-year East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy modelled on the Łódź Regeneration Team. This enables several city departments to work together with the city-region administration and, crucially, communities will be included in the redesign of their neighbourhoods. So, the benefits of redevelopment will be felt where they are needed most.



Interviews recorded for the story-telling project 'Voices of B16'



# Enriching the education system with local partnerships

**Halmstad, Sweden**

Population 100 000

on board

[urbact.eu/onboard](http://urbact.eu/onboard)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Viladecans (Spain)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Tallinn (Estonia), Poznań (Poland), Albergaria-a-Velha (Portugal), Nantes (France), Halmstad (Sweden)



## SETTING THE SCENE

Halmstad is a fast-growing coastal town on Sweden's west coast: a port, but also a university, industrial and recreational city.

The local education system rarely cooperated actively with local companies, organisations, or even parents. Rather, it was strongly managed by municipal departments guided by national rules. Typically for Sweden, local families were involved in children's sports clubs, but much less so in schools.

Halmstad had already had positive links with the city of Viladecans since 2014 and was enthusiastic about adopting their Educational Innovation Network (EIN) approach. The town hoped to deliver short-term improvements such as calmer classrooms, but also longer-term benefits in terms of preparing future professionals and citizens.

"We had carried out a lot of transnational projects and other knowledge exchange and transfer initiatives between cities before. But never had we been tasked to really link the work so closely, so differently, with the community and different stakeholders in Halmstad," remarks the city's ON BOARD Coordinator, Jonas Åberg.



## Inspired by... 'Educational Innovation Network', Viladecans (Spain)



Launched in 2013, the Educational Innovation Network (EIN) is a cooperative structure that brings together public administration, education centres, professionals, families and enterprises. Collaboration among these stakeholders helps to stimulate innovation and creativity in the city's schools.

The EIN develops innovative projects to advance educational innovation and achieve education success in the city, reversing trends of rising unemployment and declining growth. One example of EIN's achievements is the introduction of new technological devices into schools, and their improved use by teachers, students and families.

## A MORE JOINED-UP APPROACH TO IMPROVING EDUCATION

Halmstad started by taking an inventory of local stakeholders, their capacities, needs and interests. The city also identified a first school to trial the EIN approach. The town then formed Focus Groups around '10 Good Habits' to improve students' brain power and overall wellbeing – advice developed by a local consultancy in cooperation with the Neuroforum network on brain research and education. Inspired by Viladecans, each Focus Group involved a mix of relevant stakeholders. For example, the group on 'Increased learning and good reading habits' linked up training schools, teaching students, Halmstad University, and the school librarian.

Another significant cooperation initiative taken on by Halmstad's city council has been the creation of four cross-departmental clusters. These focus on: Care and Support; Education and Learning; Growth and Attractiveness; and Infrastructure.

One of the key lessons for the town was the depth of change required to deliver a multi-stakeholder approach. Schools in Halmstad now involve parents, businesses, sports clubs, something the city's ON BOARD Coordinator Jonas Åberg says "normally wouldn't happen at all". But it has been worth it. "A little more cooperation between colleagues can have a positive effect!" said Mattias Rossköld, municipal director of Halmstad.

**"The big eye-opener for us has been the way so many different stakeholders in the Viladecans municipality can work together on behalf of education innovation."**

Jonas Åberg, ON BOARD Coordinator, Halmstad

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Halmstad is grateful for the support it received from the National URBACT Point in Sweden and also particularly appreciated their ON BOARD partners' "excellent cooperation and invaluable inputs". During transnational meetings, each city presented at least two 'Pilot EduProjects' from their own experience, forming an inspirational pool of education innovation ideas for all to use.

Halmstad shared its '10 Good Habits' approach, and in turn fed the ideas of the other network partners ideas into its own local Focus Groups. In addition to a Viladecans project on 'Positive Mindset and Emotions', this included the work of Tallinn (EE) to encourage pupil participation in youth events, and a project marketplace from Albergaria-a-Velha (PT) showcasing diverse educational initiatives.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Having been inspired by both Viladecans' Good Practice and the transnational exchanges, Halmstad is committed to continuing to work to enhance education innovation in collaboration with community stakeholders. The town recognises that in order to continue and expand the work, the City Council will need to organise and delegate, but also continue to transform the municipality's different departmental boundaries.

The town has also identified further necessary improvements to build on the progress made so far. For example, "We have recognised that we really need to improve the way we communicate within our municipality and between our departments and school units... bringing people closer together and keeping them better informed of our goals and activities," said Jenny Axelsson, Deputy Mayor Halmstad municipality. Halmstad is taking inspiration from Viladecans' excellent work in this area too.



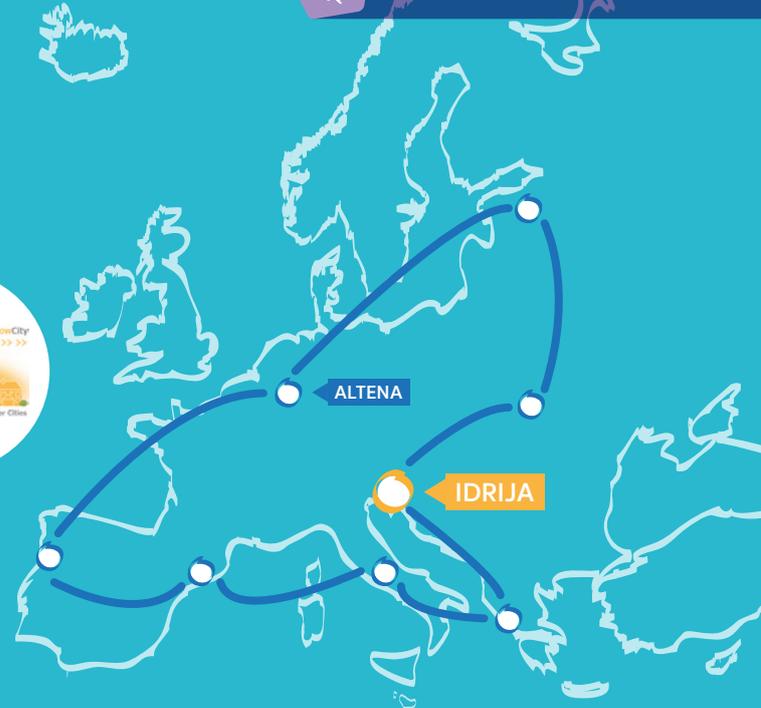
ON BOARD's Policy Declaration for educational innovation signed by all partner cities, 2019



# Working with civil society to reverse decline

## Idrija, Slovenia

Population 12 000



[urbact.eu/re-growcity](http://urbact.eu/re-growcity)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Altena (Germany)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Manresa (Spain), Igoumenitsa (Greece), Isernia (Italy), Melgaço (Portugal), Alūksne (Latvia), Nyírbátor (Hungary), Idrija (Slovenia)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Idrija is a small former mercury mining and industrial town set in the Alpine foothills, which has also been suffering years of decline following the loss of key local industries.

In 2015, Idrija participated in the URBACT City Centre Doctor Network, producing an Integrated Action Plan to revive the town centre. This included an idea for a new community centre.

Idrija already had various local NGOs, a youth centre and a multi-generational centre in a retirement home, but each was relatively focused on its own agenda. The municipality was looking for a solution that would connect people, enable them to make decisions together, and open new possibilities.

"When we saw the issues Altena was tackling and how they addressed them – there was something right about it. And when we learned about their NGO platform 'Stellwerk', that was just it! Our dreams from the previous project finally got a form," highlights URBACT Local Group (ULG) Coordinator Tina Lisac.



The Living Room, a place "by the people for the people"

## Inspired by... 'Finding opportunities in declining cities', Altena (Germany)



Altena in south Westphalia developed a model to manage long-term decline combining: organisational restructuring; development of civil society and volunteering; integration of refugees; and economic revitalisation. Key initiatives have included the 'Stellwerk' volunteers' platform, and a 'Pop-up Shop' campaign.

Having shifted its strategic objectives to work more closely with citizens and focus on controlling decline rather than growth, Altena has stabilised its population and improved municipal finances. There are fewer empty shops and unemployment is falling for the first time in 40 years.

## A 'LIVING ROOM' FOR THE TOWN, INSPIRED BY ALTENA

The municipality formed a small ULG involving the heads of the city administration, active citizens, social services and economic departments, the regional development agency, library and nursing home, local clubs and associations.

When the municipality found a vacant building to house the project with minimal cost, enthusiasm grew. For Tina Lisac, what was crucial was that the ULG saw that their role is important, and they are actually heard. Having a place for activities made the NGO platform more real. It was also an important step in the eyes of the public since they saw that the municipality is willing to support ideas like that."

In February 2020, Idrija launched its new town 'Living Room' with all activities free and open to everyone. It links organisations with interested citizens, based on "by the people for the people" model. Activities have already included events on housing and building refurbishment, chess classes and a knitting evening to raise breast cancer awareness. It hosts services, such as a municipality-supported free transport service for elderly people and a book corner provided by the local library.

"For us, establishing an NGO platform meant giving people the opportunity to be part of a community and, even more important, to decide and to design what will be happening in their local environment," stresses Tina Lisac. Nevertheless, whereas Altena's NGO platform is totally self-governed, Idrija's volunteers still need guidance and support.

**"The whole transfer was a brilliant experience where we were able to learn not just from the Lead Partner, but also other partners in the network. It makes it easier to work on things when you have a friend (yes, that is how we call our project partners) who is working on the same things and you can discuss everything that comes your way!"**

Tina Lisac, ULG Coordinator, Idrija

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

A key theme for Re-growCity partners was 'developing civil society'. The project kicked-off with a joint visit to Altena's NGO platform. "It was really helpful to get an insight directly from those who are doing the practice and having the opportunity to ask questions afterwards," remembers Tina Lisac.

Idrija particularly appreciated the "much needed" deep dive workshops on topics such as how to work with volunteers, how to connect stakeholders and how to empower citizens – all with useful examples, techniques and case studies.

## WHAT'S NEXT

The outlook for the town's living room is optimistic, with a paid coordinator now in place to animate and coordinate events organised by volunteers. They are eagerly awaiting the lifting of coronavirus measures to expand their activities, including a new monthly repair café.

Additionally, Idrija is set to transfer the practice to other towns, thanks to a new URBACT National Practice Transfer Initiative. "Idrija is enthusiastic to become the city that can pass on the excitement of taking part in an URBACT network to Slovenian cities that have not yet been part of the URBACT community," says Petra Očkerl, National URBACT Point.



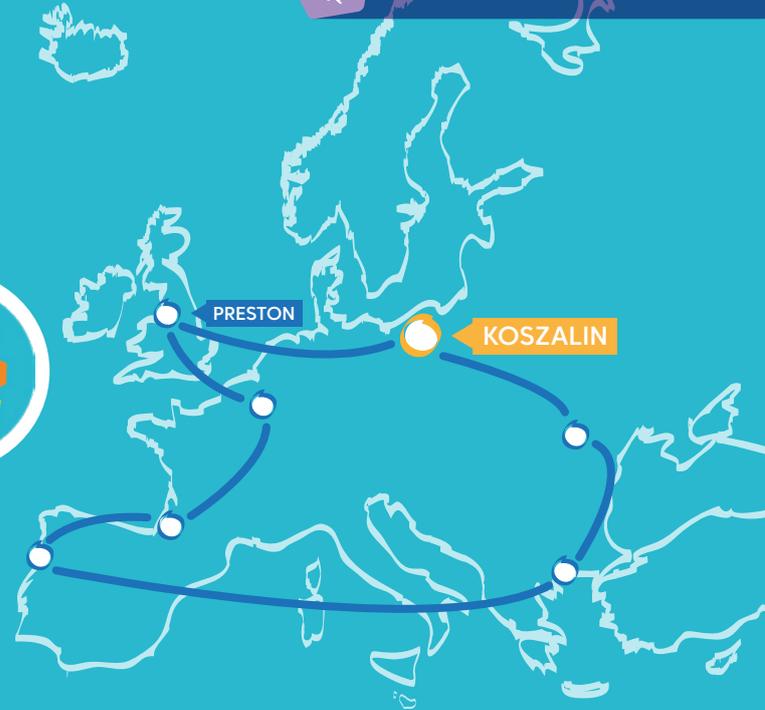
Connecting inside the Living Room



# Understanding and shaping procurement spend

## Koszalin, Poland

Population 106 000



[urbact.eu/makingspendmatter](http://urbact.eu/makingspendmatter)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Preston (United Kingdom)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Pamplona (Spain), Kavala (Greece), Bistrița (Romania), Vila Nova de Famalicão (Portugal), Schaerbeek (Belgium), Koszalin (Poland)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Koszalin is a city in northwest Poland located 12km south of the Baltic Sea coast. The three most important sectors of the economy are industry, construction and tourism.

Koszalin had already worked with Preston (UK) as a partner in the 2015-2018 URBACT Procure Network, in which it had sought to understand if and how procurement could really be used to create jobs, support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and address environmental challenges – and whether procurement bureaucracy could be reduced.

As a result, the city already had a local Integrated Action Plan (IAP) to improve its approaches to procurement and was convinced of the power of procurement to prompt both local economic change and pursue sustainability objectives.

In 2018, Koszalin was looking for help to implement their ambitious new IAP. “We wanted to understand more effectively where our procurement spend went; we wanted to encourage our SMEs to bid for procurement opportunities with Koszalin City Council; we wanted to include social and environmental considerations in our decision-making; and we wanted to influence the procurement behaviour of other anchor institutions,” remembers Adam Sawicki, Project Coordinator.



Investing in physical infrastructures such as the refurbishment of the amphitheatre

## Inspired by... 'Progressing procurement practice through spend analysis', Preston (UK)



This approach started in 2013, when Preston City Council and six key ‘anchor institutions’ set out to identify how their wealth could be harnessed more effectively to benefit the local economy.

To do so, they looked into where their main procurement spending went – both geographically and according to business type – as well as what happened to it once it reached suppliers. This information is then used to change procurement practice so that it generates more local economic, social and environmental benefits.

## PRESTON'S SPEND ANALYSIS TOOL ADOPTED

The city adopted Preston's spend analysis tool and achieved the core objective of their previous URBACT network: to understand the scale of procurement spend in the city and to use this evidence to shape wider procurement practice.

Through their URBACT Local Group (ULG), Koszalin City Council transferred the spend analysis tool to anchor institutions within the city, such as the Regional Hospital, Technical University of Koszalin, and Koszalin District Administration. This enabled them to explore alongside the city authorities how much they spend, and where that money goes geographically.

Across all procurers within the city, they collectively identified an annual spend of over EUR 100 million making procurement a significant contributor to Gross Domestic Product. The City Council was pleasantly surprised by the

extent to which procurement spend was already directed to organisations in the Koszalin Functional Urban Area (83%) and SMEs (91%).

Addressing the other side of the procurement dynamic, Koszalin strengthened relations with business representative bodies and SMEs. They surveyed business chambers to identify challenges and how they could be addressed to support SME participation in procurement.

Koszalin has presented their procurement activities and results at events organised by the Polish National URBACT Point to showcase their example as a city that has realised real incremental change. They also shared their learning bilaterally with the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area and they feature as a case study in URBACT Online Course on Strategic Procurement\*.

**"We have learnt an awful lot from Preston, the experts and the other cities. We have changed our view of how procurement can be used to realise local economic outcomes, we have better relationships with anchor institutions and SMEs and we are seeing real positive changes in the economy of our city,"**

Urszula Miller-Grzybowska, ULG Coordinator

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Through the transnational meetings with their URBACT partner cities, the municipality was able to increase its knowledge and understanding of advanced spend analysis, social and environmental considerations, and SME engagement.

Director General of Koszalin City Council, Tomasz Czuczak, agrees that the involvement in Procure and Making Spend Matter has been "incredibly beneficial" for procurement in Koszalin: "Through hard work, risk-taking, stakeholder engagement, and learning, the City of Koszalin has achieved something very special – they have changed the way in which they think about procurement."

## WHAT'S NEXT

Tomasz Czuczak is convinced that "it takes time to change the way in which people think about procurement, and the challenges our cities face are constantly evolving. This is not the end of our journey around procurement – indeed it is just the beginning." He also highlights the important role these approaches are expected to play in the post-Covid recovery.

Furthermore, the city council will continue to be active in encouraging other cities across the wider region, Poland and beyond to progress their procurement approaches and policies in support of sustainable urban development.



Koszalin Festival, 2016

\* [urbact.eu/procurement](http://urbact.eu/procurement)



# Sparking new blue business in a coastal city

## Mataró, Spain

Population 120 000



[urbact.eu/bluact](http://urbact.eu/bluact)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Piraeus (Greece)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Burgas (Bulgaria), Galați (Romania), Matosinhos (Portugal), Mataró (Spain), Ostend (Belgium), Salerno (Italy)



## SETTING THE SCENE

Mataró has the largest port between Barcelona and France. Despite its four beaches, port, boat repair yard, and university maritime courses for students from around the world, the city has historically ‘lived with its back to the sea’. Mataró had an annual entrepreneurship awards programme – ‘Cre@tic’ – but nothing specific on the blue economy.

The municipality wanted to promote a more nautical culture, and related business opportunities. They had a broad plan to harness the potential of the city’s key assets, to give the port a more positive role in the city’s future economic development and to cooperate on a maritime strategy with neighbouring municipalities. The foundations for this project were laid in the ‘Sea in Value’ project, which sought to promote a nautical culture, develop the blue economy and open the city to the sea.

In this context, Mataró saw BluAct as a good opportunity to learn from other European cities and contribute to their activities stimulating entrepreneurship and new jobs in the blue economy.



Filming the video documentary BluAct

## Inspired by... ‘BlueGrowth’, Piraeus (Greece)



This is a competition promoting sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation in the maritime economy. Piraeus launched BlueGrowth in 2014 to inspire young entrepreneurs and help them realise innovative concepts, boosting jobs and services related to marine and freshwater resources.

The scheme has four stages, from proposal submission and evaluation to an award ceremony and a six-month incubation programme. Winning ‘trainees’ get advice and courses on scientific knowledge, market needs and business opportunities, thanks to mentors from a so-called ‘Marinescape’ of partners, sponsors, advisors and academics linked to the blue economy.

## BLUE INNOVATION REWARDED WITH PRIZES AND MENTORSHIP

Mataró started by identifying diverse stakeholders working with blue growth, innovation and entrepreneurship, bringing them together for the first time in an URBACT Local Group (ULG). Drawn from public administration, education, export associations, environmental organisations, citizens and business, they include: the dynamic regional 'Barcelona Nautic Cluster'; Mataró Port Authority; Barcelona Provincial Government; and the technology park TecnoCampus, which includes the University and a business incubator.

Mataró further reinforced connections with the private sector thanks to activities such as university-based 'entrepreneur hours', mentoring schemes, and funds for small pilot projects.

The municipality created a new Blue Growth Entrepreneurship competition, building on the 20 years of knowledge and experience of the existing annual entrepreneurship awards programme. The project was coordinated and promoted locally by the municipality's City Promotion team.

The municipality was able to secure EUR 4 000 from the Mataró Port Consortium and EUR 2 000 from the Barcelona Provincial Government to provide cash prizes and cover marketing and promotion costs. In addition, TecnoCampus offered its high quality mentoring and business accelerator programme free of charge (valued at EUR 1 000 for each of three winner projects).

In March 2020, during the Demo Day, three winning ideas were selected from seven high-quality applications. An award ceremony took place in June, with mentoring and incubation provided from July 2020 to February 2021. Top prize went to the first Spanish nautical workshop franchise for the refit and repair of boats. Second, an online application facilitating communication between superyachts, management companies, refit shipyards and contractors. And in third place, an environmentally friendly and quiet electric boat propulsion system.

**"The good experience of the Lead Partner convinced us to combine a small cash prize with a powerful mentoring programme, with the aim of providing projects with a good base of knowledge, tools and contacts' network."**

Marta Ruiz Brunet, URBACT Project Coordinator, Mataró

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Mataró was directly inspired by Piraeus' Good Practice, but also flexible in its implementation. Having drawn up a Transfer Plan to adopt Piraeus' practice – and guided by the network's Lead Expert – Mataró worked with commercial sponsors and adjusted plans to take account of various local negotiations and administrative procedures.

The result was a similar blue entrepreneurship competition, but with a local twist. For example, Mataró took its own competition a step further than the original by offering applicants small amounts of prize funding (EUR 4 000 donated by Mataró's Port) to help kickstart their business ideas.

The work of the ULG was also crucial in building local awareness and professional relationships in support of the blue economy. For example, Oscar Valdivielso, ULG Coordinator, observed that "the project has really enabled us... to start to realise the importance of working together in the ULG with 4 helix members (Public Administration, Education, Associations and citizen, and Private Sector)".

## WHAT'S NEXT

With its partners, the city has developed a strong foundation programme which it plans to build on, maintaining the Blue Growth Competition as an annual or biennial event.

Mataró is also now considering the feasibility of supporting a broader range of aspiring entrepreneurs, with more events such as hackathons and workshops focused on generating new ideas and projects in the seed phase.





# A blue gem making digital waves

## Piraeus, Greece

Population 164 000



[urbact.eu/tech-revolution](http://urbact.eu/tech-revolution)

**GOOD PRACTICE CITY:** Barnsley (United Kingdom)

**TRANSFER CITIES:** Bacău (Romania), Piraeus (Greece), Schiedam (Netherlands), Nyíregyháza (Hungary), Pardubice (Czech Republic), Vilanova i la Geltrú (Spain)

## SETTING THE SCENE

The municipality of Piraeus, part of the Athens urban area, urgently needed to support recovery after the 2008 global financial crisis. Despite being a major freight and passenger port, the number of businesses and jobs were falling in all sectors, with several large shipping companies relocating elsewhere.

Piraeus developed an integrated 'Blue Growth Strategy' (2018-2024) aiming to develop innovation and higher value jobs in sustainable businesses related to the sea, coasts and maritime heritage. Goals included attracting international technology businesses, encouraging existing businesses to adopt modern technologies, and helping young people improve their digital skills.

The municipality joined the URBACT Tech Revolution Network in particular to enhance the digital aspects of their Blue Growth Strategy.



Marking Tech Revolution star in a sea of blue

## Inspired by... 'The Digital Media Centre', Barnsley (UK)



The Digital Media Centre (DMC) is a hub for creative and digital business in the town centre. It hosts a start-up support service, promotes clustering and community building, and seeks to drive demand for digital products, skills and services in the town.

The DMC is part of a broader business support programme called 'Enterprising Barnsley' which creates higher value jobs for local people, thanks to a specialist business development team with private-sector experience. Every GBP 1 of public sector investment leads to an additional GBP 5.33 in private sector investment into the local economy – and an extra £0.96 in local tax revenue.

## A NEW BLUE BUSINESS HUB

Based on Barnsley's Good Practice, Piraeus launched its own 'Blue Lab'— the first Blue Economy Innovation Center in Greece. The municipality worked with a private contractor to found Blue Lab in a modern facility near the harbour, that welcomes young people and early-stage businesses who want to develop technological and business skills through a range of services (seminars, co-working space, advanced technology).

A crucial step in transferring the Good Practice from Barnsley was engaging the local community, educational institutions and business representatives and private-sector partners as part of an URBACT Local Group (ULG). Cooperating with local stakeholders, the team decided to provide state-of-the art technologies – such as 3D designing/printing and microelectronic systems – to promote innovation and to develop digital adoption programmes for local businesses.

"Blue Lab is one of the few centres in Greece that has a dedicated 'makerspace' for start-ups to focus on creating functional prototypes to develop their main ideas. A variety of industrial equipment supports the activities," says Andreas Kantaros, Blue Lab Technical Consultant.

Before the end of its first year, Piraeus' Blue Lab had welcomed hundreds of visitors, and provided 1080 hours of business mentoring, 608 hours of tech and entrepreneurship training, multiple workshops and networking events, sparking more than 28 prototyping projects and 27 entrepreneurship ideas.

University students and professors also linked up with Blue Lab. When Covid-19 struck, they used the facilities to produce prototype technology solutions that could benefit the community – including a 'Blue Air' concept to sterilise air using ultraviolet radiation, and Personal Protective Equipment such as surgical masks.

**"We try to achieve a big change for the benefit of our citizens and create new jobs especially for young people. The support received by the network and the knowledge transferred informed the services of Blue Lab."**

Dimitris Karidis, Piraeus Deputy Mayor for planning and development

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Piraeus' learning journey was supported by exchanges with Tech Revolution city partners – including at a transnational meeting for all network partners in Piraeus – and reinforced by visits from Barnsley and the URBACT Lead Expert. These exchanges helped identify the most important lessons and inspiration for their own city, in particular around the centre's economic viability, promising digital technologies, new ways to engage local stakeholders, and how to promote collaboration and start-up formation.

Crucially, the approach achieved wholehearted engagement – including with enthusiastic senior city decision-makers. This sparked strong new partnerships. Schools in particular have been keen to engage with Blue Lab, for example through field visits.

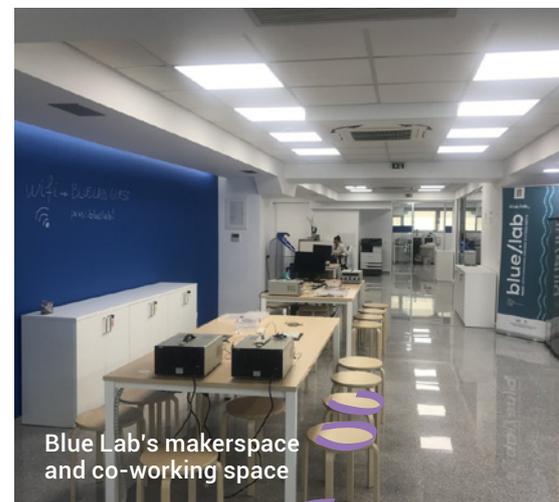
## WHAT'S NEXT

Tech Revolution has boosted Piraeus' strategic vision for the local Blue Economy and, starting June 2021, the municipality is going to offer business start-up, scale-up and innovation support as core services, as in Barnsley.

Cooperation with businesses has also led to plans for a second, bigger innovation centre as a springboard for entrepreneurial activity. Piraeus' plans include a larger co-working space, training facilities to upskill the workforce and investment in more advanced technologies.

The hope is that this energy will feed into a broader receptiveness to digital adoption and subsequent development of higher-value jobs in the local economy.

"The participation in the URBACT Tech Revolution Network, and learning from other cities, contributed to the realisation of Piraeus growth strategy and reinforced the plans for the further development of services provided towards Piraeus' entrepreneurial community for the coming years", says Andriana Zarakeli, Piraeus Deputy Mayor for EU funding programmes.



Blue Lab's makerspace and co-working space



# Co-designing a digital innovation

**Rotterdam,**  
Netherlands  
Population 650 000



[urbact.eu/innovato-r](http://urbact.eu/innovato-r)

GOOD PRACTICE CITY: Turin (Italy)

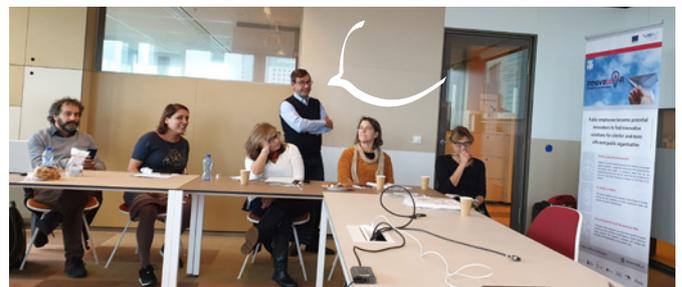
TRANSFER CITIES: Cluj-Napoca (Romania), Porto (Portugal), Murcia (Spain), Rotterdam (Netherlands), Veszprém (Hungary), Métropole du Grand Paris (France)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Rotterdam is the second largest city in the Netherlands and a major logistic and economic centre, home to over 180 nationalities. The city is known for its universities, riverside setting, cultural life, maritime heritage and world renowned architecture following the near-complete destruction of the city centre during the Second World War.

The city has a recent history of promoting social innovation, founding the 'innovation Network Rotterdam' (iNR) in 2014. This innovation community included over 1 800 civil servants and 500 external stakeholders interested in innovation, from entrepreneurs to academics and committed citizens.

In 2017, the community started co-designing a digital innovation platform for members to learn and share with each other. A first trial in 2018 became known as 'Minimal Viable Product no. 0', or 'MVPO' for short.



Working sessions in Rotterdam's Digital Experimentation Centre to develop the next generation of the MVPO

## Inspired by... Innova.TO 'Everyone's an innovator', Turin (Italy)



This competition open to Turin's 10 000 municipal staff stimulates ideas to develop innovative projects that improve the administration's performance, by reducing waste and/or valuing resources. At its heart is the ambition to engage in a collaborative way with city employees and encourage them to see themselves as potential innovators.

Project proposals are anonymous, the jury is composed of internal and external experts, and awards are donated by private sponsors. Early winners included an idea for improving transparency and community participation in local projects, a new smart procurement model, and sensors to regulate lighting in public buildings.

## A FRESH APPROACH FOR A NEW INNOVATION PLATFORM

By joining the URBACT Innovato-R, Rotterdam formed an URBACT Local Group (ULG) of about 20 civil servants from different fields, all keen on innovation and process improvement and drawn from the innovation network iNR. The group decided to see how they could breathe new life into the city's digital innovation platform (MVP0) that was still stuck in development.

"We dusted-off the digital platform we had built in 2017 and looked back on why we had started it in the first place. For whom did we want to build [it], what requirements did it have, but more importantly, who did we need to join?," explains the ULG Coordinator Jochem Cooman, Innovation Officer of the City of Rotterdam and founding member of the iNR.

The ULG worked to ensure the innovation platform's concept better reflected the community's needs and used a 'Design Thinking' approach to help create a new version of the MVP0. This included the decision to build 'MVP1' on a totally new platform compared to the previous one.

Further testing and stakeholder engagement highlighted needs for additional improvement at each stage, such as taking a mobile-first-perspective, adding data analytics, news feeds and live word clouds, and linking up with other online ecosystems.

Through the project, Rotterdam also introduced 'inspiration sessions' at local level, inviting innovators to showcase their activities. With Covid-19, these sessions moved online, opening them to more diverse stakeholders and increasing peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

**"The URBACT Innovato-R Network links very nicely to our existing activities and approach in Rotterdam. Social innovation is in the DNA our city, and the project has been a key opportunity to further this, and embed it within a wider set of stakeholders, including businesses and the university,"**

Jochem Cooman, Innovation Officer,  
City of Rotterdam

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

"In Rotterdam we prepared the journey based on the lessons we took from [Innovato-R's first transnational meeting in] Paris," remembers Jochem Cooman. "The first sessions were about what the ideas were that [Turin] had in the first place, about the process and planning of the project, about what a MVP is and on how to build it."

Further partner meetings provided additional ideas and inspiration. For example, the idea for local inspiration sessions came from a transnational masterclass. Rotterdam also enjoyed the opportunity to share its progress and discuss its own local adaptations, particularly when it hosted the transnational partner meeting in October 2019.

Its strong ULG was composed of members who understood the process of building an MVP and were able to give valuable input. URBACT led Rotterdam to boost cross-sectoral links between city departments and businesses, and form new peer-to-peer specialised working groups, for designers for example.



## WHAT'S NEXT

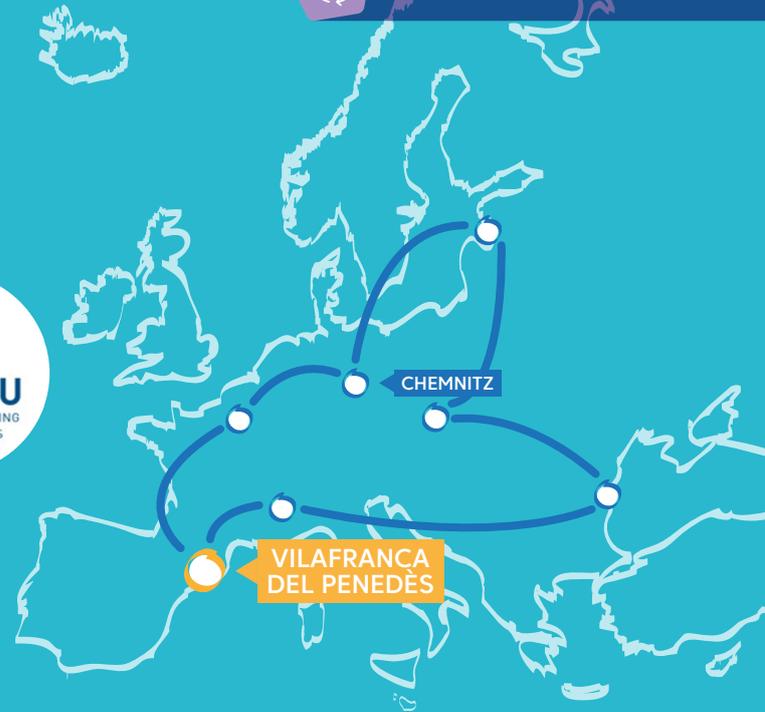
The Rotterdam team has found that an MVP can be a complete solution which delivers the desired finished product of a digital innovation platform. However, more testing and upgrading is planned before it can go live. The URBACT learnings and Local Group look set to last and their next step will be to create a mobile version of the innovation platform.





# Public-private actions to revive unused buildings

**Vilafranca del Penedès, Spain**  
Population 40 000



[urbact.eu/alt-bau](http://urbact.eu/alt-bau)

GOOD PRACTICE CITY: Chemnitz (Germany)

TRANSFER CITIES: Riga (Latvia), Constanța (Romania), Turin (Italy), Seraing (Belgium), Rybnik (Poland), Vilafranca del Penedès (Spain)

## SETTING THE SCENE

Vilafranca del Penedès is a small municipality, around 60 km to the west of Barcelona, and known as the wine capital of Catalonia. Following the 2008 global economic crisis, its population growth decreased and the city stopped new public construction.

Shifting its focus to rehabilitation, 'Vilafranca Inclusion' was born: an initiative to recover empty housing, whilst improving the social level of unemployed workers who participated in its refurbishment. This project was considered a Good Practice by the Diputació de Barcelona, and awarded the label in 2017 by URBACT, under the title 'From empty housing to social inclusion'.

However, despite positive results, the approach proved insufficient when large homeowners left their properties abandoned in anticipation of future price increases, leading to disorganised and even mafia-style occupation, an unfortunate phenomenon seen across Spain. To tackle these new housing challenges, Vilafranca saw the need for a more integrated, sustainable approach.



### Inspired by... 'The housing agency for shrinking cities', Chemnitz (Germany)



'Agentur StadtWohnen' is an agency specialised in revitalising unused and decaying housing stock. The agency connects owners, investors, users, and public authorities to initiate the sustainable, resource-saving development of empty buildings.

Initiated and funded by the city's public authorities, the project is carried out in the public interest by a long-standing private partner. Taking a flexible, proactive approach, positive effects have included activating owners, or changes of ownership, and channelling public grants to places where they can be used most effectively.

## TOWARDS A NEW, ACTIVE HOUSING POLICY

Despite the serious exacerbation of existing challenges and the creation of new ones by the Covid-19 pandemic, Vilafranca's participation in ALT/BAU has been laying the groundwork for some radically changed policies post-Covid-19.

"What has been necessary, first of all, is a change of conception of the problem on our part," explains Jordi Cuyàs, Local Project Coordinator. This has meant shifting the focus from the immediate social challenges associated with abandoned buildings, towards building a structure with more capacity to deliver long-term change.

A key objective was identified as finding private partners with enough technical capacity and financial solvency to help the municipality move forward on its new path.

As a result, Vilafranca signed an agreement with Habitat3, a social foundation whose main objective is to identify and obtain rental housing at below market prices in order to implement housing rehabilitation, in collaboration with job placement companies.

Together, the municipality and Habitat3 already recovered ten housing units during the lifetime of the URBACT network. Implementing the new approach nevertheless remains a challenge in a context where this has been left to the private market alone for so long. Difficulties were worsened when Covid-19 hampered in-person meetings between relevant actors who needed to build trust to operate efficiently.

**"The example of Chemnitz [has been] deeply interesting for us as it addresses the public-private partnership with the placement on the real estate market of entire buildings, which is what we currently need. What we have learnt from Chemnitz, especially with the visits, is that this project is POSSIBLE AND NECESSARY in Vilafranca."**

Jordi Cuyàs, Local Project Coordinator

## URBACT JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Through the URBACT ALT/BAU Network, Vilafranca had the opportunity to see and learn about how Chemnitz's Agentur StadtWohnen had helped revitalise the city's historic housing stock by acting as the central collector and distributor of information on the buildings and bringing in investors for their rehabilitation. They were particularly interested in the potential for reducing speculation, channelling grant money, and avoiding future costs for both the owners of decaying buildings and the municipal government.

A key URBACT tool for transferring the Good Practice in the URBACT ALT/BAU Network was the Transferability Study, co-produced by the city partners. This enabled Vilafranca and its partners to discuss which elements of the Good Practice should be components of their methodology.

"The experiences of the other cities in the network have also provided us with many elements of reflection and have enriched our perspective. Especially the temporary use of the spaces in which there is activity while it is being rehabilitated," says Jordi Cuyàs.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Vilafranca believes that, despite requiring a large management capacity, today the housing agency "is more efficient and can allow operations to be unclogged with a reduction in costs". Their challenge now is to achieve the vital collaboration needed between the administration and private initiatives, without compromising the public interest.

Vilafranca del Penedès is also continuing to explore additional elements of Chemnitz's broader model, identifying the successful examples of the Chemnitz Homeowners' Cooperative and student apartment building as particularly interesting experiences to study and transfer.





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Tagged with the three city dimensions of the New Leipzig Charter – 'Green', 'Just' and 'Productive' cities – the easy-to-search database provides city practitioners with a snapshot of the practice, why it works and who to contact for more details.

[urbact.eu/good-practices/home](http://urbact.eu/good-practices/home)



# Final words



**Adele Bucella,**  
HEAD OF UNIT  
PROJECTS & PROGRAMMING

What a journey! After more than two years of experimenting, exchanging and learning, over 150 European cities from 25 countries have made real changes thanks to European cooperation. But the journey doesn't end here, for cities, or for the URBACT Programme.

## Second Wave

When you find a formula that works, what can you do but repeat it! Having seen the great results from the Transfer Networks, we wanted to open up the opportunity to another wave of cities to benefit from them. With much of the hard work already done to break down the Good Practice into understandable blocks, it should be easier second time around to apply the transfer method. Seven networks, coming from the Good Practices presented in this publication, will receive funding for another 18 months to replicate and share the successful experience with new cities.

## National transfer

As part of the Time to Share! campaign, we have also devised a pilot action to test the replicability of the Good Practice to other cities within the same country. Working with our National URBACT Points, we selected a number of cities who had done a great job in adapting and transferring the Good Practice to their own context. National Points in Ireland, Italy, Estonia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Slovakia are now accompanying cities with no previous URBACT experience to follow the same 'Understand, Adapt, Re-use' method.

## Innovation transfer

Interest in the transfer method has spread beyond URBACT. We are now looking at how this method can be applied in the transfer of innovation. Specifically, if the large-scale innovative practices funded by the Urban Innovative Actions initiative can be replicated in other cities. Five new pilot networks have also just started in April 2021, with the aim of testing this mechanism before rolling it out in the next funding period.

## What's next for URBACT?

Even in this late stage of the URBACT 2014-2021 programme, many new activities are being tested. These pilots will run alongside the final round of Action Planning Networks that will continue until mid-2022. We have been working hard with the European Commission and the programme's member states to take the best of URBACT forward to the next round of programming. So if all of the stories of change in this publication have sparked your interest, we are delighted to inform you that URBACT will continue in 2021-2027. Funding is secured and with even stronger links to the Cohesion Policy, URBACT will continue supporting cities to network, exchange and learn while improving their skills in sustainable and integrated urban policy. We hope to meet you in June 2022 at the next URBACT City Festival for the launch of the new programme!



Visiting the GNRation cultural Centre in Braga (Portugal),  
URBACT URBAN REGENERATION MIX Network

URBACT enables cities to work together to develop sustainable solutions to major urban challenges, through networking, sharing knowledge and building capacities of urban practitioners. It is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Member and Partner States since 2002.

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