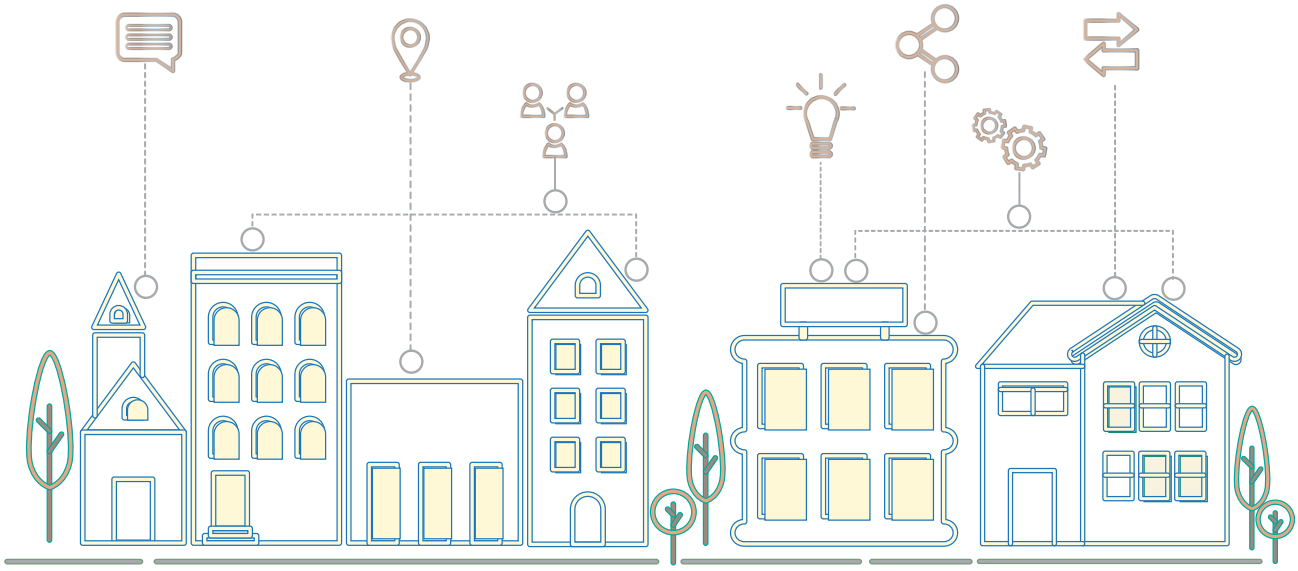
Independent Study of the Integrated Action Plans of URBACT Action Planning Networks 2019-2022 (URBACT III PROGRAMME)

IAP STUDY n°2
Final Report



European Union
European Regional Development Fund

URBACT
Driving change for better cities

Acknowledgements

Project lead: E40 Communications

This IAP Study report has been prepared by a small study team composed of Ed Thorpe, Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson and Linn Tramm.

The work of the study team was overseen within a small steering group created by URBACT, involving two representatives of the URBACT Programme: Adele Bucella (URBACT Secretariat, Head of Unit Projects & Programming) and Sally Kneeshaw (URBACT Programme Expert). The study team would like to thank them for their highly valued input, cooperation and guidance.

Thanks also to Thierry Picquart (Head of Unit, Administration & Coordination) and Evgenia Strati (Technical Assistant) for their administrative support.

Report layout: Veneta Paneva (E40 Communications)

Glossary

APNs – URBACT Action Planning Networks are thematic city networks supported by URBACT, typically running for around 2.5 years with 8-10 participating cities from across Europe.

APN1 – the first 'round' of URBACT III Action Planning networks that ran from 2015 to 2018.

APN2– the second 'round' of URBACT III Action Planning networks that ran from 2019 to 2022.

EU – European Union

IAPs – Integrated Action Plans are the main output of cities participating in Action Planning Networks, aiming to set out how the city will practically address the selected thematic challenge.

IAP Study 1 – The 2019 study of the IAPs from the first round of URBACT III APNs (2015-2018).

SUD – sustainable urban development

ULG – an URBACT Local Group is created in each participating city to bring together the range of local stakeholders on the theme being addressed in order to collectively develop the IAP.

Contract reference: Expertise contract No. 22 112

Programme-Led Capitalisation - Integrated Action Plans Study n°2

Date: March 2023

Contents

A. Introduction 4
B. Executive Summary....5
C. Study methodology....8
D. Are IAPs adding value for URBACT cities?....10
E. What makes a good IAP? 18
F. What enables a good IAP? 28
G. Where do IAPs go wrong?....34
H. Where could IAPs be further strengthened?....35
I. Observations and analysis of findings....36
J. Recommendations....39

List of tables and figures

Table 1: IAP Screening criteria 8
Figure 1: Average number of action planning elements covered by the IAPs....11
Figure 2: No. of IAPs meeting each number of Action Planning Criteria 11
Figure 3: Action Planning Detail: APN1 and APN2 cities compared 11
Figure 4: Expected future impact of IAP 15
Figure 5: Performance and usefulness of individual tasks of IAP development....16
Figure 6: Mapping Action Planning Detail against Confidence in Impact 16
Figure 7: A clear internal logic....20
Figure 8: Rating of URBACT support 30
Figure 9: Average score for specific support provided by Lead Experts 30
Figure 10: Most useful URBACT guidance....31
Table 2: Elements of integrated approaches identified by IAP Study 1 (2019) 41
Table 3: Suggested categorisations of the different aspects of integration 42

Background

URBACT is the European Territorial Cooperation programme for cities focused on building the capacity of cities to deliver on EU objectives for sustainable urban development. URBACT is **a tool of EU Cohesion policy** and a key means of delivering on the vision of the renewed Leipzig Charter focused on promoting more integrated approaches to sustainable urban development in order to harness 'the transformative power of cities for the common good'.

The programme operates through the **URBACT method**, which consists primarily of:

- **Transnational exchange** between cities through small thematic networks (typically running for around 2.5 years with 8-10 participating cities from across Europe in each).
- **Local stakeholder participation** - through the creation of URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) in each participating city, animated by a local ULG coordinator.
- **Guidance and expertise** on both thematic knowledge and methods for promoting sustainable urban development – through Lead and Ad Hoc Experts associated with each network, an online toolbox, good practice database and capacity building events at European and national levels.

Under the URBACT III programming cycle (2014-2020), URBACT has supported two rounds of '**Action Planning Networks**' which aimed "to support an organised process of exchange and learning among peers across Europe, with a view to improving local policies through concrete action planning.… [Cities] shall identify a policy challenge they want to address at local level. Then, they shall commit to develop an Integrated Action Plan that will address this challenge." (Source: URBACT III Programme Manual).

The first round of URBACT III APNs (2015-2018) involved 214 partners from 26 countries who delivered 205 IAPs. These were the subject of IAP Study 1 (2019) also delivered by E40. The **second round of URBACT III APNs (2019-2022)** involved 192 partners from 25 countries. In June 2022, URBACT launched a call for an independent study of this second round of IAPs, for which the offer of E40 Communications was selected. This IAP Study n°2 report is the final output of this work.

A. Introduction

This report marks the final output of the 'IAP Study 2' commissioned by the URBACT Programme and conducted by E40 Communications, led by URBACT Expert Ed Thorpe, together with URBACT Expert Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson and junior researcher, Linn Tramm.

The study was focused on the **Integrated Action Plans (IAPs)** of the latest generation of URBACT Action Planning Networks (2019-2022), with the objective to "**provide useful intelligence on both content and methods used to develop the IAP**", identifying trends, pitfalls and good examples, as well as insights into the sustainability and implementation of these Integrated Action Plans, including how they will be used and resourced and how they link to broader local/regional strategies.

The study comes at an important time for the URBACT Programme as it prepares to support the first generation of Action Planning Networks under the new URBACT IV Programme (2021-2027). The study was therefore specifically requested to "**make recommendations for the future APN guidance**", based on research input collected through several complementary phases (see methodology below).

This final study report is supported by **six IAP case studies** focused on the latest round of IAPs. It is also supported by **three 'implementation case studies'** looking at the implementation stories of IAPs developed by cities from the 2015-2018 generation of Action Planning Networks.

B. Executive Summary

The following Executive Summary provides a three-page overview of the key findings of the IAP Study 2 delivered in March 2023 and focused on the Integrated Action Plans of the cities participating in the second generation of URBACT III Action Planning Networks.

Study methodology

The methodology for the IAP Study had six components:

- **IAP screening** - to record whether all IAPs included specific elements of action planning detail
- **Detailed reading of 46 IAPs** – based on two per network selected according to set criteria
- **Review of APN Closure Survey results**, incorporating data from URBACT's internal survey
- **Review of other relevant URBACT materials,** including guidance and guidelines
- **Interviews with APN1 cities** – ten APN1 cities identified as having a story to tell
- **Interviews with APN2 cities** – seven APN2 cities identified from the reading of the 46 IAPs

The study made the following 28 key findings structured under five headings looking at both the strengths and weaknesses of the IAPs delivered by URBACT cities:

Are IAPs adding value for URBACT cities?

Key Finding 1. IAPs are an appropriate and appreciated output for URBACT cities

Key Finding 2. The level of action planning detail has improved from APN1 to APN2

Key Finding 3. IAPs are contributing to real change on the ground in URBACT cities

Key Finding 4. However, the impact of the IAP always needs to be understood as part of a longer process within the city

Key Finding 5. Furthermore, implementation success is not limited to the actions defined in the IAP

Key Finding 6. Cities clearly understand that the contribution of the IAP is complex

Key Finding 7. The greatest value of the IAPs is not necessarily their action planning detail

Key Finding 8. Ultimately, implementation success seems to be more about people than written words

What makes a good IAP?

Key Finding 9. Good IAPs have a clear, but concise presentation of needs and context feeding into strategic choices

Key Finding 10. Good IAPs have a clear and coherent intervention logic

Key Finding 11. Good IAPs present a clearly integrated approach

Key Finding 12. Good IAPs set out action planning details in summary tables

Key Finding 13. Good IAPs include a clear implementation framework

What enables a good IAP?

Key Finding 14. URBACT Local Groups are at the core of development of a good IAP

Key Finding 15. Transnational exchange between cities can be highly inspirational in developing IAPs

Key Finding 16. URBACT Lead Expert support is particularly highly appreciated

Key Finding 17. URBACT written guidance is valued but often needs explaining

Key Finding 18. URBACT Ad Hoc expertise has been used very successfully to support IAP development

Key Finding 19. Peer Review is another valued part of the IAP development process

Key Finding 20. Lessons from small-scale actions have supported IAP development and impact in different ways

Where do IAPs go wrong?

Key Finding 21. Some IAPs blur their purpose and target audience

Key Finding 22. Some IAPs lack clarity as to what constitutes an 'action'

Key Finding 23. Some IAPs fail to adequately take advantage of clear action planning tables

Key Finding 24. Some IAPs are unnecessarily long.

Where could IAPs be further strengthened?

Key Finding 25. IAPs could often present the overall strategic logic more clearly

Key Finding 26. IAPs could usefully highlight more explicitly the specific contribution of transnational exchange

Key Finding 27. Some IAPs could helpfully showcase more directly the URBACT Local Group input into planning and implementation of actions

Key Finding 28. IAPs could often be clearer about how the proposals represent a more integrated approach.

Key Finding 29. IAPs could usefully address more explicitly cross-cutting thematic issues

The study team make a series of observations which build on the key findings and inform the study's recommendations.

Observations and analysis of findings

There is a lot that is positive about the IAPs, but this study seeks to focus attention on where and how they can be strengthened still further in future.

Observation 1. Cities are facing a tension between action planning breadth and action planning detail.

Observation 2. Cities are still struggling to deal with the complexity of integration

Observation 3. Some IAPs seem to have been written at the end of the process

Observation 4. Cities are trying to use the IAPs for multiple purposes

Observation 5. It takes time to complete all the stages of effective action planning

Observation 6. Final IAPs depend on the starting point of each city

Observation 7. If URBACT wants to be better able to demonstrate impact it will likely need to invest more in following up with participating cities

Observation 8. It is striking that the main findings and conclusions from the APN1 IAP Study remain valid

Observation 9. There remains a need to help cities to be more systematic and structured in their plans.

Observation 10. However, there are risks associated with demanding ever more action planning detail

Observation 11. So the challenge is to help cities be more systematic and structured in setting out their plans without increasing the burden of the action planning detail compared to other aspects of the APN journey

Recommendations

Category 1. IAP structure and process

1.a) Maintain IAPs as the final output of cities' work in the Action Planning Networks

Suggested IAP structure

Section 1. Context and needs

Current situation, policies and strategies, SWOT analysis…

Section 2. Overall logic and integrated approach (breadth)

Challenge ⇒ vision ⇒ objectives ⇒ action areas ⇒ actions

Section 3. Activity planning (depth)

Actions broken down into specific activities with action/activity tables providing details of costs, timings, responsibilities, funding, risks, indicators.

Section 4. Implementation framework

Governance processes and monitoring, mitigation of risks, funding

1.b) Impose the following IAP structure:

1.c) Put other reporting requirements in a separate output

1.d) Align the APN journey and the IAP sections more explicitly

1.e) Redraft and simplify IAP guidelines to follow the updated structure.

1.f) Reinforce the action planning expertise provided to cities

Category 2. More integrated approaches

2.a) Provide training on what is meant by more integrated approaches

2.b) Identify integration challenges and priorities during Phase One of the APN journey

Suggested obligatory aspects of integrated approaches
Stakeholder involvement in planning
Coherence with existing strategies
Sustainable urban development (economic, social, environmental)
Integration over time.
Stakeholder involvement in implementation
Suggested optional aspects of more integrated approaches
Sectoral integration
Spatial integration
Territorial integration
Multi-level governance
Integration of cross-cutting thematic aspects
Complementary types of investment
Mobilising all available funding

2.c) Require reporting on integration in the new Section 2 of the IAP

2.d) Require reporting on the source/inspiration for planned actions

Category 3. Enhancing action planning detail

3.a) Allow more detailed planning of actions to be based on prioritisation of actions

3.b) Require action/activity planning tables and provide more detailed action planning table templates

Category 4. Implementation & follow-up

4.a) Provide specific follow-up opportunities to both support and trace implementation by cities

Case studies overview

APN2 – IAP Case Studies – notable features

- Fundão (PT), SibDev, is a **relatively detailed action plan**, with a clear overall logic, significant action planning detail and an extensive use of highly attractive visuals (making it relatively long at 82 pages).
- Razlog (BG), IoTXchange, is a detailed and **easy-to-read action plan presented clearly and logically**, including good use of infographics to present key elements and facts (34 pages).
- La Rochelle (FR), GenderedLandscape, sets out a small but **achievable number of actions to be implemented in the short-term** to launch more tangible action on a priority topic (18 pages).
- Klaipeda (LT), Thriving Streets, uses a concise, logical presentation and a good use of visuals to map out a set of loosely defined actions providing a **clear 'direction of travel' for the city** (31 pages).
- Poznan (PL), Health&Greenspace, sets out a **broad and integrated set of actions** to deal with a significant transversal challenge facing the city: implementing its green vision (74 pages).
- Bistrita (RO), Zero Carbon Cities, is an example of an IAP where the main value and focus is on **building a community of engaged actors** around a broad plan of action to deliver transformational change (41 pages).

APN1 – IAP Implementation Case Studies – notable features

- Longford (IE), MAPS, is a good example of an IAP which has provided a clear **impetus and direction to apply for investment funding** from EU and national funds.
- Torino (IT), BoostInno is an example of an IAP that has contributed to the **mobilisation of significant funding** for targeted activities, but which needs to be understood **as part of a longer process** and not as a directly implementable 'project plan'.
- Koszalin (PT), Procure is an example of where the IAP has been implemented through **process change within a Municipality** and amongst wider ULG membership .

C. Study methodology

The methodology for the IAP Study was proposed by the contractor, E40, and agreed by a study 'steering group' made up of three members of the study team and two representatives of the URBACT Programme (one senior member of the Secretariat and one Programme Expert). The methodology was regularly reviewed as the study was carried out to ensure any required modifications.

The final methodology can be summarised under the following six sub-headings:

1. IAP screening

The study used an IAP Screening Table in Excel to record whether, yes or no, all IAPs included specific elements of action planning detail, building on the methodology developed under IAP Study n°1:

Table 1: IAP Screening criteria

Yes-No criteria	Additional element
Defined actions?	**No. of actions**
Action planning table?	Page numbers within IAP
Time-defined?	In action tables?
Responsibilities allocated?	In action tables?
Costed?	**Total cost** In action tables?
Potential funding identified	In action tables?
Monitoring indicators?	In action tables?
Risk assessment?	In action tables?

To enable trends to be spotted, the screening table also recorded basic factual information for each IAP: network; city; country; city size; level of regional development; and if city was new to URBACT. Initial trends and observations on the quality of action planning were also recorded.

2. Detailed reading of 46 IAPs

Building on the initial screening of all the IAPs, a more detailed reading was undertaken of a subset of 46 IAPs (two per APN) which used a fixed template to record multiple aspects of:

A. The quality of the action planning process

B. The integrated nature of the planned actions

C. The quality of the planning for implementation

D. Overall observations

Note: The 46 IAPs were selected through the following five-step methodology:

i. Long-listing of the best performing IAP from each network (from the initial screening).

ii. Prioritisation of IAPs which included all aspects of action planning in action planning tables.

iii. Inclusion of the best performing IAPs from countries not represented in the initial long list.

iv. Inclusion of additional good example IAPs identified during the screening.

v. Modifications to ensure a balance across countries, city size and level of regional development.

3. Review of APN Closure Survey results

The study team identified relevant questions from URBACT's internal survey of all APN cities at the end of networks and reviewed the responses provided to these questions (in terms of emerging data and written answers) in order to provide an important additional input to the study.

4. Review of other relevant URBACT materials

Beyond the APN Closure survey results, the study team reviewed a number of additional URBACT materials relevant to the study and which were provided by the Secretariat. These included:

- APN2 Phase One Guidance (49 pages)
- APN2 Phase Two Guidance (59 pages)
- The IAP Roadmap (4 pages)
- APN2 URBACT Guidelines for Co-Producing an Integrated Action Plan (18 pages)
- APN1 URBACT Guidelines to produce and Integrated Action Plan (7 pages)
- URBACT Guide - Applying the results framework to Integrated Actions Plans (39 pages)
- Implementation tools in the URBACT Toolbox, including on 'Refining an Action' and 'Applying the Results Framework'.

5. Interviews with APN1 cities

An important additional element of the methodology not initially included in the URBACT call was to conduct interviews with cities from the first round of APNs. This specifically aimed to explore questions around implementation of the IAPs from the perspective that these cities had now had four years to implement their IAPs and stories to tell in terms of success factors and obstacles for implementation.

Ten APN1 cities were interviewed:

i. Bilbao (ES) – In Focus
ii. Bistriţa (RO) – RetaiLink
iii. Fundão (PT) – AGRI-URBAN
iv. Koszalin (PL) – PROCURE
v. Longford (IE) – MAPS
vi. Murcia (ES) – Interactive Cities
vii. Oldenburg (DE) – Arrival Cities
viii. Strasbourg (FR) – BoostInno
ix. Torino (IT) – BoostInno
x. Zagreb (HR) – SmartImpact

Of these, the examples of Koszalin, Longford and Torino have been written up as APN1 case studies and published alongside this report.

6. Interviews with APN2 cities

Interviews with APN2 cities focused on the preparation of the APN2 city case studies provided in annex to this final report. They aimed to dig deeper into the city experience in developing the IAP, including the URBACT support, tools and processes that helped the most, and their specific plans for ensuring implementation of the IAPs. Seven APN2 cities were interviewed:

i. Bistriţa (Romania) - ZeroCarbonCities
ii. Fundão (Portugal) – SIBDev
iii. Klaipeda (Lithuania) – Thriving Streets
iv. La Rochelle (France) – Gendered Landscape
v. Poznán (Poland) – Health&Greenspace
vi. Razlog (Bulgaria) – IoTXchange
vii. Utrecht (Netherlands) - URGE

D. Are IAPs adding value for URBACT cities?

Key Finding 1. IAPs are an appropriate and appreciated output for URBACT cities

A first important observation to make is that this study confirms that the IAP is an appropriate output for URBACT cities. The reading of the IAPs and the interviews with both APN1 and APN2 cities highlight a number of ways in which the IAPs bring value and are appreciated by cities.

- **IAPs have a clear action focus**. At the most obvious level, the IAPs serve an important function in mapping what a city intends to do on its chosen theme. The screening of all 189 APN2 IAPs confirms that only one IAP failed to define planned actions. In different contexts this is the basis for political and/or stakeholder agreement for what should be done.

- **IAPs confirm in writing the local need and context for the selected actions.** IAPs typically set out an improved understanding of the local context and challenges, based on stakeholder input, problem identification exercises and expert input. When done well, this provides a clear rationale and justification for the selected actions.

- **IAPs reflect the positive journey of cities in URBACT Action Planning Networks**. The reading of the IAPs confirms that the also have value in reflecting the multiple (and various) benefits that cities have taken from participating in the action planning process, using the URBACT method. Some of the main benefits that cities present in their IAPs are:
    - Transformed approach to local participation in planning.
    - Improved cross-departmental cooperation within the municipality.
    - Improved thematic understanding.
    - Greater awareness of potential solutions inspired by other cities.
    - More integrated approaches.

- **IAPs are also an important part of the journey.** Before the value that IAPs bring as outputs, they are also an important part of the APN process in the first place. They play a crucial role in focusing minds, directing discussions and avoiding that participatory processes become 'talking shops'. As one interviewee put it, having the IAP as the ultimate goal "was a very good process to push us to get things done."

- **IAPs are useful for internal and external communication**. Interviewed cities expressed that the IAP was principally for the city itself and the members of its URBACT Local Group in confirming the planned actions agreed. However, they often also anticipated that the IAP would be read by external stakeholders (at home and abroad) and saw the IAP as a way of demonstrating to others the progress of the city on the chosen theme.

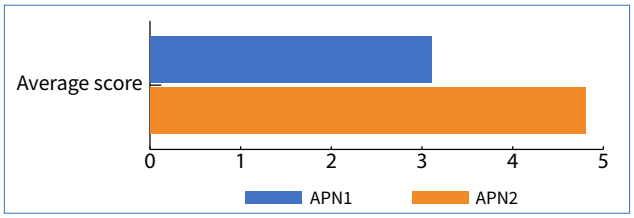
- **Cities are able to adapt IAPs in line with their needs and preferences.** The IAPs present significant diversity in terms of style, length and structure, with each city able to reflect its own priorities, preferences and journey in designing and writing its IAP. Many have come up with creative new visual ways of presenting information, their vision or planned actions.

- **Cities believe that the IAP has value for them.** All the cities interviewed during the study confirmed that the development of the IAP was a valuable and positive step for them. All were happy and proud to be invited by the study team to talk about their IAP and the process to develop it in more detail.

Key Finding 2. The level of action planning detail has improved from APN1 to APN2

All 189 IAPs were screened for whether or not they included the **six identified aspects of action planning detail** identified by the first IAP Study: timings; responsibilities; costings; funding; indicators; & risk assessment. Overall, there has been a significant increase in the level of action planning detail achieved, from an average of 3.1 action planning elements included in the previous round of APNs, to an average score of 4.8 action planning criteria met for the new generation.

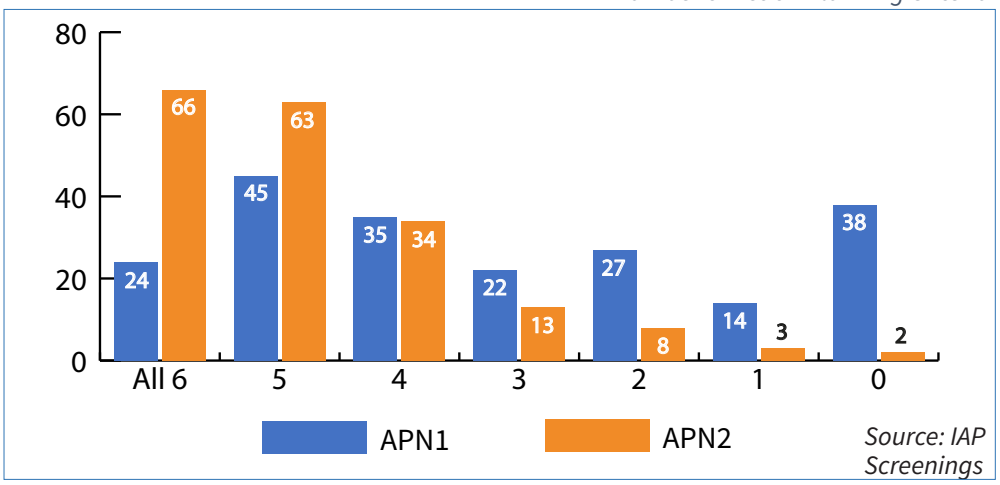
Figure 1: Average number of action planning elements covered by the IAPs



Source: IAP Screenings

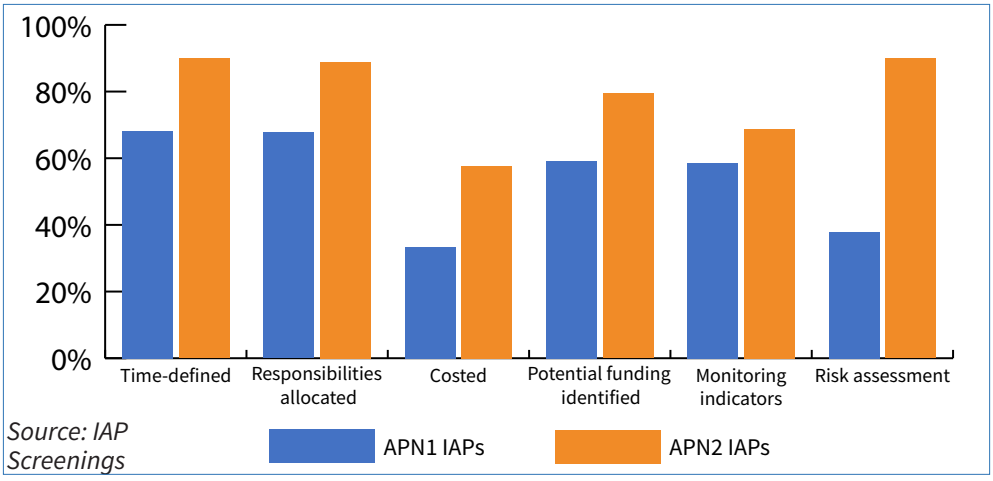
Only 26 APN2 IAPs (14%) contained three or fewer of the action planning elements – compared with as many as 49% of the APN1 IAPs, representing a **significant increase in action planning detail**.

Figure 2: No. of IAPs meeting each number of Action Planning Criteria



Source: IAP Screenings

Figure 3: Action Planning Detail: APN1 and APN2 cities compared



Source: IAP Screenings

The most notable increase is in terms of the inclusion of a **risk assessment**, which increases from under 40% to 90%. The next most striking increase is in the percentage of IAPs that attempt to cost actions.

Key Finding 3. IAPs are contributing to real change on the ground in URBACT cities

A particularly informative phase of the methodology for tracing the real life impact of IAPs were the interviews with APN1 cities who had concluded their IAPs in 2018 and had therefore had four years in which to implement them. Selected interviews with ten cities aimed to see what lessons could be learned about the added value of IAPs for cities and success factors for implementation.

These interviews confirmed that IAPs are contributing to real change on the ground in URBACT cities. The city representatives estimated that implementation had so far started for around two-thirds of the 96 actions detailed in the ten IAPs discussed in APN1 city interviews.

Of course, the way that money is mobilised is a crucial factor. In many cases, this is about the ability to identify and mobilise external funding (Bistriţa, Longford, Bilbao, Zagreb, Torino). However, it can also be about the ability to take action using existing city resources (Koszalin, Murcia). More details are provided in the three APN1 case studies presented in annex to this report and summarised briefly here.

Example of Torino, Italy (BoostINNO)

The IAP was focused on how to harness the potential of social innovation in the city to benefit sustainable urban development. The plan identified 37 actions under five headings:

- Ten 'tools for social innovation'
- Four 'collective actions'
- Eleven 'engagement and capacity building' actions
- Eight 'civic technologies
- Three actions on 'finance and impact assessment'.

The city estimates that it has implemented around 80% of actions so far thanks to successfully attracting both national and European funding. For example, Torino received € 1.5 million from the European Social Fund (ESF) to deliver the 'Torino Social Factory' designed to develop the capacity of local social enterprises. A further € 50,000 of ESF was also attracted to deliver the 'Civic Crowdfunding Academy', which aimed to support innovative services and projects with high social impact.

Example of Longford, Ireland (MAPS)

The IAP was focused on turning the abandoned military barracks in the town into an effective community resource providing opportunities to drive economic regeneration of the town. The plan defined 13 actions to be developed under three spheres of intervention:

- Six 'economic' actions (masterplan, innovation campus, farmer's market, visitor accommodation, consolidation of municipal offices, improve tourism offer).
- Three 'physical' actions (River Camlin enhancements, urban quality, skate park).
- Four 'social' actions (assisted living accommodation, museum, festivals, communication).

The city has successfully accessed €13 million of funding through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (matched with €4 million from Longford County Council) to implement activities aimed at revitalising the former military barracks. It has also directly implemented the more 'process-focused' actions, such as developing the masterplan and consolidating municipal offices.

Example of Koszalin, Poland (Procure)

The IAP was focused on how public procurement in the city can be used more effectively to support local society and the local economy. The plan defined six actions to be carried out:

- Analysis of actual public spend
- A website for entrepreneurs
- A 'Catalogue of Local Companies' with in the Koszalin Economic Portal
- Capacity building of public procurers
- Capacity building of entrepreneurs
- Designing procurement contracts to facilitate SME access

The city has been able to implement all of the actions using existing resources except for the website for entrepreneurs, which is still pending further investment.

Key Finding 4. However, the impact of the IAP always needs to be understood as part of a longer process within the city

• **Cities' IAPs are not developed or implemented in a vacuum**

Cities IAPs must always and necessarily build on existing strategies, activities and available funding. Some planned activities may be totally new. However, other actions may be modifications or evolutions of existing activities or approaches. Some IAPs may be mostly about changing existing approaches to a topic or challenge.

This makes the task of trying to put a single figure or percentage on the implementation success of an IAP difficult, if not misleading. Looking again at two of our three implementation examples, we can understand the complexity.

Example of Torino, Italy (BoostINNO)

Torino was successful with an application for an Urban Innovative Action (UIA) project called 'Co-City' which received € 4.1 million of ERDF money to work on new forms of active citizen participation in the collaborative management of urban commons to counteract poverty and socio-spatial polarisation. It is included as one of the actions of the integrated approach presented in the IAP even though the project launched in March 2017 – in parallel with the development of the BoostINNO IAP.

Several IAP actions were also planned under the existing 'PON Metro Torino' programme 2014-2020, which is co-financed by European Structural Funds. The implementation success may therefore be better understood in terms of the ability to use EU Funds most successfully/ strategically, rather than in terms of new funding mobilised.

Example of Koszalin, Poland (Procure)

For Koszalin, implementation success was achieved without triggering any external investment. However, this is not particularly a weakness in a context in which the IAP was precisely focused on changing internal ways of working in order to harness the local development potential of existing funds managed by the city and its partner institutions through their procurement contracts. Rather than attracting external funding therefore, successful implementation is mostly about modifying existing activities, using existing resources more effectively and empowering local SMEs .

• **Speed of implementation also depends partly upon the thematic topic and type of activities**

The topic being addressed also affects the timeframe in which implementation can be reasonably assessed. Looking at all ten interviewed cities, we can notice the following approximate trends:

- Short-term implementation (up to 3 years) tends to be for ***project-focused actions*** around themes such as retail (Bistriţa), school meals (Fundão), use of assets for events (Longford and Murcia), smart technologies (Zagreb).
- Medium-term implementation (up to 5 years) tends to be for ***process-focused actions*** around themes such as procurement (Koszalin), local economic development (Longford) and smart cities (Zagreb).
- Long-term implementation (up to 10 years) tends to be for ***actions of strategic change*** around themes such as smart specialisation (Bilbao), and social innovation (Strasbourg, Torino).

Key Finding 5. Furthermore, implementation success is not limited to the actions defined in the IAP

IAP implementation is a complex process that cannot be reduced to a linear exercise of checking whether exact plans have been put into action 'to the letter'. The study confirms that IAPs should not typically be understood or assessed as investment-ready plans or project management tools.

- **IAPs are living documents, not static 'project plans'**

Assessing the impact of URBACT cities' IAPs is complicated by the fact that the IAP can feed into the development of new activities which were not explicitly foreseen at the time of concluding the IAP. If we limit IAPs to the words written at the conclusion of the URBACT network, then such activities could not be counted as implementation success. However, if we understand the IAPs to be living documents that continue to evolve, then it seems quite reasonable to understand that these actions are also part of the IAP's overall impact.

Example of Torino, Italy (BoostINNO)

Following the conclusion of its IAP on social innovation, Torino successfully developed a second Urban Innovative Action – this time called To-Nite on the topic of community-based urban security. This project fits within the overall vision of the BoostINNO IAP and links to the action to stimulate collective actions and the 'installation of networks of sensors colleting environmental variables and developing public solutions in the field of mobility and safety'. Some partners of ToNite have been active ULG members. However, it goes much further than the initial plans of the IAP, with strengthened community co-definition of solutions. The € 4.6 million of ERDF mobilised for this project is therefore not about direct implementation of a planned action, but is nevertheless directly related to the impact of the approach and vision defined by the IAP.

Example of Longford, Ireland (MAPS)

Longford has not been afraid to adapt their IAP as new opportunities, challenges, ideas and obstacles emerge. For example, the skate park that was initially planned as part of the revitalisation of the former military barracks has actually been implemented at a different location. Although this may seem on the surface to be a failed activity in terms of revitalising the barracks, the reality is that it reflects the importance of ongoing community engagement in developing the planned actions. The ULG members decided in the end that a different location would be more appropriate and better meet the aspirations of that specific planned activity. On the other hand, the site has been used to host a funfair, which was not originally foreseen in the planned activities and a number of community groups have continued to use facilities on the barracks as part of a temporary use programme which has evolved further since the elaboration of the IAP. These successes are directly linked to the development of the IAP, even if they were not defined as planned activities when the IAP was submitted.

- **IAPs support implementation in different ways**

Indeed, it is clear from the APN1 city interviews that the IAP can feed into broader processes of change in different ways, including:

- As a basis for putting together more detailed applications for funding (Bistriţa, Longford, Zagreb, Torino, Strasbourg).
- As a framework/input for wider strategy development at local level (Zagreb, Bilbao, Longford, Strasbourg).
- As a means of inspiring policy change at national level (Fundão).
- As a mechanism for sustaining ULG involvement post completion of the APN (all).

Key Finding 6. Cities clearly understand that the contribution of the IAP is complex

The initial findings set out above are important for understanding the added value of the IAPs and the difficulties of reducing this added value to simple metrics such as 'funding mobilised' or 'percentage of actions delivered'. (As we will show later in this report, this is made even more complicated by difficulties in comparing like with like across IAPs that may define 'actions' at different levels.)

This seems to be well understood by URBACT cities and also reflects their initial motivation for participating in an action planning network in the first place. Rather than being about the development of the IAP itself, per se, there is a clear sense that **the primary motivation for participation in an APN is more connected to one or more of the following elements**:

i. Improve understanding of the opportunities and challenges on a particular theme.

ii. Take lessons and practical inspiration from peer cities in particular areas.

iii. Strengthen the local participatory approach to identifying appropriate local solutions.

iv. Improve the integrated nature of responses to local urban challenges.

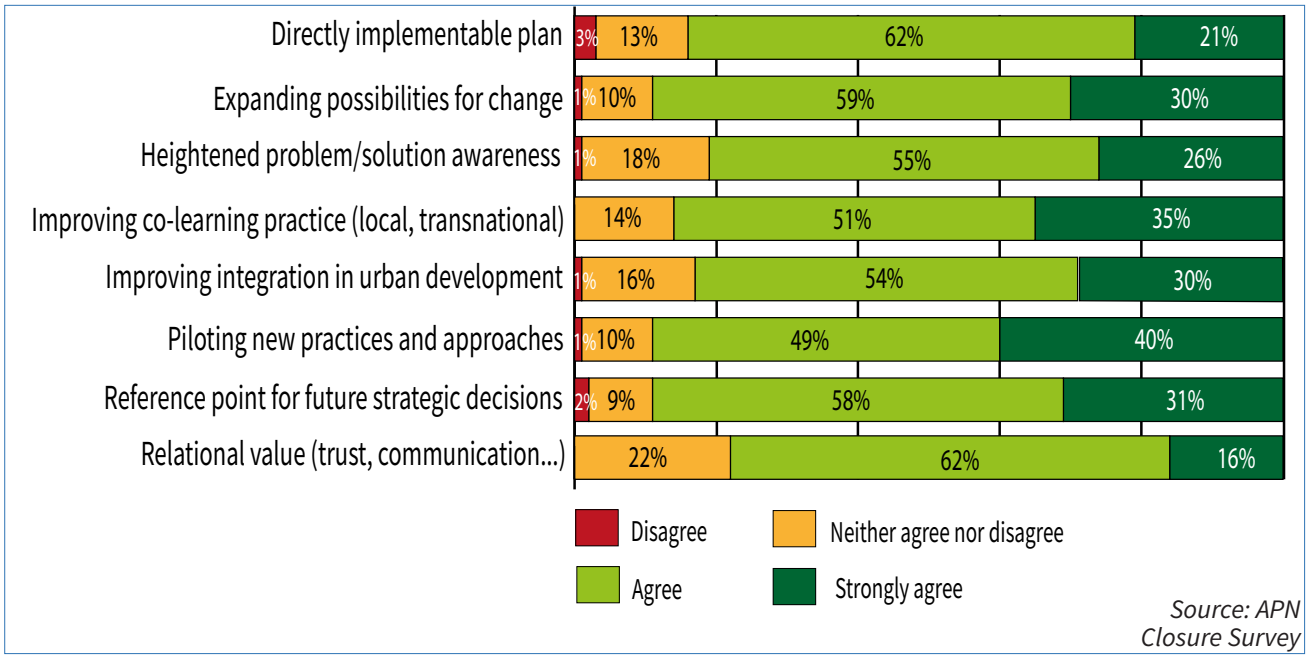
This is backed up by data from the APN2 Closure Survey, which highlights that **cities expect the IAP to deliver future impact in a variety of ways.**

This chart highlights that not only do 83% of respondents see the IAP as a "directly implementable plan", but an even higher percentage see the IAP as being a "reference point for future strategic decisions" and something that supports "expanding possibilities for change". Nearly as many believe that it holds "relational value" in terms of building trust and communication.

The benefits that respondents most strongly perceive are the piloting of new practices and approaches and improving co-learning practice. In other words, the benefits of the IAP are not limited to the implementation of the planned actions as defined in the IAP, but have a strong component of ongoing learning, informing future choices and enhancing participatory ways of working.

A final observation in this context is that IAP implementation also often means that planned actions are integrated into other strategic documents of the city. The implementation is then no longer directly planned from the IAP to the ground, but passes via other municipal strategies and plans. The impact of the IAP can be very real even when it becomes harder to trace and there is no official reporting mechanism against the IAP itself.

Figure 4: Expected future impact of IAP



Source: APN Closure Survey

Key Finding 7. The greatest value of the IAPs is not necessarily their action planning detail

City interviewees agreed that the requirement to think about **action planning detail was useful and important.** But they did not tend to talk about action planning detail as the most important aspect of the overall APN or IAP-development process.

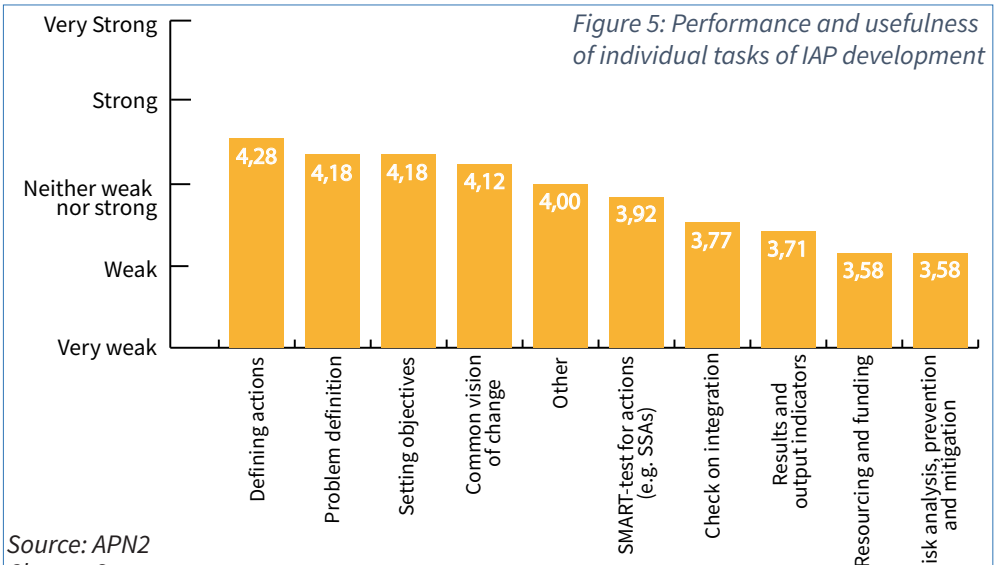
For example, it was considered useful to estimate how much an action might cost in order to identify whether external funding would be required and where this might be obtained. However, costing an action in detail when it was not close to being ready to implement or when it was simply about changing existing ways of working was considered a waste of effort. Precise costings are only needed when, for example, a specific funding application needs to be prepared.

This observation is backed up by data from the APN2 closure survey which suggests that some of the **most appreciated stages for the cities are the work of defining the problem, creating a common vision of change and setting objectives** (the overall direction of travel for the city's response to the challenge faced). Whilst 'defining actions' is the most beneficial aspect of all, the details of this action planning in terms of risk analysis, resourcing & funding and indicators are considered less useful to them.

Even more interestingly, there seems to be a **negative correlation between the level of action planning detail achieved by cities and the level of confidence in the future impact** of the IAP.

The following chart plots the average score per network for these two variables.

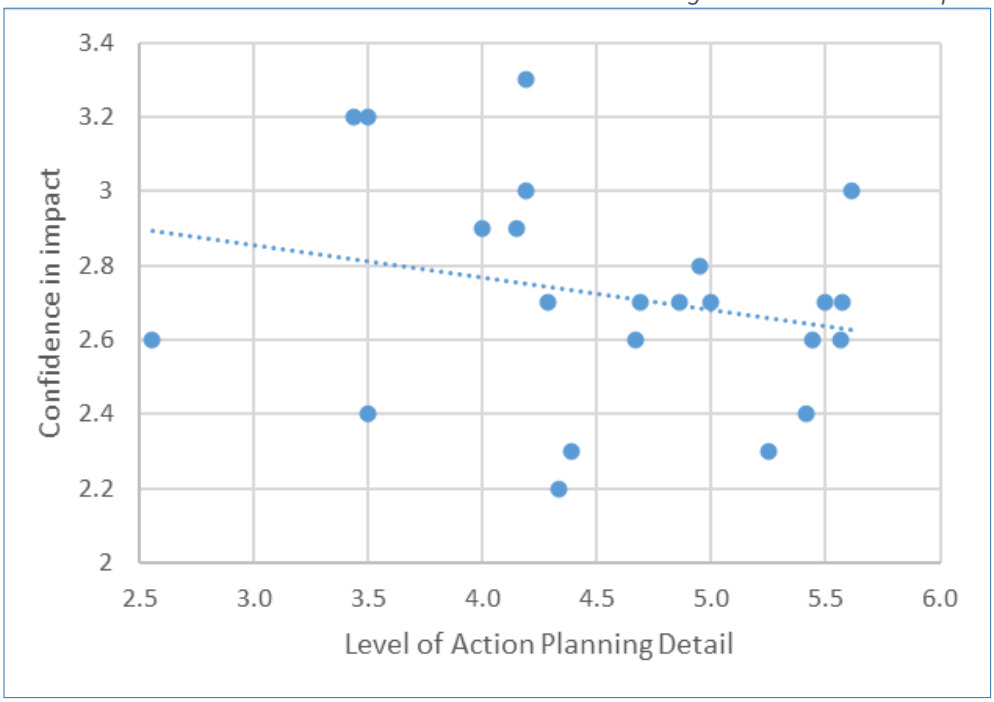
Figure 5: Performance and usefulness of individual tasks of IAP development



Source: APN2 Closure Survey

The main reason for this trend appears to be that **cities that were developing fundamentally new approaches sometimes did not get as far in terms of action planning detail**, even though the shift in approach supported by URBACT was seen as fundamental.

Figure 6: Mapping Action Planning Detail against Confidence in Impact



Key Finding 8. Ultimately, implementation success seems to be more about people than written words

When exploring the implementation successes of the sample of APN1 cities, it was clear that the IAPs were a central part of the implementation story. However, in many ways, the documents themselves are more a reflection of the new ideas, new relationships and new ways of working that will be the real drivers of change.

Indeed, whilst the IAPs were not seen by the city representatives interviewed as simply 'reports to be left on a shelf', they typically also found it hard to separate the value of the document from the value of the process behind it. When pressed to identify success factors for implementation, however, they rarely spoke in terms of the written words or numbers contained in the plan.

Rather, the IAP serves as an important guidepost on the longer journey to more sustainable and integrated urban development that continues to be defined more precisely and delivered through ongoing political and broader engagement.

Political and administrative engagement is a key success factor for implementation.

This engagement and its importance revealed itself in different ways in the interviewed cities, for example:

- Political backing for implementation and allocating resources accordingly (Koszalin, Torino).
- Improved cross-departmental working within the Municipality and strengthened Municipal funding applications (Bistriţa, Fundão, Murcia).
- Willingness of political and administrative figures to change culture (Bistriţa, Koszalin).
- Creating linkages to wider strategy (Longford, Fundão).

ULGs can be usefully understood as just as crucial an APN output as the IAPs.

When exploring implementation success, most city representatives talked about the importance of the ongoing use of the participatory approaches supported by URBACT, including in terms of the ongoing evolution of the planned activities. In other words, whilst it may seem intuitively that the ULG is the process and the IAP is the output, in reality the ULG is itself a key output, which continues to feed into and deliver the ultimate impact on the ground.

It was for this reason that some interviewees saw the **IAP as a communication tool** as much as a planning tool – a means to ensure collective understanding and buy-in to the evolving plan, rather than a delivery tool for a city administrator. For example, this was given as the reason why some cities put so much effort into the graphic design and visual presentation of the IAP, including photos.

This also explains why interviewees agreed that the requirement to think about **action planning detail was useful and important, but not necessarily the most important aspect of the process**. For example, whilst it was considered useful to estimate timings or how much an action might cost to make the planning more robust, it was largely felt that more precise costings and timings only needed to be calculated when implementation was more imminent or to prepare an actual funding application.

E. What makes a good IAP?

The screening of all 189 IAPs and the more detailed reading of a sub-set of 46 IAPs has – similarly to IAP Study 1 - highlighted a tremendous diversity in approaches, styles and formats in the development of the IAPs. This diversity is both a strength in allowing cities flexibility to adapt their IAP to their theme, context and preferences and a potential weakness in creating some blurring of definitions and ambiguity in what is being presented. In this section we will start with a review of what makes a good IAP, structured under a number of key findings.

Key Finding 9. Good IAPs have a clear, but concise presentation of needs and context feeding into strategic choices

An essential part of the URBACT methodology is that planned actions are based clearly on identified needs. To enable that, the APN process foresees a baseline study led by the Lead Expert who undertakes a study visit to each city together with the Lead Partner. URBACT also provides specific tools and guidance to support the URBACT Local Group coordinator in the task of problem identification with local stakeholders using tools such as problem tree.

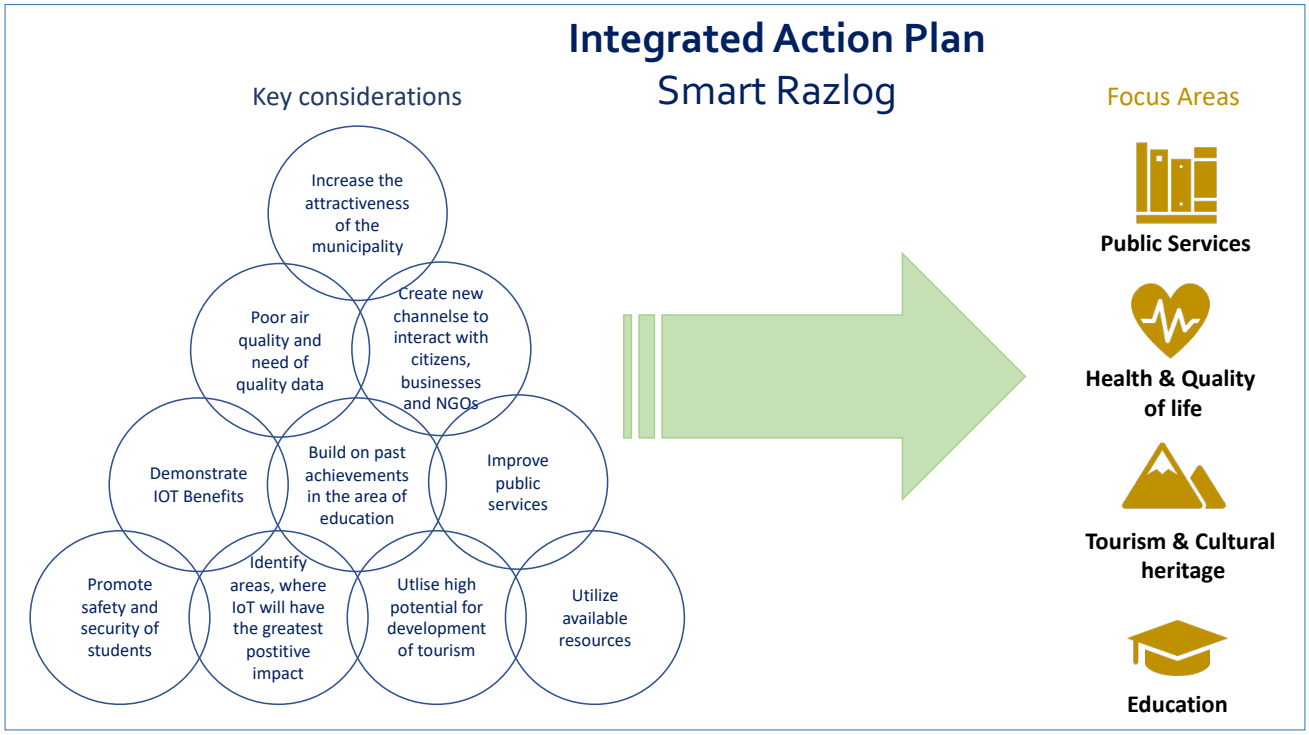
To enable a clear and logical IAP, it is therefore important to start from a clear presentation of this local context and what the needs to be addressed are. Some of the best and clearest IAP examples are able to do this clearly and succinctly supported by appropriate visuals. It is not necessary to present all the available data, but to summarise the key points and – where possible – how this informed strategic choices made by the ULG members in defining the IAP.

APN2 IAP Example: Razlog (IoTXchange)

A good illustrative example of a clear, concise introduction and context is provided by Razlog. With a good use of infographics, it is able to present in just 11 pages information on the following aspects:

- Introduction to URBACT and the IoTXchange network
- City context (including natural resources, demographics, economic development);
- Current state of play in the areas of digitalisation and Internet of Things (IoT)
- National context and Local context
- SWOT analysis

All of this feeds clearly into the definition of the focus of the IAP



APN2 IAP Example: Klaipeda (Thriving Streets)

Klaipeda provides another good example of a clear and concise introduction and context section.

This is able to present a detailed background to the planned actions in just 10 pages covering:

- Context and problem identification
- Challenges
- Existing strategies and initiatives
- Vision

Vision

Safe, clean, and pedestrian accessible Klaipeda Old Town, full of activities and culture – a reason to be in the Old Town.

Again, the work of setting out the context and challenges feeds clearly and directly into the vision defined for the city and a visual mapping of the issues to be addressed/ objectives to be achieved.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP) **priorities / values**

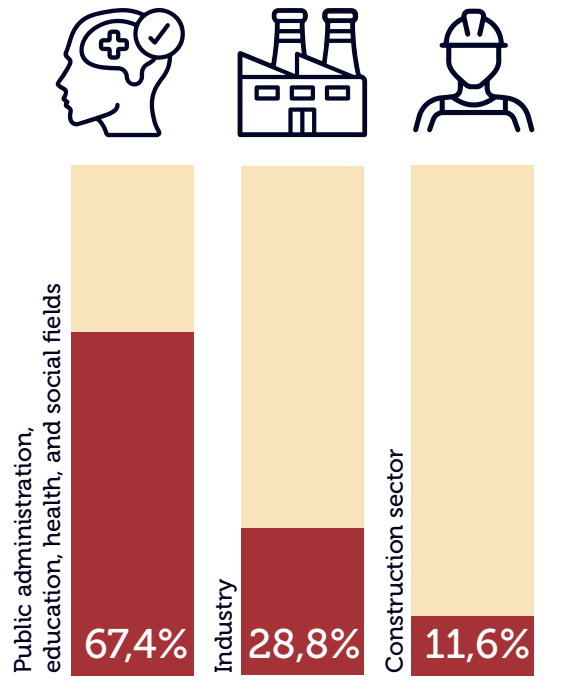
- Community focus and involvement in the implementation of small-scale actions;
- Promoting sustainable mobility in the city;
- Economic value of the carried-out activities (for the old town businesses).

APN2 IAP Example: La Rochelle (GenderedLandscape)

La Rochelle is an interesting example of a highly action-focused IAP, in which the background and context is restricted to the truly pertinent information that informs the definition of the planned actions (which starts already on page 7 of the IAP).

Nevertheless, in just five pages, the IAP is still able to clearly set out the key local context and needs identification that informs the planned actions. This includes the local policy context around gender equality, the local economy, gendered differences in education and employment, the ULG composition and the journey towards definition of the action plan.

CHALLENGE TACKLED IN LA ROCHELLE: INCORPORATING A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE TO REBALANCE THE LABOUR MARKET AND INCREASE FEMALE EMPLOYMENT RATES OVERALL. AN ISSUE THAT OPENED THE WAY TO MANY OTHERS...



Key Finding 10. Good IAPs have a clear and coherent intervention logic

The best IAPs are able to trace a coherent intervention logic that runs through the heart of their IAP. Making strategic choices based on effective needs assessment is one aspect of this, but when done well, the logic runs through several layers. One of the simplest and most structured ways in which the logic flows through the action plan is as follows (see figure 7).

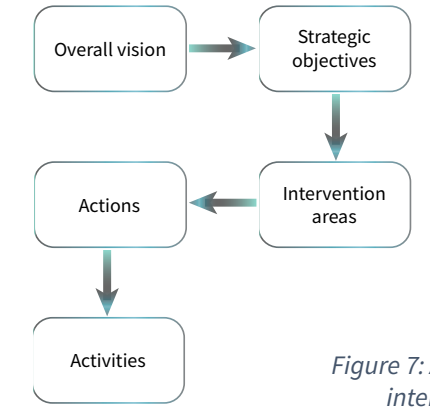


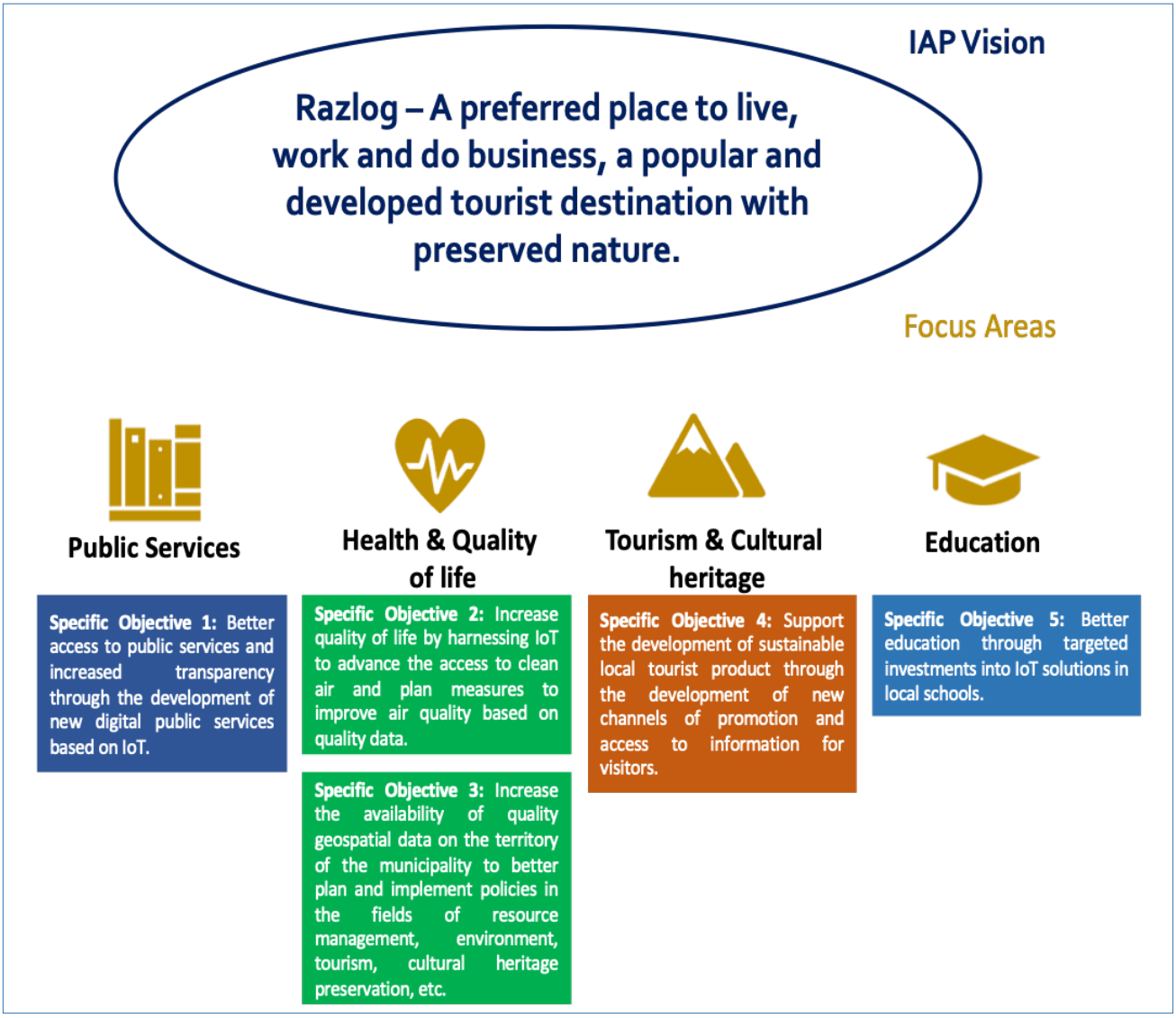
Figure 7: A generic internal logic

APN2 IAP Example: Razlog (IoTXchange)

The IAP of Razlog has a clear overall structure based on:

- 1 overall vision
- 4 Focus Areas
- 5 Specific objectives
- 9 Actions
- 26 Activities

The 9 actions are then defined in "action description" tables by specific objective.



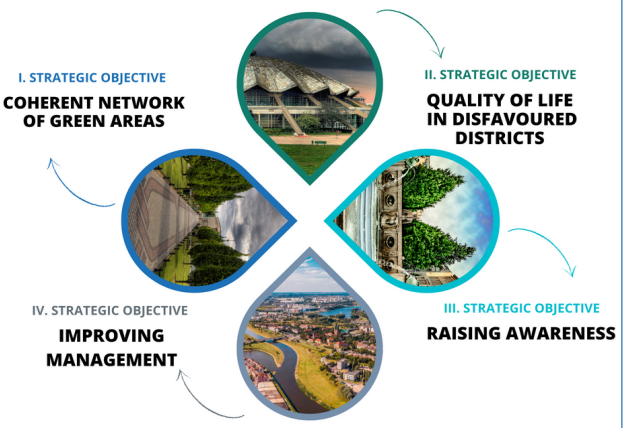
APN2 IAP Example: Poznan (Health & GreenSpace)

The intervention logic of the Poznan IAP is presented very clearly, in a step-by-step manner across different sections of the IAP.

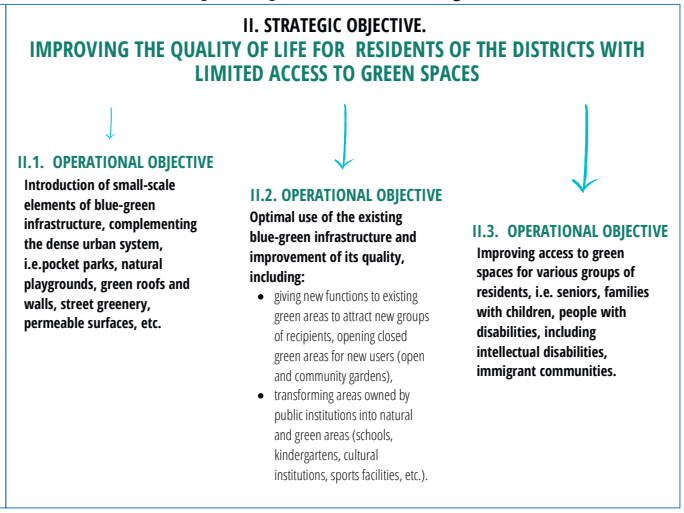
After the opening context section, Chapter 2 of the IAP presents "**The Green Vision for Poznan**" as set out in the City Development Strategy for 2030+. This vision is then elaborated through a series of statements made by representations of members of the community, such as "all residents have equal access to greenery", "a coherent greenery network of green wedges and rings with green corridors for pedestrians and cyclists" and "designated institutions cooperate and have common green vision of the City".

> Poznań i 2030 is a multi-generational community of people living in a green, friendly and well-connected residential estates.
>
> The City Development Strategy for the City of Poznań 2030+

Strategic objectives



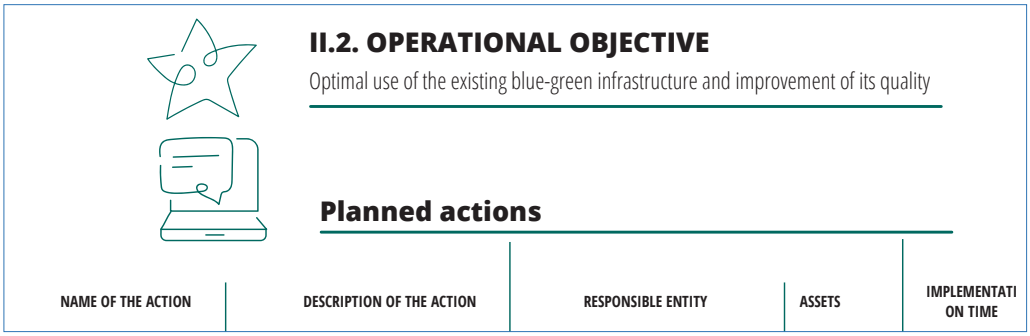
Example operational objectives



In Chapter 4, the achievement of the vision is broken down into **four strategic objectives**, before each of these are broken down into a total of **12 operational objectives** for the IAP.

Section 5 of the IAP then presents a number of specific actions to be undertaken under each operational objective. In total the IAP sets out **64 actions** to be implemented with basic planning information for each, including description, responsible entity, existing resources and timeframe.

Later on, the IAP chooses to plan only **10 of these actions in more detail** using fully developed action planning tables, including more detailed descriptions, definition of 'tasks' within each action, links with strategic documents, more details on timings, resources and assets, and risk identification.

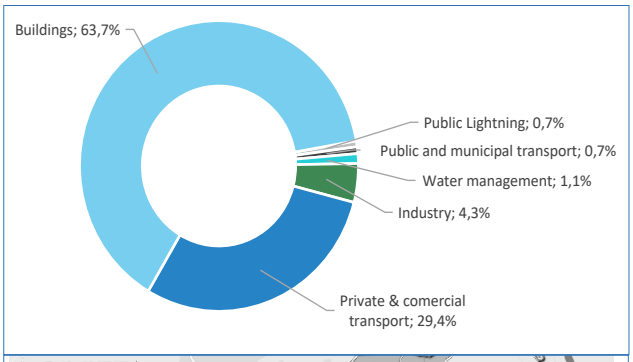


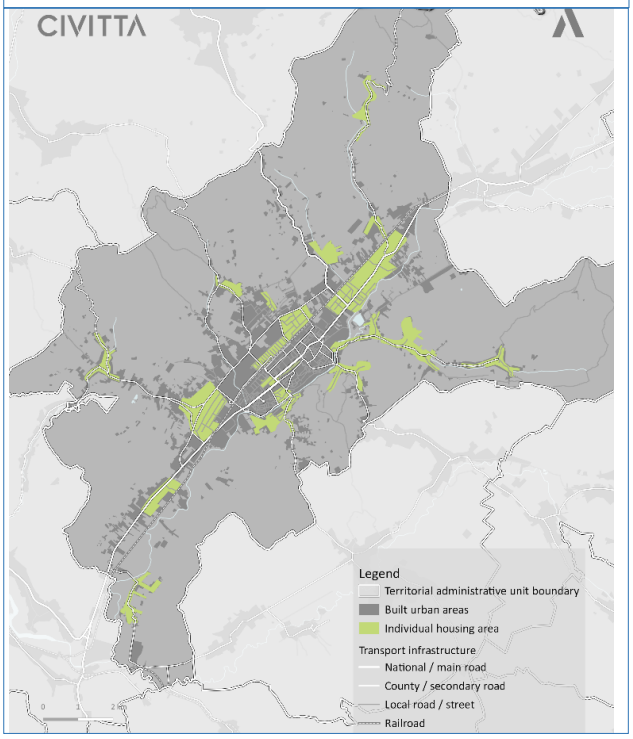
Key Finding 11. Good IAPs present a clearly integrated approach

Whilst the integrated approach is central to the URBACT methodology, some IAPs are particularly clear in the way that they present the integrated nature of their response. When done well, this links clearly to the previous point about a clearly presented overall intervention logic.

APN2 IAP Example: Bistrita (ZeroCarbonCities)

The integrated nature of the Bistrita IAP is reflected already in the context section of the IAP, which looks at both the sectoral and spatial dimensions of carbon emissions in the city.





This feeds into the definition of a clear long-term strategy for Bistrita.

The long-term vision for Bistrita is to become a "zero carbon city" by 2050 through intelligent use of energy resources in order to have a low energy consumption and, at the same time, a high level of quality of life.

In order to achieve this overall vision, it defines **three strategic objectives**, which it breaks down into nine areas of intervention as follows:

- **O1. Increased capacity and involvement of local actors to prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change**
  - Citizens and stakeholders' involvement;
  - Local administrative capacity.
- **O2. Data-driven local public decisions and policies, by relying on indicators and targets based on the carbon budget**
  - Data collection, monitoring and evaluation
- **O3. Reduce carbon emissions in priority sectors and increase the city's resilience to climate change**
  - Energy efficiency (buildings and public lighting);
  - Transport;
  - Energy production;
  - Environment and biodiversity;
  - Spatial planning;
  - Complementary actions (waste management, water management etc.).

The nine areas of intervention demonstrate a well-integrated approach clearly addressing various types of integration, including sectoral integration (buildings, lighting, transport…), spatial integration, integration of environmental and economic objectives and integration of hard and soft investments.

The approach to these areas of intervention is outlined briefly before the specific actions are defined.

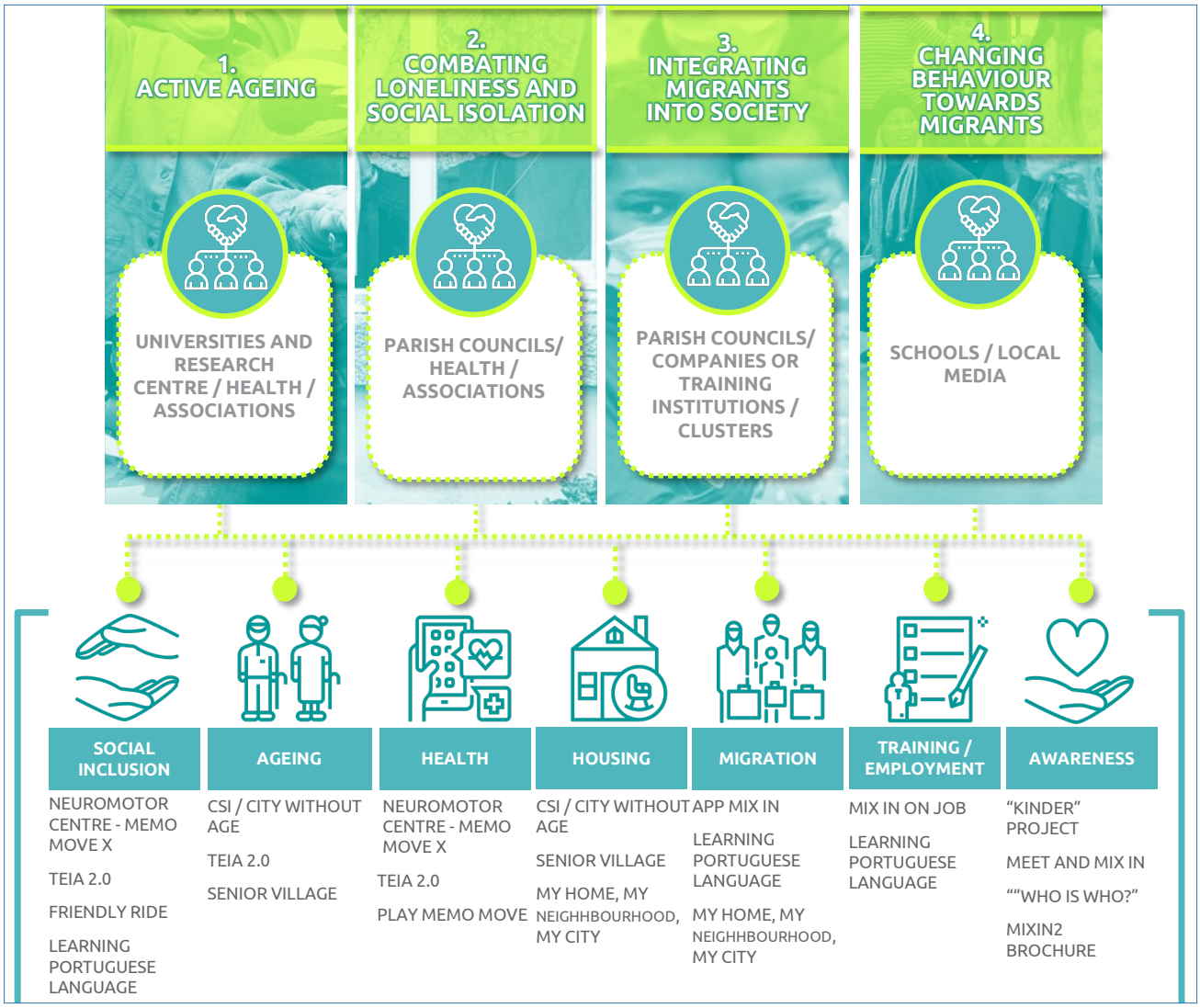
Finally, the IAP defines a total of 58 actions across all the areas of intervention. This large number of actions also reflects the attempt to produce a truly integrated response, with the ULG having focused on identifying as full a range as possible of actions needed to meet the scale of the challenges faced.

APN2 IAP Example: Fundão (SIBdev)

Fundão finds an interesting way to show the integrated nature of its IAP. The overall logic of the IAP is structured as follows:

- A strategic vision ("expected results") of becoming an inclusive, prosperous and attractive city, more open, dedicated and cosmopolitan, while maintaining its characteristics as a 'rural city'
- Two "key missions"
  - Age-friendly city
  - Welcoming city
- Four areas of intervention (called "categories" of action):
  - Active ageing
  - Combatting loneliness and social isolation
  - Changing behaviour towards migrants
  - Integrating migrants into society
- 14 actions (six on ageing, eight on migration)

However, a different visualisation of the same actions serves to highlight the integrated nature of the approach, regrouping the same activities under the different headings of social inclusion, ageing, health, housing, migration, training/ employment and awareness raising.



Key Finding 12. Good IAPs set out action planning details in summary tables

The seven APN2 case study examples all present their actions using action planning tables, which support the presentation of actions in ways that are **clear, succinct and structured**. Nevertheless, these examples also show the tremendous variety of possible approaches, styles and formats for setting out actions in planning tables.

Some IAPs created **multiple tables** to present different aspects of the action planning detail - for example one table to define actions, timings and responsibilities, with separate tables to present other aspects, such as the necessary financial resources, or implementation risks (see for example the case study on Utrecht from the URGE network).

However, some of the clearest examples found ways to **combine all the action planning detail into one table**. Flexible presentation styles supported this, where the use of 'tables' is less about a literal 'grid' and more about a consistent structure of the presentation of diverse elements. This supports understanding of the actions planned under the IAP.

APN2 IAP Example: La Rochelle (Gendered Landscape)

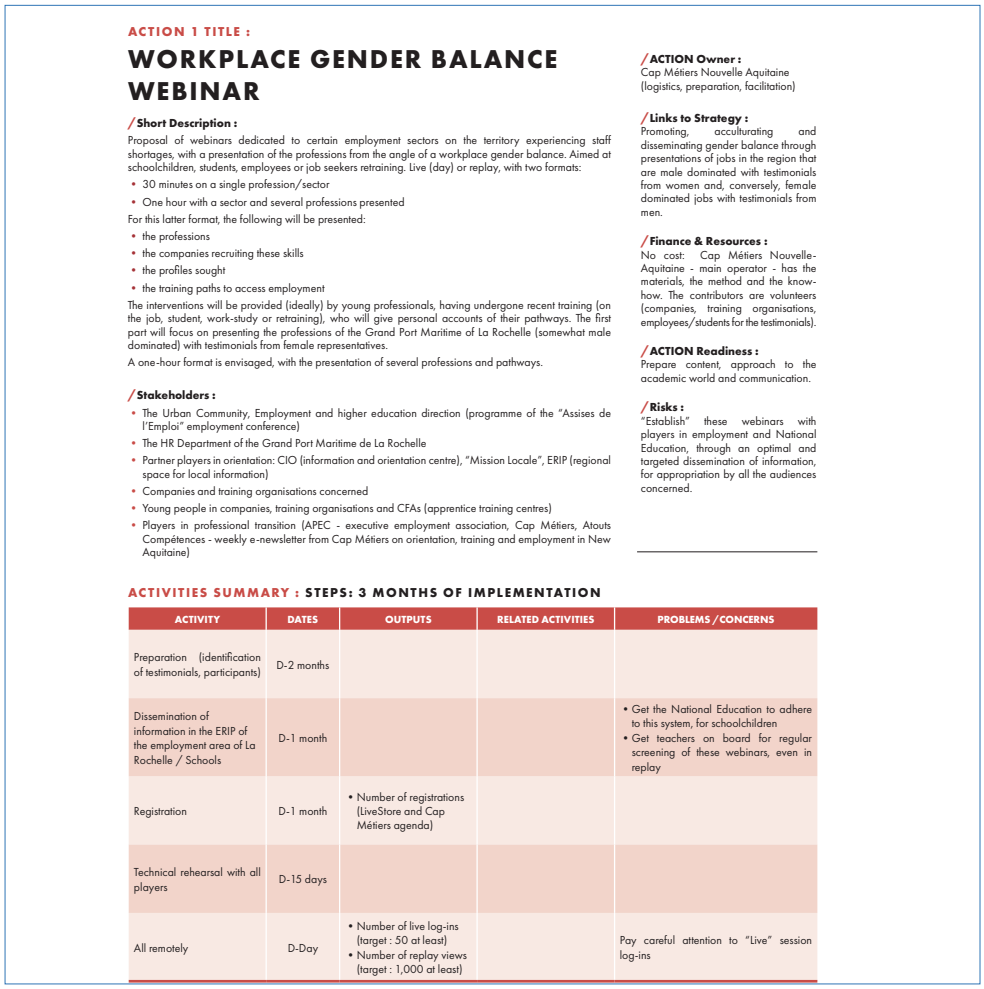
La Rochelle provides a good example of an IAP which presents all the key action planning detail for each action on one page, using the same clear and attractive presentation structure, making the plan easy to understand and navigate.

Each action is planned under one of three 'action areas' as part of the overall intervention logic.

The planning tables then include a description of the action, with crucial planning details including confirmation of the action owner, relevant stakeholders, the finances needed and risks to implementation.

The table also adds planning value by linking the action to the overall strategy in the city and defining the level of 'action readiness'.

Finally, a second part of the action planning tables breaks the action down into specific activities to be implementation over a defined period, including more specific timings, definition of outputs and identification of potential problems or concerns to be addressed.



ACTION 1 TITLE :

WORKPLACE GENDER BALANCE WEBINAR

/Short Description :

Proposal of webinars dedicated to certain employment sectors on the territory experiencing staff shortages, with a presentation of the professions from the angle of a workplace gender balance. Aimed at schoolchildren, students, employees or job seekers retraining. Live (day) or replay, with two formats:

- 30 minutes on a single profession/sector
- One hour with a sector and several professions presented

For this latter format, the following will be presented:

- the professions
- the companies recruiting these skills
- the profiles sought
- the training paths to access employment

The interventions will be provided (ideally) by young professionals, having undergone recent training (on the job, student, work-study or retraining), who will give personal accounts of their pathways. The first part will focus on presenting the professions of the Grand Port Maritime of La Rochelle (somewhat male dominated) with testimonials from female representatives.

A one-hour format is envisaged, with the presentation of several professions and pathways.

/Stakeholders :

- The Urban Community, Employment and higher education direction (programme of the "Assises de l'Emploi" employment conference)
- The HR Department of the Grand Port Maritime de La Rochelle
- Partner players in orientation: CIO (information and orientation centre), "Mission Locale", ERIP (regional space for local information)
- Companies and training organisations concerned
- Young people in companies, training organisations and CFAs (apprentice training centres)
- Players in professional transition (APEC - executive employment association, Cap Métiers, Atouts Compétences - weekly e-newsletter from Cap Métiers on orientation, training and employment in New Aquitaine)

/ACTION Owner :
Cap Métiers Nouvelle Aquitaine (logistics, preparation, facilitation)

/Links to Strategy :
Promoting, acculturating and disseminating gender balance through presentations of jobs in the region that are male dominated with testimonials from women and, conversely, female dominated jobs with testimonials from men.

/Finance & Resources :
No cost: Cap Métiers Nouvelle-Aquitaine - main operator - has the materials, the method and the know-how. The contributors are volunteers (companies, training organisations, employees/students for the testimonials).

/ACTION Readiness :
Prepare content, approach to the academic world and communication.

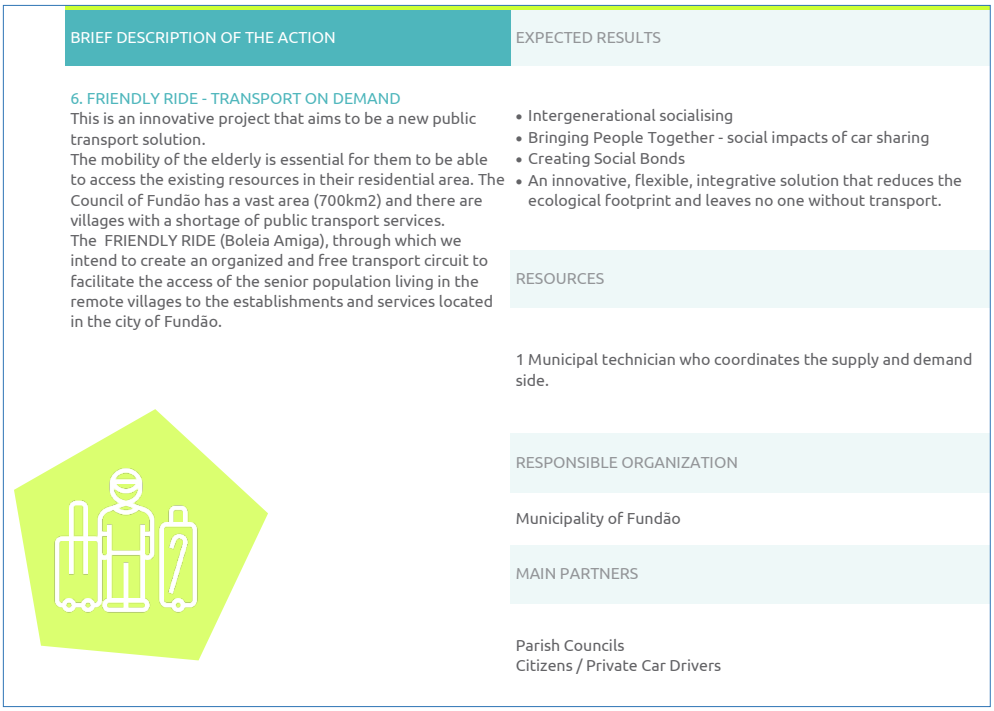
/Risks :
"Establish" these webinars with players in employment and National Education, through an optimal and targeted dissemination of information, for appropriation by all the audiences concerned.

ACTIVITIES SUMMARY : STEPS: 3 MONTHS OF IMPLEMENTATION

ACTIVITY	DATES	OUTPUTS	RELATED ACTIVITIES	PROBLEMS / CONCERNS
Preparation (identification of testimonials, participants)	D-2 months			
Dissemination of information in the ERIP of the employment area of La Rochelle / Schools	D-1 month			• Get the National Education to adhere to this system, for schoolchildren • Get teachers on board for regular screening of these webinars, even in replay
Registration	D-1 month	• Number of registrations (LiveStore and Cap Métiers agenda)		
Technical rehearsal with all players	D-15 days			
All remotely	D-Day	• Number of live log-ins (target : 50 at least) • Number of replay views (target : 1,000 at least)		Pay careful attention to "Live" session log-ins

APN2 IAP Example: Fundão (SIBdev)

Fundão provides a different type of example in which the presentation of the action planning detail is in four distinct sections. Firstly, a summary table is provided for each action area, which sets out the main objective in that area of intervention and the city's vision, as well as a reminder of some contextual details, links with municipal 'focus areas' and examples of inspiration from other cities.

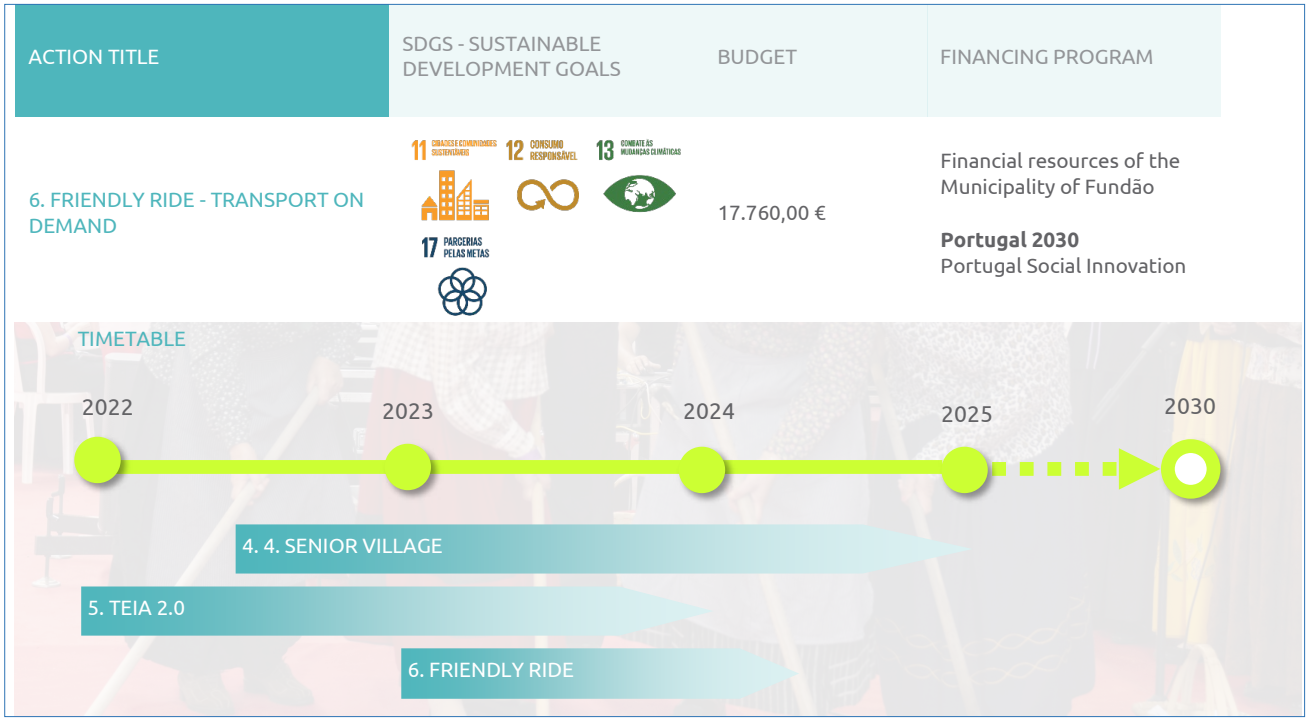


BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION	EXPECTED RESULTS
6. FRIENDLY RIDE - TRANSPORT ON DEMAND This is an innovative project that aims to be a new public transport solution. The mobility of the elderly is essential for them to be able to access the existing resources in their residential area. The Council of Fundão has a vast area (700km2) and there are villages with a shortage of public transport services. The FRIENDLY RIDE (Boleia Amiga), through which we intend to create an organized and free transport circuit to facilitate the access of the senior population living in the remote villages to the establishments and services located in the city of Fundão.	• Intergenerational socialising • Bringing People Together - social impacts of car sharing • Creating Social Bonds • An innovative, flexible, integrative solution that reduces the ecological footprint and leaves no one without transport.
	RESOURCES
	1 Municipal technician who coordinates the supply and demand side.
	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION
	Municipality of Fundão
	MAIN PARTNERS
	Parish Councils Citizens / Private Car Drivers

This is followed by a set of tables which present, for each action within that action area, a brief description of the action, expected results, non-financial resources, the responsible organisation and main partners.

A third section then summarises for each action area, how the specific actions contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the budget needed to implement them and potential funding sources.

Finally, underneath, a visualisation is provided for the timeline of implementation of the actions per action area.



ACTION TITLE	SDGS - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	BUDGET	FINANCING PROGRAM
6. FRIENDLY RIDE - TRANSPORT ON DEMAND	11 CIDADES E COMUNIDADES SUSTENTÁVEIS 12 CONSUMO RESPONSÁVEL 13 COMBATE ÀS ALTERAÇÕES CLIMÁTICAS 17 PARCERIAS PELAS METAS	17.760,00 €	Financial resources of the Municipality of Fundão **Portugal 2030** Portugal Social Innovation

TIMETABLE

2022 2023 2024 2025 2030

4. 4. SENIOR VILLAGE

5. TEIA 2.0

6. FRIENDLY RIDE

Key Finding 13. Good IAPs include a clear implementation framework

A good implementation framework puts in place the structures and processes needed to ensure and oversee implementation of the IAP. Key aspects of this framework include:

- **Gantt chart** – setting out the overall implementation timeline for the IAP
- **Governance** – who will be responsible for overseeing implementation – including if and how the ULG will be maintained.
- **Funding** – where will the resources come from to finance the foreseen actions
- **Monitoring indicators** – to establish how success will be monitored and over what timeframe and using which results indicators.
- **Risk assessment and mitigation** – identify potential barriers to implementation and what can be done to anticipate and overcome them.

The approaches to defining the implementation framework once again differed significantly from one IAP to the other. Within the case study IAPs, we see examples where several of the above elements of the implementation framework are included within the action planning table. However, it was good practice for IAPs to include specific sections particularly around future governance arrangements for implementation of the IAP.

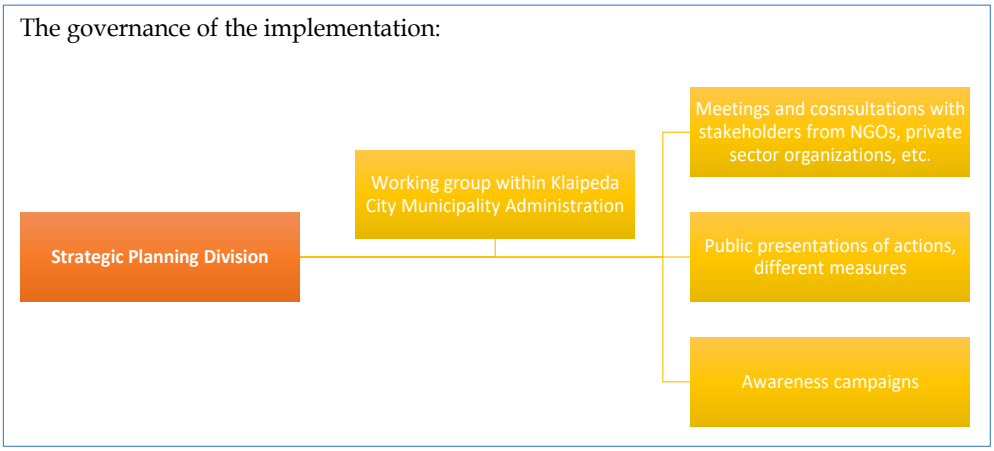
APN2 IAP Example: Klaipeda (Thriving Streets)

The third section of the IAP for Klaipeda (after 1. Context and process and 2. Action plan) specifically sets out the Implementation Framework. This starts with an overview of the **governance arrangements**, highlighting that the **lead role for implementation** will be assigned to the Strategic Planning Division within the Municipality, including coordination of the implementation of actions, applications for funding and incorporation of planned actions into the strategic development plan of the city.

However, each activity is assigned to the relevant municipal division or departments (e.g., Project Division, Construction, and Infrastructure Development Division). A working group will be created within the city administration in order to ensure **cross-departmental coordination** and cooperation.

It is also recognised that "most of the actions, especially 'soft' investments (based on the nature and scope) included in the plan will be implemented in cooperation with the URBACT Local Action Group, the city community, and other relevant stakeholders". To support this, the city commits to organising various activities to continue **dialogue and cooperation with local stakeholders**, including meetings, presentations, surveys and awareness-raising campaigns.

The implementation framework is preceded by a **Gantt chart** overviewing implementation period for each action within the period 2021-2030. The framework also includes definition of a number of monitoring **indicators**, identification of sources of **funding** and resources and an overview and analysis of **risks**. Klaipeda also provides **contact details** for the IAP which can be considered good practice as part of an ongoing commitment to the IAP.



APN2 IAP Example: Bistrita (ZeroCarbonCities)

The IAP of Bistrita provides another good example of planning for implementation that includes a section titled "**Framework for delivery**", but which also sets out several critical aspects for implementation in preceding sections.

Within Chapter 2 'Integrated Action Plan', the IAP sets out a **Gantt chart** for implementation of the 'large-scale action sectors' foreseen in the IAP and their allocation of the city carbon budget (section 1.7). This is followed by a detailed section (1.8) on **indicators** including clear targets for 2030.

Example indicators

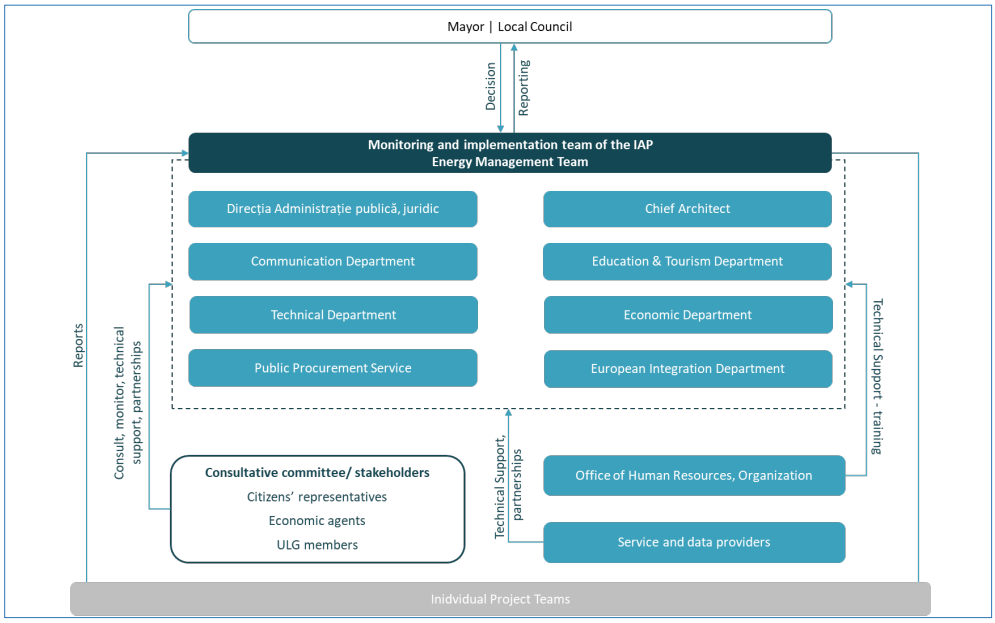
Class of indicator	Indicator	2020	Target
Energy consumption by sector (MWh)	Energy consumption in residential buildings	481,233	240,617
	Energy consumption in public buildings	19,576	9,788
	Energy consumption in transport	402,679	201,339
	Energy consumption in industry	646,264	323,132
	Energy consumption in public lighting	3,279	1,640
	Energy consumption in water management	5,355	2,677

Section 1.10 which is called '**Resources'**, then visualises "the total estimated cost for Bistrita to reach climate neutrality based on the list of actions [which] is approximately 582 million EUR". This is followed by a detailed mapping of potential **funding sources** resources needed for implementing the IAP, including regional, national, European and alternative funding sources.

The IAP usefully sets out the **governance framework** for future implementation and monitoring, which is crucial since "the successful transition of the IAP from development to implementation poses a new series of challenges for the municipality and the local group". It highlights that an Energy Management Team will take on overall coordination of implementation and monitoring, responsible for coordinating with other departments within the municipality and for engaging "stakeholders from the city area in order to increase the projects' impact".

This **implementation and monitoring scheme** is then visualised in the implementation framework section, which is followed by an overview of how the city will address transversal issues related to gender and the digital transition.

The IAP concludes with a detailed risk assessment and mitigation measures and a section of 'conclusions and next steps' highlighting immediate commitments for taking the IAP forward, including presenting the IAP to other possible stakeholders, creating a long-term partnership with current ULG members, developing the Energy Management Team within the City Hall and integrating the IAP's medium and long-term actions in other strategic documents of the city.



F. What enables a good IAP?

This section outlines the key findings in terms of the factors that enable the drafting of a good IAP.

Key Finding 14. URBACT Local Groups are at the core of development of a good IAP

The creation of an URBACT Local Group (ULG) is an obligatory part of the URBACT method driving the Action Planning Networks (APNs). They are therefore central to each and all of the IAPs developed. It has not been the objective of this study to compare ULG development and activities – which could be the subject of a study in itself. However, it is nevertheless important to observe the central role that the ULG has in IAP development.

The way that IAPs reflect and present this role differs significantly from one IAP to another. Some of the clearer examples help to understand the structure of the ULG by category of stakeholder. It is also interesting and useful when IAPs explain clearly some of the strategic choices made by the ULG in terms of priority setting or action planning.

APN2 IAP Example: Poznan (Health & GreenSpace)

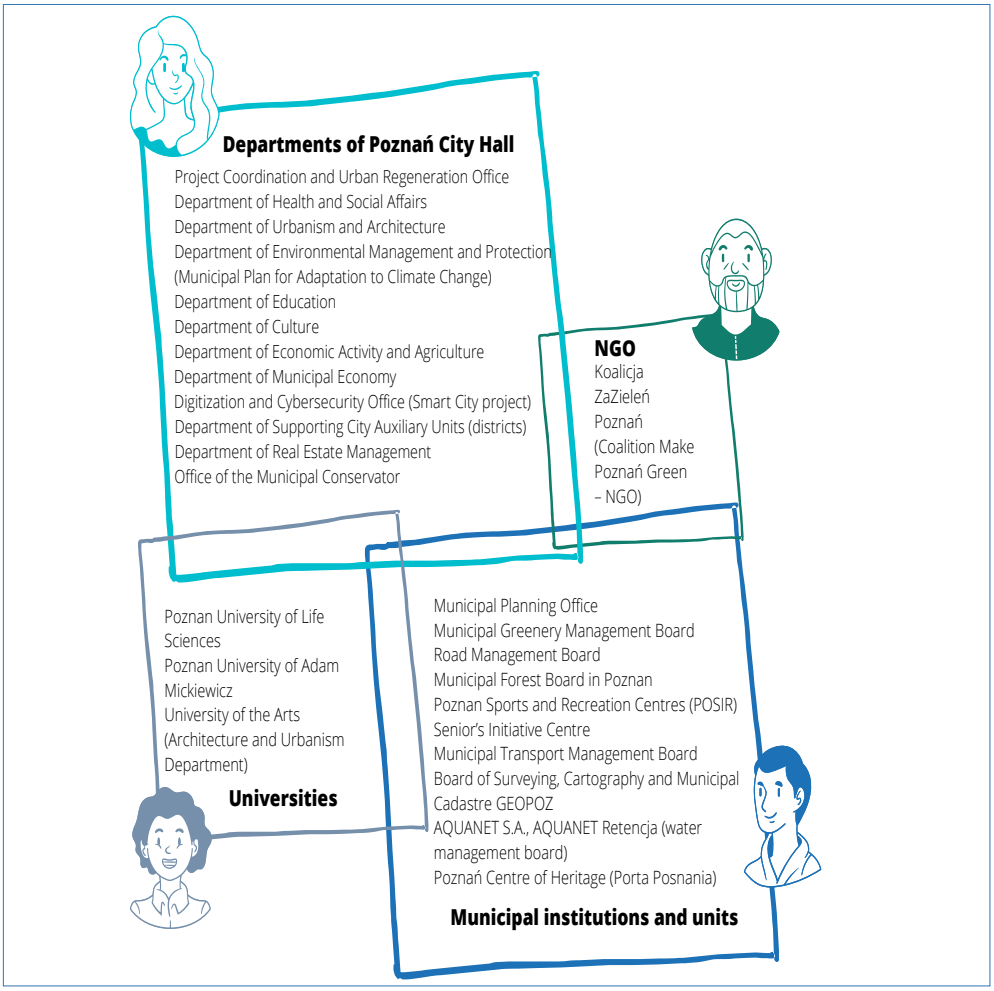
In this context, Poznan's IAP provides an illustrative example. The ULG is nicely presented in a simple visual format which groups the members into four major categories: departments within the urban authority; other municipal 'institutions and units'; universities; and NGOs.

The presentation then helps an external audience to understand the ULG, supported by a flavour of the discussions that took place between the different perspectives.

"Initially the ULG meetings were devoted to presenting all the stakeholders, their responsibilities and good practice, in order to fill the information gap and to enhance future networking.

In the next stage the group was divided into three thematic groups to make to work more effective: I - Spatial planning of green areas; II - Blue & green infrastructure; and III – Attractive green spaces (around 15 people in each group)."

The results of their work was not only "the first thorough discussion and analysis of the situation of greenery in Poznan" and the "foundation for future Green Strategies in the city", but also the identification of the 58 actions set out within the IAP.



Key Finding 15. Transnational exchange between cities can be highly inspirational in developing IAPs

Another core element of the URBACT method, the transnational learning and exchange between participating cities has clearly and directly informed the action plans, despite the unfortunate negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the ability of the cities to gain the full benefits of transnational exchange. This negative impact is likely to have been even more important for themes where physical spaces are more central.

For example, Klaipeda (Thriving Streets) state within their IAP the clear view that "It is a pity that the project meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic have been moved to the virtual space. It is likely that the impact and results of the project would be much bigger if the meetings were held physically, (i.e., visiting cities physically)."

In their IAP, Poznan (Health&GreenSpace) also highlight that "Due to the breakout of COVID-19 pandemic, transnational exchange and learning was seriously limited…. [As a] result the transfer of knowledge between the partners was obviously less effective and also less attractive for ULG members.." However, they are still positive that beneficial exchange and learning did take place through the alternative 'digital' tools and materials used including video-walks around partner cities, the Health&Greenspace online Academy and a cycle of presentations of good practice. Valuable inspiration shared is highlighted as including "health forest tracks in Espoo and Budapest, 'Walk a Mila' initiative from Santa Pola [and] re-naturalisation of river channels in Breda".

Meanwhile, Bistrita (ZeroCarbonCities) particularly highlights how the learning from the Lead Partner Manchester "on developing carbon budgets and using science-based targets clarified how to elaborate and to implement a carbon budget at local level". Furthermore, "transnational meetings bringing together project partners, the workshops, masterclass sessions, ULG meetings and other events… provided valuable opportunities to exchange experience and to build knowledge on climate-related actions".

Whilst many IAPs talk in general terms about the benefits of transnational exchange and learning, the beginnings of a good practice example – which URBACT should probably require more explicitly - is provided by Fundão (SIBdev) which identified some specific references to inspiration taking from other cities within the IAP.

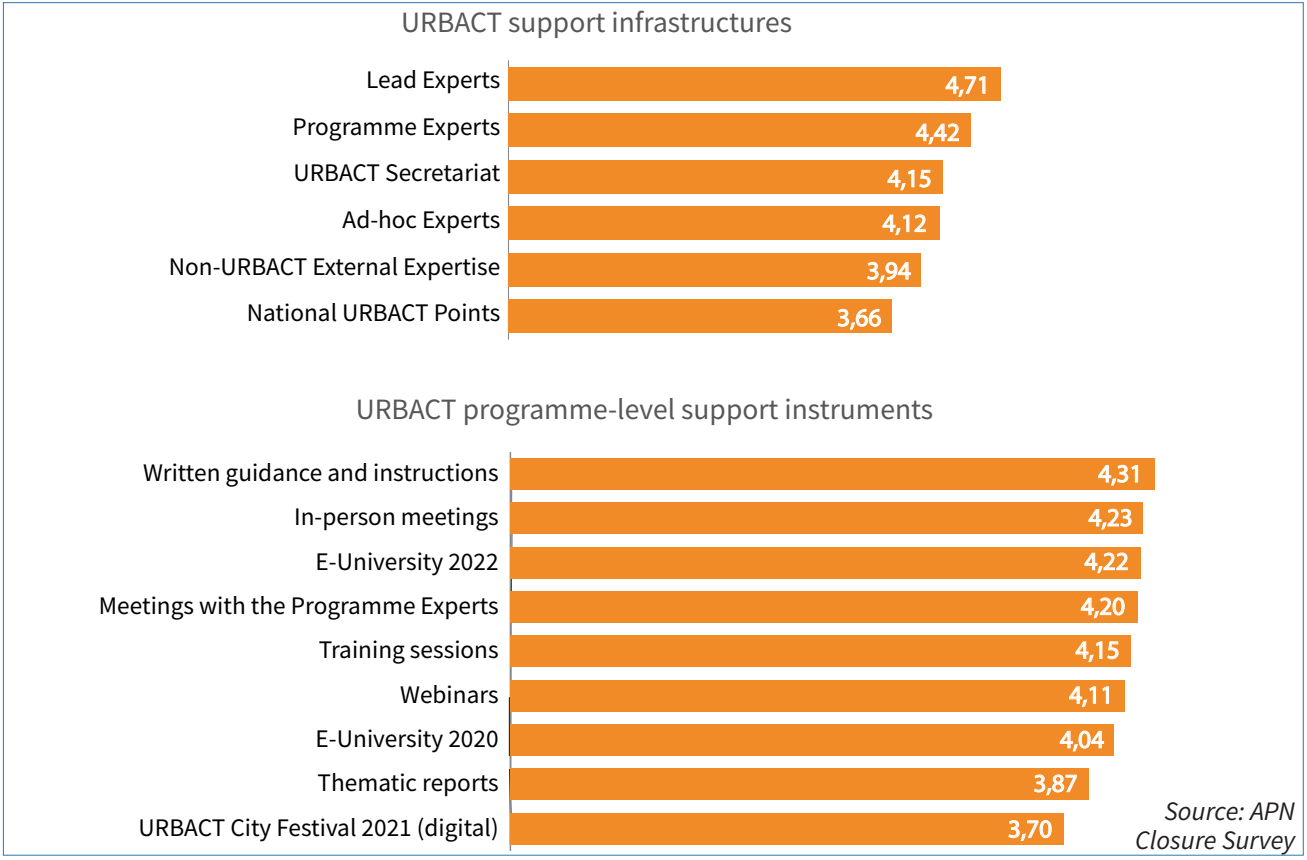
Practical examples of transnational inspiration from the Fundão IAP

INSPIRATION	Some valences of the Neuro-Motor Centre - MEMO MOVE X are inspired by the Dokk1 space in Aarhus.
INSPIRATION	The Generation House model in Aarhus served as a reference for the Senior Village project.

Key Finding 16. URBACT Lead Expert support is particularly highly appreciated

The evidence from both the APN Closure Survey and city interviews is that the support provided by URBACT is highly appreciated, in particular the close, in-person support provided by the Lead Expert.

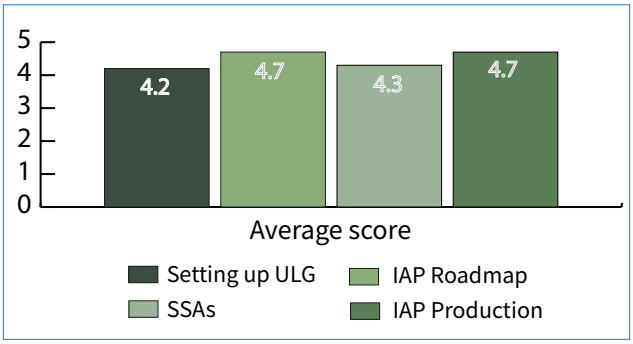
Figure 8: Rating of URBACT support (out of 5)



Source: APN Closure Survey

The importance of the expert role specifically in supporting the development of the IAP is also highlighted. Lead Expert support for IAP production was rated as the most valuable contribution – higher than the equivalent figures for setting up the ULG or developing Small-Scale Actions (SSAs). Around 70% of respondents scored the expert contribution to IAP development as 5 out of 5.

Figure 9: Average score for specific support provided by Lead Experts



Source: APN Closure Survey

This data is backed up by comments by the city interviewees, which consistently highlighted the valuable support of the Lead Expert in guiding the city towards the development of the IAP. Similar written comments are reflected in the closure survey:

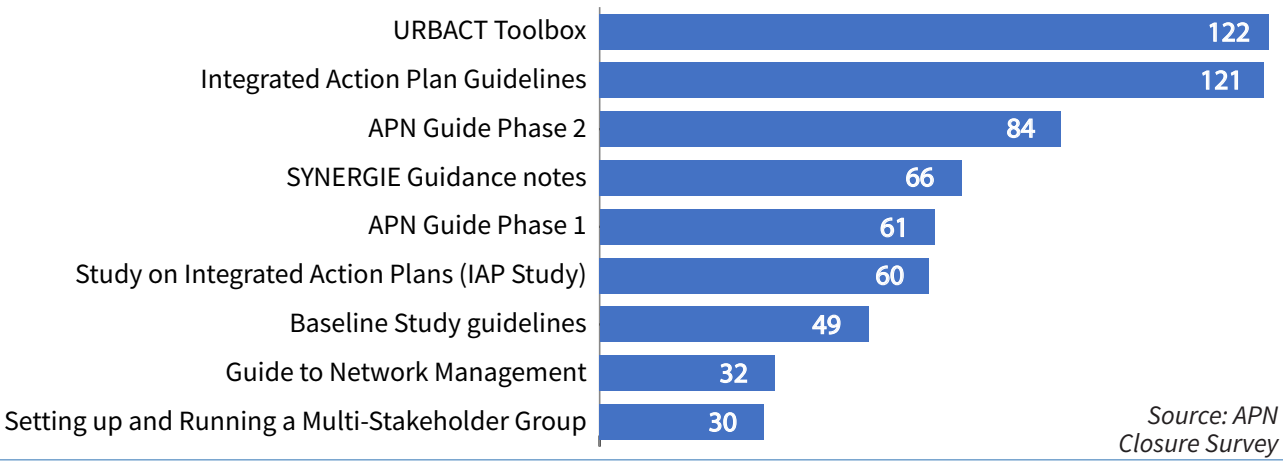
✓ *"The support of the Lead Expert was particularly helpful during the writing of the IAP."*

✓ *"I really appreciate the support given by the Lead Expert in creating the IAP."*

Key Finding 17. URBACT written guidance is valued but often needs explaining

The chart on the previous page highlights that URBACT written guidance is the most appreciated of the specific tools provided. More detail on which guidance was most appreciated is provided in a follow-up question.

Figure 10: Most useful URBACT guidance



Source: APN Closure Survey

The IAP guidelines were significantly more referenced as being useful than the broader APN Phase 1 and Phase 2 Guides, or guidelines related to the baseline study or ULG. However, this may be because of the timing of the survey at the end of the journey and just after the cities had been working on their IAPs.

However, the strong appreciation of the written guidance by APN2 cities compared to other tools does not totally fit with the anecdotal evidence from the APN1 city interviews that the events were the most appreciated. It may have been that the appreciation of events by APN2 cities was negatively impacted by the restrictions on physical meetings imposed by Covid-19.

Furthermore, it seems important to understand the score of the written guidance alongside the high appreciation for the role of the Lead Expert, since Lead Experts seem to be considered vital for understanding, navigating and explaining the written guidance provided. Strikingly, in one city interview a respondent offered no criticism or suggestions for improving the guidance materials provided by URBACT, but then went on to particularly praise the role of the Lead Expert in helping them to understand and interpret the guidance provided.

Key Finding 18. URBACT Ad Hoc expertise has been used very successfully to support IAP development

Several interviewed cities as well as APN2 closure survey respondents highlighted the usefulness of turning to additional support (whether URBACT ad hoc expert or national-level external expertise) to help the process of drafting the IAP – in addition to the support provided by the Lead Expert.

APN2 IAP Example: Razlog (IoTXchange)

The Razlog case study is a good example of an IAP that was developed through mobilisation of specific support from an external ad hoc expertise in the local language. The expert worked closely with the local coordinator and ULG to turn the ideas into a well-structured plan. The important role of this expert is reflected in the fact he is named and presented on the final page of the IAP itself.

The **APN2 Closure Survey** also highlighted the added value of this resource for cities.

✓ *"[Ad Hoc Expert] support was… really useful because he directed the writing of the IAP towards a deep and well-organized structure."*

✓ *"Ad Hoc Expert remarks were very valuable while developing the IAP."*

✓ *"we only requested and promptly received support with drafting and elaborating the IAP."*

✓ *"Within [the network] there were two ad hoc experts for two specific tasks: [one] supported the partners with the production of the IAPs. This support was valued very positive."*

✓ *"Specific support was provided especially on indicators and one to one coaching. It was really useful because he directed the writing of the IAP towards a deep and well-organized structure."*

At the same time, at least one city found it challenging to find Ad-Hoc Experts with suitable IAP development and support skills.

✓ *"Couldn't find an ad hoc expert for helping us with IAP or SSA on a national level although we reached out to national URBACT Contact Point..."*

Key Finding 19. Peer Review is another valued part of the IAP development process

Whilst not as central to the IAP development process as the ULG, or transnational exchange more generally, the Peer Review process established as part of the IAP Roadmap was valued and considered to have added important value to the final IAPs. Although it was not the first thing that cities mentioned when assessing their IAP development journey, some of the interviewed cities clearly appreciated the Peer Review and this also came across in some of the IAPs themselves.

APN2 IAP Example: Klaipeda (Thriving Streets)

"During the Peer review, we got the chance to hear the ideas and comments how to improve our Integrated Action Plan, to look to our own city with different eyes and point of views. The project coordinators and partners are competent, project-oriented people with whom it was interesting to discuss various issues, hear their views and ideas on urban planning and the involvement of citizens and thus to broaden our knowledge and to open our minds for new experiences."

APN2 IAP Example: Razlog (IoTXchange)

"The ULG had the opportunity to learn from the challenges and ideas that has been developed throughout the other partner municipalities as well as share its experience with peers from across Europe. In addition, the partners provided valuable input in terms of improvement of the IAP within the peer review process."

Key Finding 20. Lessons from small-scale actions have supported IAP development and impact in different ways

The ability of cities to use URBACT support to develop and deliver small-scale actions was an important new feature of the 2019-2022 generation of Action Planning Networks. A separate URBACT-commissioned study on the small-scale actions took place in parallel with this IAP Study 2, however we can also highlight some observations in terms of the positive ways that cities used the small 'pilot-type' actions to inform their IAPs, with reference to our case study IAPs.

1. Some cities used the small-scale actions to test a specific activity or solution at a pilot scale, which was then included in the IAP as an action to be rolled out a larger-scale.

APN2 IAP Example: Fundão (SIBdev)

The IAP has a specific section on the experience with the small-scale action 'Play Memo Move', which is a new technological instrument to be used by the elderly population to promote physical activity and motor skills. The successes and lessons of the pilot test are presented and the links made with the IAP in that "action nº3 of IAP foresees the creation of 5 more platforms… in 5 parishes" across the wider territory around Fundão.

2. Some cities used the small-scale actions as a tool to generate community engagement and commitment with the overall vision and aims of the IAP.

APN2 IAP Example: Bistrita (ZeroCarbonCities)

Bistrita reports four different small-scale actions in its IAP:

i. A 'Zero Carbon Bike Tour', to promote more ecological forms of transport, which was attended by about 150 local people.

ii. Creation of a mural dedicated to 'zero caron cities' with students from the High School of Art

iii. Traffic safety lessons aimed at schoolchildren, in order to increase their confidence in walking or riding their bikes in the city.

iv. Installation of 18 air quality monitoring sensors.

These actions were less about piloting new approaches and more about finding ways to engage with members of the community about climate-related goals and building engagement with the city's vision and IAP. The actions were also used to attract local media attention and reach out to more members of the community beyond those that took part directly in these small activities. None of these four actions are then included within the list of 58 planned actions of the IAP.

3. Some cities used the small-scale actions as a useful 'quick win' to enable other andmore ambitious actions to be planned.

APN2 IAP Example: Razlog (IoTXchange)

The small-scale action implemented in Razlog was the installation of an air quality sensor on a roof in the municipality, the expansion and continued use of which is included as an action of the IAP.

The importance of this action was not to test the feasibility of the action or to engage the community directly – the usefulness of sensors is known and the roof location is largely out of sight. However, the installation of the sensor allowed the city to do three important things: 1. Build its experience and competences with regards to monitoring air quality; 2. Generate data to help understand and communicate local air quality issues and their causes to members of the local community; and 3. Provide a crucial information base on which to plan, implement and, of course, monitor the success of further and even more ambitious actions.

G. Where do IAPs go wrong?

There are still several areas where IAPs, overall, could be strengthened. The detailed reading of the selection of 46 IAPs revealed that – despite being selected for their relatively strong performance in terms of action planning detail – many IAPs demonstrated clear areas where the quality of the IAP could be strengthened relatively easily.

Note: the study is not able to give a number of how many IAPs presented each 'weakness'. Rather, it focuses on identifying trends in terms of the weaknesses observed.

Key Finding 21. Some IAPs blur their purpose and target audience

One trend was that several IAPs did not seem to have been written as working documents of the city, but rather for an external audience, including sometimes as a report for URBACT. Lengthy presentations of the city, explanations of the context or reflections on the theme were relatively common – interesting content, no doubt, but more than is necessary for a document that truly wants to function as an 'action plan' for the city. In some rare cases, the actions set out were not future plans, but the work carried out during the lifetime of the project.

Key Finding 22. Some IAPs lack clarity as to what constitutes an 'action'

Given the centrality of action planning here, it can be problematic that different IAPs demonstrate quite different understandings of what constitutes an action. Sometimes what is presented as an action is really an objective (e.g. to increase public transport), sometimes it is an area of intervention (e.g. education and training). Some IAPs break 'actions' down into 'activities' or 'tasks' while in others, these individual steps are the 'actions'. This not only makes it difficult to compare across IAPs, but makes it fundamentally more difficult for cities to provide requested planning details at the level of their actions (the definition of timings, responsibilities etc looks very different if you are thinking about a specific task compared to a broad 'area of intervention').

Key Finding 23. Some IAPs fail to adequately take advantage of clear action planning tables

Action planning tables provide an opportunity for cities to carefully, but succinctly define and plan actions in a structured way without having to write long pages of texts. Many good examples exist including amongst the case study examples. However, many action planning tables were also filled out in ways that were vague, inconsistent or missing important information. Overall, only 5 of the 189 IAPs were considered to have included all six aspects of action planning within comprehensive action planning tables.

Key Finding 24. Some IAPs are unnecessarily long

Whilst the average IAP length was a reasonable 41 pages, 10 IAPs (5%) were longer than 80 pages. There was a sense that the task of drafting the IAP would have been less burdensome - and in the end clearer - had action planning tables been used more consistently and appropriately and the narrative presentation of the context and overall thematic understanding reduced or presented elsewhere. In other cases, length came from the city appearing to feel the need to plan more and more actions in an attempt to be fully integrated. 21 IAPs (11%) defined more than 20 actions, and one as many as 58.

Source: Reading of 46 IAPs

H. Where could IAPs be further strengthened?

Key Finding 25. IAPs could often present the overall strategic logic more clearly

IAPs often have detailed context sections explaining the situation and challenges in the city being addressed by the IAP and relevant policies or initiatives already in place. They typically then present a series of actions that have been planned in the city. A careful reader can usually make the connections between the planned actions and the identified challenges and context. However, the links from challenges to objectives and objectives to actions are not always presented as clearly as they might be.

Key Finding 26. IAPs could usefully highlight more explicitly the specific contribution of transnational exchange

Several IAPs talk about the benefits of transnational exchange, however almost always in an abstract sense, without giving concrete examples of which specific planned actions were inspired by other cities or experts. So, whilst the feedback from cities about their experience with transnational exchange in the APNs is overwhelmingly positive, it makes it harder for URBACT as a programme to demonstrate more tangibly the benefits experienced by cities from the URBACT method.

Key Finding 27. Some IAPs could helpfully showcase more directly the URBACT Local Group input into planning and implementation of actions

Many IAPs present their ULG within their plan to varying levels of detail. However, it is not always possible to trace the role of the ULG in informing the specific actions planned or – even more significantly – into the planned implementation of the actions. In some cases, the ULG appears to have been treated more as a consultative body than a planning body, and implementation rests on the shoulders of the city municipality. More consideration could still usefully be given in such cases of what other stakeholders could contribute to achievement of the city's shared vision.

Key Finding 28. IAPs could often be clearer about how the proposals represent a more integrated approach.

That an IAP represents an enhanced approach to integrated urban development can almost always be seen from a detailed reading of the plans. However, this crucial aspect of the added value of URBACT is often 'under the surface' of the IAP. While some aspects of integration come through very clearly, the reader is often required to 'join the dots' in what is being presented to understand how other aspects of the integrated approach have been reinforced, whether it be sectoral integration, spatial dimensions or demonstrably balancing economic, social and environmental aspects

Key Finding 29. IAPs could usefully address more explicitly cross-cutting thematic issues

Important cross-cutting issues such as gender, digitalisation and climate change are also often not directly mentioned. In such cases, it is typically not clear if these aspects were taken into account but not considered priorities or simply overlooked. In other cases, they are mentioned, but in ways that seem rather tokenistic and without clarity on how consideration of the cross-cutting issue shaped the defined actions.

I. Observations and analysis of findings

Building on the above findings and our experience in conducting the research involved, the study team make the following observations which are important for understanding the recommendations that follow.

There is a lot that is positive about the IAPs, but it is worth focusing attention on where and how they can be strengthened still further in future.

Observation 1. Cities are facing a tension between action planning breadth and action planning detail.

It is clearly easier to plan three actions in detail than 33. However, it is not totally clear whether a plan with three detailed actions is considered better than a plan with 33 lightly planned actions. The requirement to be integrated is pulling in one direction, whilst the requirement to plan actions in detail is pulling in another.

Observation 2. Cities are still struggling to deal with the complexity of integration

Integration is still a complex topic that cities are finding difficult to address systematically. Sometimes IAPs talk about stakeholder engagement as if this, by itself equates to an integrated approach, rather than the integrated nature of the responses defined by the ULG. Sometimes they demonstrate improved integration in some aspects, whilst other aspects are surprisingly overlooked.

Observation 3. Some IAPs seem to have been written at the end of the process

It seems apparent in some cases that the drafting of the IAP only started at the end of the APN journey. The focus was on using the URBACT method of participation and exchange for local problem identification, relationship-building within the ULG, and transnational exchange and learning.

Observation 4. Cities are trying to use the IAPs for multiple purposes

It seems clear that there is some tension between the different potential purposes of the IAP as a document. These include to provide an implementable plan, to capture increased understanding of a thematic challenge, to provide a report to URBACT of the work done and progress made, to showcase the city to an external audience and to document ULG agreements.

Observation 5. It takes time to complete all the stages of effective action planning

It is clear that the delivery of the perfect IAP takes time and requires the city to pass through a number of stages which cannot be by-passed to jump to the end. This logical order passes through problem identification, vision definition, objective setting, identifying areas of interventions, defining specific actions and defining the implementation framework.

Observation 6. Final IAPs depend on the starting point of each city

It is understandable that a city that is aiming to improve an existing approach may get further in the planning process than a city that is aiming to start work in a totally new area. Depending on where they started, it could be that a city with little action planning detail has made more progress towards integrated sustainable urban development than one whose IAP ticks more action planning boxes.

Observation 7. If URBACT wants to be better able to demonstrate impact it will likely need to invest more in following up with participating cities

This study highlights that it is not possible to put in place a simple metric or survey question to capture the impact of the IAP (or the broader APN process) on URBACT cities. More detailed follow-up is required to understand the complex ways that IAPs have supported impact on the ground.

Observation 8. It is striking that the main findings and conclusions from the APN1 IAP Study remain valid

Although the level of action planning detail has noticeably improved from the APN1 to APN2, many of the key observations from the APN1 IAP study remain valid for this APN2 Study.

Summary of the Key findings – APN IAP Study – July 2019

- IAPs highlight the positive learning journey that cities have undertaken within URBACT APNs
- IAPs almost always define a set of chosen actions to be implemented.
- There is often significant buy-in from local stakeholders and decision-makers, giving the IAPs a strong potential to be implemented.
- However, IAPs are characterised by the complexity of integrated action planning and their diversity in terms of their presentation, structure, style and content.
- IAPs typically set out more integrated approaches to urban development.
- However, IAPs are only able to get so far in defining all the possible action planning details.
- Cities seem to face a tension between providing a broader action plan (more integrated) and a deeper action plan (more detailed actions).
- The clarity of many IAPs is reduced by excessive reporting of city context and APN journey.
- The clearest, most concise ways of presenting actions is through action planning tables.
- Network theme seems to be the largest factor influencing approaches to integration.
- Nevertheless, the final IAP is a result of the interplay between the theme, each city's starting point and its individual journey in the APN.

Main conclusions – APN1 IAP Study – July 2019

"The IAPs are valuable tools in defining what a city plans to do next on a particular theme. But for many cities, the process of developing the IAP is even more valuable."

"The IAPs are not best understood as 'investment-ready' project plans, but rather 'living' documents whose implementation will come from ongoing stakeholder and city-authority engagement, including feeding into new funding applications."

"The key impetus and main achievement of the URBACT Action Planning Networks is to drive more integrated approaches to sustainable urban development, rather than developing more detailed plans… Focusing down on action planning detail can only really start after the city has decided what it plans to do more generally."

"Despite their existing value and the legitimacy of much of the variation and diversity seen in the IAPs, URBACT can still help cities to be more systematic about the way they address the complexity involved in integrated action planning and more structured in setting out their plans, including in terms of what needs to be in the action plan and where is the place for reporting on the rich URBACT journey that led to the plan."

Observation 9. There remains a need to help cities to be more systematic and structured in their plans.

Whilst the diversity in themes, APN journeys and IAP styles can be a richness of URBACT, it remains clear to us as a study team that participating cities and the programme itself would benefit from a clearer structure in terms of what is expected in the IAP. The enhancements to the guidance between APN1 and APN2 helped, but they did not resolve some of the fundamental issues cities still seem to be facing.

Observation 10. However, there are risks associated with demanding ever more action planning detail

Asking cities to focus more of their attention on planning their actions in ever greater detail could improve the score in the next IAP screening, whilst also detracting from the time that cities are able to spend and the value that they are able to extract from other fundamental parts of their APN journey. For example, in terms of increasing their thematic understanding, better understanding their local context and challenges, taking inspiration from the practices of other cities, improving their local participatory approaches and defining a clear (strategic) 'direction of travel' for their city.

This point is particularly relevant for URBACT in a context where more detailed action planning does not seem to be the most important aspect of the APN journey for cities or their primary motivation for taking part in an URBACT network. The requirement to plan actions in more detail (a narrowing down) could also be in conflict with the desire to see more integrated approaches (a broadening out).

Cities need to be ready before they can plan their actions in more detail. This means having established what the actions are going to be in the first place, and at an appropriate level – not at the level of an objective or entire 'area of intervention'. This is about establishing the 'quality' and an appropriate number of actions to be planned. Where an action plan has 20 or more actions (as was the case for 11% of IAPs), it does not necessarily seem recommendable that they have to achieve the highest level of planning detail for each and every one in the time available.

Taken to an extreme, one could increase the action planning score by only pre-selecting cities which have already defined their list of actions and now need support to plan these actions in more detail. Clearly, we would not recommend this approach, since it would cut out the many cases where cities join an APN precisely because they are not sure what to do to address a particular thematic challenge and want to develop new solutions through participatory approaches and transnational exchange.

Observation 11. So the challenge is to help cities be more systematic and structured in setting out their plans without increasing the burden of the action planning detail compared to other aspects of the APN journey.

In particular, reinforced IAP development processes or guidance needs to achieve the following objectives:

i. **Make the IAPs more concise, working documents of the city** supporting more effective implementation (more contextual or narrative information should be provided elsewhere).

ii. **Build the capacity of cities to plan actions in a high degree of detail** to support implementation of activities and access to funding.

iii. **Achieve that terms are used more consistently** within and across IAPs – in particular to enable a more consistent definition of what constitutes an action.

iv. **Make it easier to map out the logic of the IAP** with the right amount of detail at the right level and enabling the level of integration to be assessed at the appropriate level.

v. **More clearly flag the tangible benefits of the URBACT methodology** – and how it informed the specific planned actions (to enable URBACT to demonstrate its impact).

All whilst still allowing cities flexibility in presenting their own vision, priorities and specificities.

J. Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the findings of this study presented above, this document sets out a series of recommendations for URBACT with future Action Planning Networks in mind. These recommendations have been grouped into four categories for ease of comprehension:

Category 1. IAP structure and process

1.a) Maintain IAPs as the final output of cities' work in the Action Planning Networks

There is no evidence in this study that a fundamentally different type of output should be foreseen. IAPs remain the right output for cities participating in URBACT Action planning networks. The work of drafting the IAPs gives cities a clear focus for guiding their discussions and creates a valuable output that sets out their agreed plan of action for the future.

1.b) Impose the following IAP structure:

Section 1. Context and needs

Current situation, policies and strategies, SWOT analysis…

Section 2. Overall logic and integrated approach (breadth)

Challenge ⇒ vision ⇒ objectives ⇒ action areas ⇒ actions

Section 3. Activity planning (depth)

Actions broken down into specific activities with action/activity tables providing details of costs, timings, responsibilities, funding, risks, indicators.

Section 4. Implementation framework

Governance processes and monitoring, mitigation of risks, funding

Whilst flexibility can be retained within each section to reflect the preferences and specificities of each city's plan and approach, **providing this defined structure will provide multiple benefits** for URBACT and participating cities:

i. It will provide cities with **greater clarity from the beginning** on the overall structure of the IAP and how the APN journey can help build the IAP logically in stages. For example, Section 1 could be completed at the end of Phase One (see subsequent recommendations), rather than seeing the IAP as being something to produce only at the end of the journey.

ii. It will help ensure a **more consistent use of terms** e.g. within Section 2 defining the overall 'action areas' or areas of intervention and then specific 'actions' within each one and then in Section 3 breaking down these actions into distinct 'activities' or tasks where possible.

iii. It will enable cities to **overcome the tension they are experiencing in action planning** between outlining the breadth of their plan (integrated approach in the new Section 2) with the depth of their plan (activity planning detail in the new Section 3).

iv. It will **ensure that the overall logic and integrated nature of the plan is clear** - presented in its own section (2) - rather than having to be understood implicitly by the reader on the basis of content presented across multiple different sections of the IAP.

v. It will support and encourage an **improved focus on achieving implementation**, including definition of effective governance processes, funding, monitoring and other useful aspects in Section 4 (building on the enhanced focus on this aspect in APN2 compared to APN1).

vi. It will **provide URBACT with a clearer picture of how cities are progressing** throughout the APN journey and how they are able to address each of the four IAP sections, including why some cities might be stronger in some sections than others and where cities may need more targeted support in the future.

1.c) Put other reporting requirements in a separate output

To keep the IAP 'clean' and focused on action planning, it is recommended to create a separate output in which cities can report on their APN journey, process and methods, including presenting the ULG membership, ULG meetings, transnational meetings, tools used, lessons from their small-scale actions / tests, and other reflections on the process, including potential new ideas such as an IAP self-assessment.

1.d) Align the APN journey and the IAP sections more explicitly

Using the above IAP structure, it should be possible to align the phases of the APN journey more directly with the development of relevant sections of the IAP. For example, the end of Phase One could see the submission of the Context and Needs section of the IAP. A second milestone could see the presentation of the integrated approach and the definition of the overall logic of the IAP, including vision, objectives, agreed action areas and actions.

Note: One issue to bear in mind here is that some cities may require longer to achieve this second milestone than others. Indeed, for some cities, Section 2 could be the primary challenge and added value of the IAP development. For them, Section 3 may not be so important – see for example the APN1 Case Study on Torino).

1.e) Redraft and simplify IAP guidelines to follow the updated structure.

The IAP guidance should be less about the process of developing the IAP (which is the APN journey) and more specifically on developing the IAP as a document, with guidance on how to complete each section and what is meant by the different terms involved e.g. 'action area' versus 'action'. The guidance can make it clear what is required in each section, at the same time as highlighting that cities can meet these requirements in different ways (e.g. finding creative ways to present the overall logic of the IAP required in Section 2).

The guidance can provide instructive examples from previous IAPs as well as linking to specific tools in the URBACT toolbox relevant for the development of each section e.g. stakeholder mapping tools for Section 1, funding and resources tools for Section 4. *Note: If necessary in terms of time and resources, URBACT could finalise the updated guidance for Section 1 first to support APN Phase 1 and then update the following sections afterwards.*

1.f) Reinforce the action planning expertise provided to cities

The evidence from the study suggests that no matter how clear the written guidance, cities will always benefit from access to expertise and support in developing (aspects of) their IAP. This expert support can be reinforced in different and complementary ways:

i. **Train the trainer** – consider specific training to Lead Experts at the beginning of their journey on what is required in the IAP and how to construct it.

ii. **IAP development at the Summer/e-University** – consider specific sessions on IAP development and the new IAP structure at the capacity building events for new APN cities.

iii. **Encourage cities/LEs to mobilise ad hoc expertise** – consider recommending to cities that they engage ad hoc expertise to support with specific aspects of the IAP development. This can be a useful addition to Lead Expertise support to the wider APN process and journey.

iv. **Expanded pool of ad hoc expertise** – consider identifying ad hoc experts (at European and national levels) who can specifically support the process of drafting the IAP.

v. **Peer expertise** – consider mobilising experienced cities (or, rather, experienced people in URBACT cities) who can contribute to capacity building of other cities for IAP development.

vi. **Inspirational examples** – consider creating a library of 'good practice' IAPs to showcase different aspects of a well-designed IAP.

Additional suggestions for IAP process and structure

i. Consider recommending that cities develop their IAPs on a rolling basis through shared online tools that members of the ULG can consult in real-time – making IAP development a stronger part of the overall process (rather than something to be produced at the end).

ii. Require a table of contents, page numbers, PDF format for all IAPs.

iii. All IAPs written in national language to ensure shared ownership by the ULG members at local level - with online translation tools used to generate English-language versions for transnational exchange and learning.

iv. Suggest page limits for the IAP (overall and/or per section).

v. Require contact details to be included for the person/office having overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the IAP to facilitate oversight and follow-up.

Category 2. More integrated approaches

2.a) Provide training on what is meant by more integrated approaches

From the beginning of the APN journey, increasing the understanding of participating cities and experts on what is meant by more integrated approaches should be a key priority. This should build on the findings of the IAP Study 1 on the different types of integration and aiming to go beyond the terms of 'horizontal' and 'vertical' integration and/or simplistic interpretations of integration as being achieved already through stakeholder engagement. Cities' understanding of integration should be expanded to cover at least:

Table 2: Elements of integrated approaches identified by IAP Study 1 (2019)

i. Stakeholder involvement in planning – the full range of stakeholders (considered horizontally and vertically) are engaged in identifying priorities and potential solutions.
ii. Coherence with existing strategies – actions and objectives are aligned and complementary to existing strategies in place at city, regional, national or European levels.
iii. Sustainable urban development - - actions address all three pillars of sustainable development in terms of economic, social and environmental objectives.
iv. Sectoral integration – addressing the full range of policies/sectors of activity, including infrastructure, transport, employment, education, green spaces, housing, culture…
v. Spatial integration – coherence of actions at different spatial levels from site-specific, through neighbourhoods, city-wide and regional.
vi. Territorial integration – coherence and complementarity of actions and policies implemented by neighbouring municipalities.
vii. Multi-level governance – actions are planned coherently at different levels of governance, covering local (district, city), regional and national levels.
viii. Integration of cross-cutting thematic aspects – notably including gender, digitalisation, climate change and procurement.
ix. Integration over time – planning of relevant actions in the short, medium and longer-terms and consideration of any necessary order in the implementation of actions.
x. Complementary types of investment – the plan effectively balances the need for both 'hard' (physical/infrastructure) and 'soft' (human capital) investments.
xi. Mobilising all available funding –seeking to use the full range of funds available to support implementation of planned actions, from EU Funds to private local sources.
xii. Stakeholder involvement in implementation - the full range of relevant stakeholders (horizontally and vertically) are engaged in the implementation of planned actions.

2.b) Identify integration challenges and priorities during Phase One of the APN journey

Rather than overwhelming cities with attempts to address all the forms of integration, it is reasonable to allow them to focus on those areas where 'more integrated approaches' are most urgent or can deliver the most obvious benefits. They should be supported already during the initial phase of their APN journey to identify where their strengths and weaknesses are currently in terms of implementing integrated approaches and where they should prioritise to efforts to become more integrated. This could be part of the Lead Expert assessment of the baseline position of each city.

It is recommended that some aspects of more integrated approaches should be considered obligatory, whilst others can be more optional elements which may be more or less relevant according to the theme or local context.

Table 3: Suggested categorisations of the different aspects of integration

Suggested obligatory aspects of integrated approaches	
i.	Stakeholder involvement in planning
ii.	Coherence with existing strategies
iii.	Sustainable urban development (economic, social, environmental)
ix.	Integration over time.
xii.	Stakeholder involvement in implementation
Suggested optional aspects of more integrated approaches	
iv.	Sectoral integration
v.	Spatial integration
vi.	Territorial integration
vii.	Multi-level governance
viii.	Integration of cross-cutting thematic aspects
x.	Complementary types of investment
xi.	Mobilising all available funding

2.c) Require reporting on integration in the new Section 2 of the IAP

Building on the increased understanding of 'more integrated approaches' and the identification of priority integration challenges in the city, it would then be reasonable to require cities to report on how their overall plan as presented in Section 2 represents a more integrated approach.

Such a requirement will achieve multiple benefits:

i. It will **help each city to keep a sharp focus on integration** and making sure that the emerging approach is more integrated.

ii. It will **help experts and peers to understand the approach to integration** and to provide feedback to the city on where its approach could or should be made even more integrated (through expert advice and peer review).

iii. It will also **enable URBACT to see, assess and demonstrate** where cities are making most progress in terms of integration and where cities are maybe still struggling to achieve greater integration.

2.d) Require reporting on the source/ inspiration for planned actions

To fully understand and trace the impact of the URBACT method on the IAPs, it would be highly useful to understand the inspiration behind planned actions – particularly when these have come directly from a key part of the APN journey (ULG discussions, small-scale testing, transnational exchange). To the extent possible, cities should briefly report for each action where the idea came from. It would also be useful to record whether an action in the IAP is a new action, an existing action or a modification of an existing action.

Additional suggestions for more integrated approaches

i. Implement recommendation 1.b) to ensure that there is a specific section of the new IAP structure (Section 2) which specifically facilitates the presentation and review of the overall logic of the IAP and the proposed integrated approach (before action planning details).

ii. Consider making some actions/ activities (e.g. ULG continuation, communication) obligatory.

iii. Consider adding in a specific peer review activity and/or mid-term reflection on Section 2 of the IAPs (or potentially Sections 1 and 2 together) so that the integrated nature of the emerging plans can be reflected upon specifically and cities exchange about areas of strength and weakness before planning their actions in more detail.

Category 3. Enhancing action planning detail

3.a) Allow more detailed planning of actions to be based on prioritisation of actions

Cities should probably be able to provide approximate costings, responsibilities, timings etc for all of the planned actions in their IAP. However, to avoid that cities feel overwhelmed by the planning detail required, it may be that cities prefer to carry out a prioritisation of actions before going into more planning detail.

This approach has the advantage of encouraging cities to plan the most important actions in more detail, whilst avoiding any pressure to come up with planning details for 50 or 60+ actions when the city is not ready to do so. At the same time, it reduces any unintended incentives for cities to reduce the number of planned actions that form part of their overall integrated approach in Section 2 due to anxiousness or inability to plan all these actions in detail.

Prioritisation could be based on planning actions that are the most urgent or those that require external funding (in order to prepare funding applications). It could take place at the level of an action or broken down into specific activities.

3.b) Require action/activity planning tables and provide more detailed action planning table templates

Whilst cities should be enabled to reduce the number of actions or activities planned in significant detail, they should also be supported to provide more detailed plans for those actions for which they are ready to do so. The action planning table templates provided should be more detailed, clarifying simple ways to present the range of details that make up a clear and implementable plan of action.

This should include the full range of action planning details identified in this study:

i. Responsible body
ii. Contributing bodies/partners
iii. Timings
iv. Costings
v. Available resources
vi. Sources of additional funding
vii. Output indicators
viii. Results indicators
ix. Risks and mitigation

Additional suggestions for enhancing action planning detail

i. Link the action planning detail in Section 3 with the Implementation Framework in Section 4 to maintain a focus on how these actions are going to be implemented specifically.

ii. Again, consider a specific peer review activity on the action/activity planning tables (or Sections 3 and 4 together) so that the preparedness for implementation can be assessed.

iii. Consider making ULG continuation a required activity that needs to be planned in detail.

iv. Require contact details per action/ activity to facilitate follow-up of implementation.

Category 4. Implementation & follow-up

4.a) Provide specific follow-up opportunities to both support and trace implementation by cities

Whilst the URBACT journey needs to stop somewhere, this study has highlighted that being better able to support and demonstrate implementation success and ultimate impact will be facilitated by further action and investment by the programme. There are many potential options available to URBACT each with different pros and cons, depending on the priority objectives that URBACT sets for itself.

Options that could be worth considering now or in the future include:

i. Include an additional phase in the existing APN journey to cover the start of implementation and allowing partners to exchange on their progress, successes and challenges.

ii. Allow APN cities to apply to take part in new Implementation Networks specifically aimed at implementation of their URBACT-supported IAPs. These could be aligned with the previous APN networks, or cross over between networks. Not all APN cities would need to take part.

iii. Put in place events focused on implementation at programme-level (e.g. webinars, Festival sessions, dedicated event) to hear and discuss implementation success stories, ongoing challenges, identify support needs etc.

iv. Create national events to exchange on implementation successes and challenges including review of the national funding context for cities (EU and national funds)

v. Undertake follow-up visits to APN cities – e.g. by Lead Expert or URBACT Secretariat – to review implementation success after e.g. one year

vi. Require an annual(?) implementation report to be submitted by each city to URBACT

vii. Use communication budgets to identify and present implementation success stories to the URBACT community

viii. Request NUPs to identify and present at least one URBACT implementation success story per year.