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ECOCORE BASELINE STUDY & ROADMAP

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Credit: Elise Saarna, Visit Pärnu

About EcoCore

EcoCore is a network of nine small European cities, all located in strategic transport corridors that want to accelerate the green transition in the industrial areas of their cities. Led by Fingal County Council, Dublin the consortium also includes Dubrovnik, Ormož, Alba Iulia, Ķekava , Santo Tirso, Pärnu Linnavalitsus, Villena and Tuusula.

Funded by URBACT, these cities will work together over a period of two and a half years. They will be supported through a targeted and tailor-made programme of transnational exchange and learning. They will undertake extensive co-creation activities locally, resulting in the development of a robust integrated action plan in each partner city, focusing on the topic of green industrial transition.

EcoCore will build the capacity of small cities to address climate change by pursuing a green economy agenda, helping local stakeholders, to transition to low-carbon economic activities, especially in their choices of energy for transportation, heating and electricity. EcoCore will create significant momentum for a green transition, especially in the industrial areas of partner cities

This report

This report consists of three main sections and is the foundation on which the work of EcoCore will be built over the coming years. It aims to provide partners with a shared understanding of existing knowledge, policies, projects and initiatives relating to green industrial transition in European cities.

Key Elements

1. The EU Overview reflects on some key challenges for the green transition and summarises the EU policy response to these.

2. The Partner Profiles, captures each city's starting point and local context They highlight the potential focus of each city's IAP.

3. The final section sets forth the exchange and learning work programme for the next two years. It is a living plan, regularly reviewed and revised if necessary.

EU Overview

This section summarises the current context with regard to the green transition in industrial urban and peri-urban spaces. It reflects on some key strategic challenges and provides an overview of the key elements of the European policy framework and its intended impact on European industry. It also refers to some examples of existing projects, programmes and good practices related to green transition in the urban industrial space.

Green Transition in Urban and Peri-Urban Spaces

The EcoCore topic of green transition in industrial spaces encompasses a broad spectrum of concepts and activities from the perspective of city councils and their strategic partners. It considers:

- the role of municipalities in promoting the green industrial transition itself, and
- how we harness the transition to better integrate industry within society and the environment through shared value opportunities, improved ecosystems and urban fabric and innovative pathways for sustainable place-making.

The green industrial transition refers to a worldwide movement towards more sustainable and eco-friendly industrial practices. It aims to move away from traditional resource-heavy and polluting industrial processes to cleaner and more sustainable, efficient and smart alternatives. It also involves a shift in consumer behaviour towards more sustainable products and services.

The ultimate objective is to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, address climate change, limit environmental damage, and encourage the efficient utilization of resources. The goal is to create a more sustainable economy that benefits both people and the planet.

How cities benefit from and encourage this transition depends greatly on the role they play. Some cities will take a relatively passive, ad hoc or reactionary role. Others will proactively become key strategic players in shaping how this transition interacts with and impacts the wider urban and peri-urban landscape – socially, economically and environmentally.

Well-planned industrial and economic spaces can be critical in helping cities to meet their own economic, environmental and social goals. Such interventions include:

Eco Industrial Parks

Typically concentrate on greening production processes while using shared infrastructure and symbiotic production processes to minimise waste and emissions. Such parks can significantly reduce the economic and environmental effects of industry by situating businesses around shared infrastructure relating to transportation, power, and waste treatment. In addition, they can deliver cost savings and promote a circular economy within a zone, integrating value chains through industrial symbiosis**.** Examples include Händelö Park outside Norrköping, Sweden**.** Händelö Eco-Industrial Park showcases world-leading industrial symbiosis between industry and city. Excess resources are used in a synergetic network of actors including a district heating system for businesses and industry.

Low Carbon Zones

These are 'distinguished by their role as test beds for experimental green policies.'[1] Low carbon zones make use of sustainable infrastructure, promote the testing of new policies, and support investment and information transfer that is geared towards reducing global warming. 'LCZs result in improved reputation and positioning in the global marketplace for both the zone authorities and the individual enterprises, allowing them to offer a differentiated value proposition to would-be investors and customers.'[2]

A good practice example can be found in the municipality of Rubí, Catalonia through the Rubí Brilla initiative which saw the council establish a target to reduce 20% of greenhouse emissions, with a focus on industry (responsible for 40% of the city's emissions). This was done by introducing a new action plan in which the main targets were to increase the number of PV installations within the industrial park rooftops, with the support of a "shared- energy" advisor. They later introduced rules and regulations promoting energy sharing between industries and focussed on reducing transport emissions and improving waste management practices. Other steps included the introduction of energy efficiency criteria within the industrial park.

[1]VividEconomics: Green Economic Zones as a Catalyst for Regional Sustainable Development Green-Economic-Zone_8bRZ.pdf (vivideconomics.com)
[2] World Bank Group (2014) Low-Carbon Zones: A Practitioner's Handbook World Bank Document

Green Industrial Clusters

Focus on supporting the development of green product supply chains. Built on the foundations of collaboration and coopetition (collaboration between competitors for mutual benefit), the cluster concept was popularised by Michael Porter in his publication 'The Competitive Advantage of Nations ' in 1990. It is broadly recognised as a valuable economic tool for individual companies, for industrial sectors and for regional development and national competitiveness. The use and integration of this tool within national and regional policy varies from country to country with varying degrees of success. The Basque country is well recognised for its efficiency in cluster policy and its environment cluster - Aclima focusses on supporting eco-industry and environmental services to promote innovation and more sustainable value chains.

In their efforts to promote the development of a sustainable and innovative industrial sector that benefits both city and business, cities can develop strategies that focus on combining different types of zones to deliver on local strategic objectives.

Local and national contexts including smart specialisation strategies, cluster policies, investment programmes, budgets, incentives, as well as regulations, standards and targets will all determine which types or mix of initiatives are appropriate to develop and when.

Eco-industrial parks can provide short term impact by optimising the use of investments and resource reserves and tapping into logistics infrastructure for the more efficient production of industrial goods while minimizing environmental impact. In the medium term, low-carbon zones can facilitate economic diversification by concentrating efforts and policies on the production of low-carbon products and services. In the longer term, green industrial cluster can play a crucial role in supporting various sectors and coordinating regional resources to deliver environmentally friendly products to the global supply chain.

Regardless of a city's chosen support pathway, by embracing the green industrial transition, cities and businesses can position themselves as front-running innovators, in the global effort to combat climate change and create a more sustainable future while offering a high-quality, attractive living and working environment for residents.

Strategic Challenges

While the benefits of transitioning towards green industrialisation is clear for both citizens and businesses, it is a seismic shift and not without its challenges. Cities wishing to promote, accelerate and capitalise on this shift must identify their role in overcoming these complex challenges. Cities must consider their role and what actions they can take to address some of the following challenges.

1

Development and deployment of green technologies

Significant investment is required in research and development to create innovative solutions for clean energy, resource efficiency, waste management, and sustainable production processes. The transition requires significant advancements in areas such as renewable energy, energy storage, carbon capture and storage, and sustainable materials.

2

Cost and Financing

Green technologies and infrastructure often require substantial upfront investments, and the cost of transitioning to sustainable practices can be a barrier for many industries, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Access to affordable financing options and incentives is crucial to facilitate the adoption of green technologies and practices.

3

Policy, Regulation and Vision

A clear place-based vision, along with supportive policy frameworks are essential for driving the green industrial transition. Cities need to establish robust regulations, standards, and incentives that encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices.

4

Strong Operational Governance

Is vital for successful green industrial policy. Cities should consider how they can adopt multi-level partnerships to address coordination among the many different types of stakeholders, policy governance areas, instruments and projects, and to coordinate across different geographical layers to address systemic and strategic change.

5

Infrastructure Development

Transitioning to a green economy requires the development of new infrastructure, such as renewable energy generation facilities, charging stations for electric vehicles, cycling & walking infrastructure, and recycling and waste management systems. The construction and integration of this can pose challenges in terms of planning, investment, and coordination.

6

Skills Pipeline

The transition will lead to changes in job profiles and skills requirements. Between 35% and 40% of all jobs could be affected. Some traditional jobs may become obsolete, while new jobs will emerge e.g. energy manufacturing jobs are expected to double between now and 2030. Ensuring a smooth transition for the workforce through reskilling and retraining programs is crucial to prevent job displacement, promote inclusive growth and ensure nobody is left behind. What future skills will be required in a green economy, and how can we inclusively equip our citizens with them, both now and in the future?

7

Sustainable Supply Chains

Green industrial transition involves reconfiguring supply chains and value chains to incorporate sustainable practices and reduce carbon emissions throughout the entire life cycle of products. This requires collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and consumers.

8

Consumer awareness, demand and behavioural change

The successful transition to a green industrial sector relies on consumer awareness and demand for sustainable products and services. Educating and informing consumers about the environmental impact of their choices and fostering a shift towards more sustainable consumption patterns is essential.

9

Co-operation beyond borders

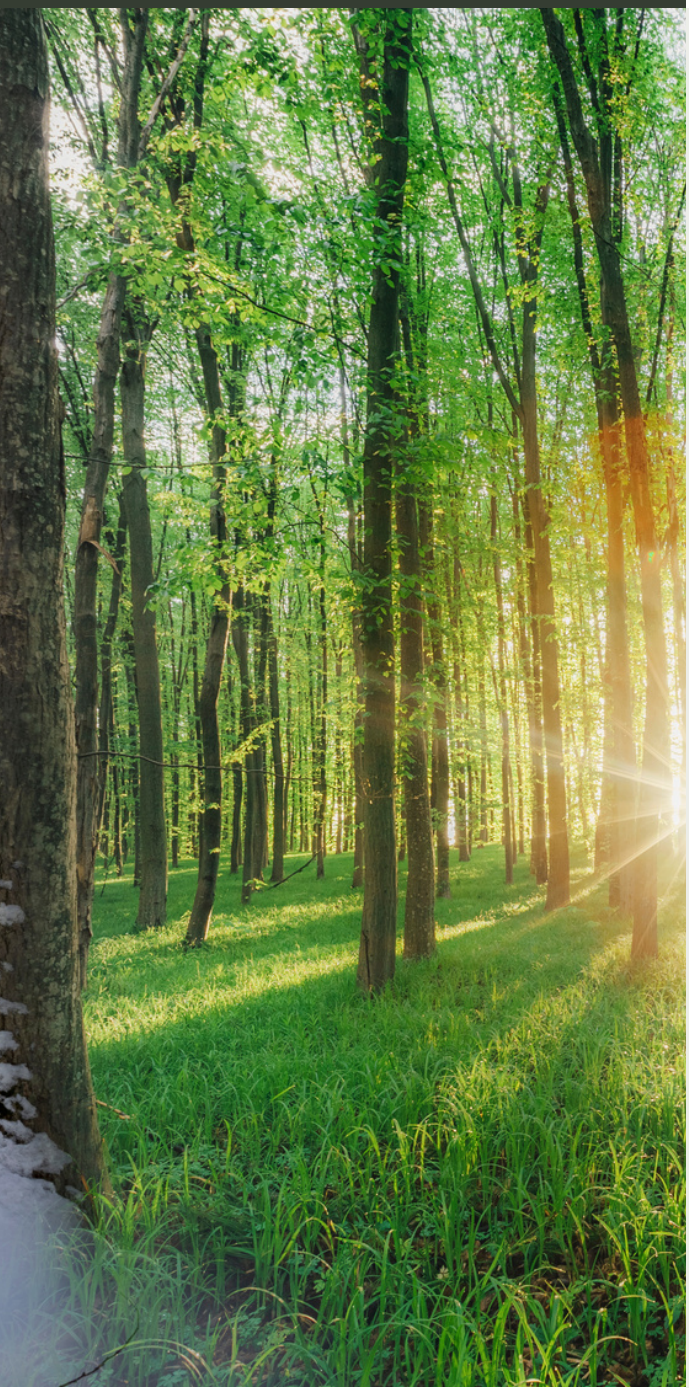
'The EU produces less than 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions'[3]. Addressing climate change and achieving sustainable development goals thus requires widespread cross-border cooperation and coordination. Regions and countries need to work together to share best practices, transfer green technologies, and provide support to developing nations in their green industrial transition.

[3] Bruegel (2020) A green industrial policy for Europe Bruegel_Blueprint_31_Complete_151220.pdf

These challenges highlight the complexity and multifaceted nature of the green industrial transition. Overcoming them will require a combination of technological advancements, supportive policies, financial incentives, collaboration among stakeholders, and a proactive approach from both the public and private sectors.

EU Policy Framework

The European Union (EU) has been at the forefront of promoting sustainable development and addressing the challenges of climate change. As part of its commitment to a greener future, the EU has implemented a comprehensive policy framework for green industrial transition with the following key strategic aims.



Strategic Aims

1. Decarbonization: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

2. Resource Efficiency: Promoting the efficient use of resources and minimizing waste generation.

3. Circular Economy: Encouraging the reuse, recycling, and recovery of materials to create a closed-loop system.

4. Innovation and Competitiveness: Driving innovation in green technologies and fostering the competitiveness of European industries in the global market

Key EU Policies

There are several high-level strategic European policies that seek to accelerate green industrial transition across Europe. The aims and objectives of EcoCore seek to implement these policy objectives on the ground in partner cities.

The European Green Deal

Sets the overarching vision and roadmap for the EU's transition to a climate-neutral and sustainable economy and aims to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. It encompasses various policy initiatives targeting sectors such as energy, transport, agriculture, and industry.

EcoCore is inspired by the EU's Green Deal. It will contribute to the significant collective effort needed in all 27 member states to reduce GHG emissions to at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2030. The project will also promote at city level the EU's target of a minimum of 40% renewable sources in the EU's energy mix by 2030.

The European Green Deal Industrial Plan (Feb 2023)

Is an addition to the European Green Deal and aims to support European industry in enabling a net-zero transition and accelerate decarbonisation by scaling up clean-tech manufacturing.

The plan is based on four complementary pillars namely a predictable and simplified regulatory environment, faster access to funding, enhanced skills and open trade and resilient supply chains. It aims to have 40% of its green technology homegrown by 2030.It identifies eight strategic sectors namely: solar, wind, batteries, heat pumps and geothermal energy, electrolysers to produce hydrogen, sustainable biogas and biomethane, carbon capture and storage, and power grids.

The Circular Economy Action Plan

Aims to promote a circular economy by improving product design, promoting recycling and reuse, and reducing waste generation. It includes measures to address specific sectors, including electronics, plastics, and textiles.

The Clean Energy Package

Promotes the use of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, and smart grid technologies. It includes targets for renewable energy deployment, energy efficiency improvements, and the development of a European electricity market.

The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)

Entered into force in January 2023. It introduces mandatory reporting standards for businesses (>500 staff by 2024, >250 staff by 2025, SMEs by 2026). Companies will have to disclose the impacts they may have on climate & society. They will have to provide information on their value chain. This means that while smaller companies are not directly within the scope of the directive, they may need to provide information to larger companies in due course if they are part of the value chain. They will have to report on 2 cross-cutting standards, 5 environmental, 4 social, 1 governance. Research shows that up to half of investors are looking to increase their investments in companies with strong ESG (environmental, social, governance) performance within the next three years.

The EU Strategy on Hydrogen

Adopted in 2020, it suggested policy action points in five areas, namely: investment support; support production and demand; creating a hydrogen market and infrastructure; research and cooperation and international cooperation

The European Industrial Strategy (2021)

Aims to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of European industries. It focuses on key areas such as digitalization, innovation, and the transition to a green and digital economy. It intends to tackle strategic dependencies and boost resilience across key strategic areas.

The EU SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe

Aims to contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal, the Digital Decade, and other EU actions launched in the context of the twin digital and green transition, namely achieving a climate-neutral, resource-efficient, and agile digital economy, by mobilising European small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) across industrial sectors. It is based on three main pillars including capacity building and support for the transition to sustainability and digitalisation, reducing regulatory burden and improving market access and improving access to finance.

The Zero Pollution Action Plan (May 2021)

Set's out the objective that by 2050 air, water and soil pollution shall be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems, that respect the boundaries of the planet. The action plan aims to strengthen the EU green, digital and economic leadership, whilst creating a healthier, socially fairer Europe and planet. It provides a compass to mainstream pollution prevention in all relevant EU policies, to step up implementation of the relevant EU legislation and to identify possible gaps.

The European Skills Agenda (2020)

A five-year plan to help individuals and businesses develop more and better skills and to put them to use, by: strengthening sustainable competitiveness, as set out in the European Green Deal; ensuring social fairness, putting into practice the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights: access to education, training and lifelong learning for everybody, everywhere in the EU building resilience to react to crises, based on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic

The EU Gender Equality Strategy

Aims to achieve a Union of Equality. The Strategy presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 towards a gender-equal Europe. The goal is a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society.

The Fit for 55 Package (July 2021)

Aims to revise EU legislation to ensure EU policies align with climate goals and EU targets of reducing net GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030. It seeks to ensure a just and socially fair transition; maintain and strengthen innovation and competitiveness of EU industry and underpins the EU's position as leading the global fight against climate change

Related EU Projects

There are a wide variety of EU-funded projects, past and present tackling issues related to EcoCore. Funding for related projects span multiple EU funding programmes and initiatives including European Transnational Cooperation programmes (e.g. Interreg, URBACT), ERASMUS+, Horizon Europe and EUI. Here follows a small sample of such projects.

Interreg Europe RESINDUSTRY

Aims to increase the energy independency of the EU industry sector, by decreasing its energy intensity through a higher integration of RES. The long-term objective is to increase the industry competitiveness by decreasing its energy bill, rising their energy independency, thus uncoupling their energy costs from geopolitical externalities. (Check out good practices RUBI Circular industry – first energy coop established within an industrial park)

Interreg Europe SKYLA (Smart Specialisation Skills Ecosystems for the Twin Transition)
Includes EcoCore lead partner Fingal County Council and aims to support public authorities in putting future skills at the centre of the twin transitions for a smarter, more resilient development, by boosting and adapting the role of VET in innovation ecosystems and smart specialisation strategies

Interreg Alpine Space ECOLE (ECO Industrial park network for the Alpine Regions leveraging smart and circular economy):

Aims to accelerate the transition to a circular and resource-efficient industry in the Alps by establishing a systemic thinking community model, including policy recommendations as well as action plans prepared by local communities to integrate circular economy in their local industrial sites. ECOLE will contribute to transforming industrial parks in the Alps into more circular, resilient and sustainable eco-industrial parks, better prepared to face climate and economic crises.

Interreg Europe TRIS (Transition Regions towards Industrial Symbiosis)

Aims to help policymakers enable systemic uptake of industrial symbiosis in SMEs thereby increasing competitiveness.

Interreg Europe REC4EU

Is the first territorial cooperation project facilitating the uptake of Renewable Energy Communities (RECs), since the new common EU legislative framework (EU2018/2001 REDII) has been in place and transposed at Member State level. With RECs, production, supply, distribution, sharing and consumption of renewable energy is carried out collectively by citizens, often partnering with SMEs and public authorities.

RECs can help move from a centralised to a decentralised energy production system, make better use of renewables, reduce energy costs and dependency from abroad and enhance citizen involvement in a prosumer role. By increasing use of renewables, REC4EU contributes to the greener, low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy EU Cohesion objective.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region GreenIndustrialAreas

Empowers public authorities to increase the share of smart and climate-neutral industrial areas and co-develop a transnational certification standard. Partners aim to compile their expertise and knowledge in a toolbox for industrial areas to become smart and climate-neutral and a transnational standard for the certification of green industrial areas aiming for climate-neutrality. These outputs represent approaches that any BSR public authority can apply to trigger investments and to frame their own instruments to accelerate the decarbonisation of industrial activities while honouring frontrunners with a quality label.

Urban Innovative Actions SPIRE (Smart Post-Industrial Regenerative Ecosystem)

Baia Mare, Romania, seeks to reincorporate the city's highly polluted brownfield sites into its productive urban fabric, combining a decontamination plan using nature-based solutions with a strategic perspective. The project combines a decontamination plan using nature-based solutions with a strategic perspective in the form of a new urban economic development model incorporating a new understanding and use of urban resources.

Horizon 2020 NetZeroCities

Aims to help cities overcome the current structural, institutional and cultural barriers they face in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. The project supports the EU's Mission of "100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030". It helps European cities by providing them with the support and solutions they need to achieve their Net Zero goal in a socially inclusive way.

Horizon 2020 STAGE (Sustainable Transition to the Agile and Green Enterprise)

Provides a platform for collaboration between industry players in sustainability reporting and investment readiness support. The STAGE project focuses on transforming companies into agile and green leaders of the European economy.

Norway grants: Climate change mitigation and adaptation: Studio of Circular Economy.

StudioKroG is a pilot project based focussed on promoting socially responsible activities in support of the green transition. Activities focus on establishing new "competitiveness" in society and local communities regarding how to live and create while minimizing resource consumption. The investment is demonstrating the importance of reuse and the circular economy both during the implementation of the project and after its completion. It seeks to provide practical evidence of the importance of circular economy, so as to increase people's faith in climate change management.

Contribution to the SDGs

EcoCore reflects on both the green and digital transitions and seeks to ensure that nobody is left behind. It supports the broad implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with a particular focus on SDG 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 17.

Related EU Networks & Initiatives

There are a wide array of active local, national and transnational networks which relate to the activities of EcoCore. Here follows a small selection of these:

EU Mission of 100 Climate-Neutral Cities by 2030

By and for the citizens, this initiative aims at supporting, promoting and showcasing 100 European cities in their systemic transformations to climate neutrality by 2030, and turning these cities into innovation hubs.

EU Mission on the New European Bauhaus

The EU has proposed a sixth Horizon Europe Mission dedicated entirely to the New European Bauhaus (NEB). With a focus on research and innovation solutions, the proposed NEB mission will seek to transform neighbourhoods across Europe for the better, making them beautiful, sustainable and inclusive. These neighbourhoods should act as ‘living labs’ for innovation. EcoCore can explore how shared value opportunities between green industrial transition and NEB aligned projects in the urban and peri-urban space.

ACR+ Association of Cities & Regions for Sustainable Resource

Is an international network of cities and regions sharing the aim of promoting sustainable resource management & accelerating the transition towards a circular economy on their territories and beyond. The network launched a specific initiative dedicated to Circular Economy Planning for cities and regions called the Circular Europe Network. Circular Europe Network builds on the expertise of European front runners within the ACR+ network in order to gather, analyse and exchange information on efficient circular economy strategies implemented by cities and regions.

The Civitas Initiative

A network of >300 members that works to make sustainable and smart urban mobility a reality for all. Its focus areas include behavioural change and mobility management, demand and urban space management, integrated and inclusive planning, smart, sustainable, connected and shared mobility, as well as urban logistics and more.

European Clean Hydrogen Alliance was

It was launched alongside the EU hydrogen strategy in 2020 as part of the new industrial strategy for the EU. It brings together industry, national and local authorities, civil society and other stakeholders. It aims to achieve an ambitious deployment of hydrogen technologies by 2030 by bringing together renewable and low-carbon hydrogen production, demand in industry, transport and other sectors, and hydrogen transmission and distribution.

C40 Cities – Waste to Resources Network

Created and led by cities, C40 is focused on tackling climate change and driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while increasing the health, wellbeing and economic opportunities of urban citizens. C40 has multiple initiatives including the Waste to Resources Network which supports cities to accelerate the transition Towards Zero Waste, reducing waste generation and increasing diversion from landfill and incineration, through regenerative and circular economy principles.

Urban Agenda for the EU

Addresses city challenges through partnerships between the Commission, EU organisations, national governments, city authorities and other stakeholders. Together they develop action plans to: improve existing regulation with regard to urban areas and urban challenges; support and improve innovative and user-friendly sources of funding for urban areas; share and develop knowledge (data, studies, good practices). Relevant EcoCore partnerships include those on air quality, circular economy, digital transition, energy transition, including of migrants and refugees, innovative and responsible public procurement, jobs and skills in the local economy, sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions and urban mobility.

Partner Profiles

The following section showcases each of the partner cities from an EcoCore perspective. They were compiled using both quantitative data gathered from each of the partners, lead expert observations, as well as qualitative data gathered from project teams and stakeholders during the city visits by the lead partner and the lead expert.

Balbriggan

Urban Area Dubrovnik

Ormož

Alba Iulia

Ķekava

Santo Tirso

Pärnu

Villena

Tuusula

Balbriggan

Balbriggan

EcoCore lead partner Fingal County Council will focus their action planning activities on the coastal town of Balbriggan, 32km north of the capital city, Dublin and located along the M1 transport corridor connecting Dublin to Belfast (Northern Ireland's capital city in the UK).

With 27,300 people, Balbriggan is young, diverse and fast-growing. The average age of the population is 30.8 years. 28% of people were born outside of Ireland and the population has grown by 194% in the last 20 years. It is a commuter town of Dublin, with a jobs ratio of 0.4 (no. of jobs per working population). Classified as relatively disadvantaged it has access barriers to education and employment.

Strategically located in the Dublin Belfast Corridor, the major economic corridor on the island of Ireland, it is close to big logistics hubs. It sits just north of Dublin International Airport with a 2022 throughput of 28.1 million passengers. It is also close to Dublin Port with a 2022 throughput of 36.7 million gross tonnes and 7,473 ship arrivals. To the north of Balbriggan off the Dublin – Belfast M1 motorway is the commercial port of Drogheda Ahandling over 1 million tonnes of freight cargo and containers annually.

Credit: Fingal County Council

Policy Framework

Embarking on a journey towards sustainability, Fingal County Council is actively engaged in EU projects and partnerships, including URBACT, Interreg, Horizon, and CERV. The council's dedication towards circularity is evident through the signing of the Circular Cities Declaration and the preparation of an action plan that aligns with the Climate Action Plan and Sustainable Fingal Initiative. Recognized as leaders in developing future talent pipelines, the council has been working to address current and future skills gaps through the Fingal Skills Strategy and the Green Skills Committee.

As part of the Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan, the council has developed Public Realm and Active Travel Strategies, providing valuable data on how people move around the town and highlighting best practices for sustainable travel. The project team will use this to inform thinking on the future sustainable development of the industrial lands. The presence of the Director of the Active Travel Section on the ULG will ensure that these measures are incorporated into the planning and development of the industrial lands.

The council is also part of the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC), which aims to promote economic development of the region and to encourage investment and job creation in the economic corridor. DBEC is a regional collaboration and includes universities in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. DBEC has developed a profile of the economic corridor and promotes regional economic development and collaboration between partners. A DBEC feasibility study on innovation hubs in the region will inform this project. The involvement of DBEC staff in the ULG will help disseminate best practice lessons throughout the region.

In line with Ireland's national strategic planning framework EcoCore seeks to support the achievement of carbon reduction targets through the designation of Balbriggan as a Decarbonising Zone and expand sustainable transport linked to economic activity in the industrial areas of Balbriggan (heavily influenced by the Dublin-Belfast Corridor). One of Ireland’s youngest and most diverse towns, it also seeks to support the implementation of policy objectives relating to diversity and inclusion as outlined in the municipality’s Migrant Integration & Social Cohesion Strategy.

Key Policies

The following is a list of some EcoCore relevant key policy documents within the multi-level Irish planning policy framework.

National

- **Project Ireland 2040**
- **National Smart Specialisation Strategy for Innovation 2022-2027**

Regional

- **Dublin Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024**
- **Eastern & Midlands Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES)**
- **Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022 – 2024**

Local

- **Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan 2019 – 2025**
- **Fingal Climate Action Plan**
- **Fingal Active Travel Strategy**
- **Fingal Digital Strategy (2020 - 2023) Smart Balbriggan**
- **Migrant Integration & Social Cohesion Strategy 2019 - 2024**
- **Fingal Skills Strategy**
- **Fingal Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP)**
- **Fingal Economic Development Plan**

Potential IAP focus


Credit: Fingal County Council

EcoCore activities will focus specifically on Balbriggan's Stephenstown Industrial Estate (c. 70 ha) which is close to the M1 motorway and owned by Fingal County Council (FCC). Engineers & planning consultants are currently engaged (2023) for the master planning of the industrial area. New land acquisitions are almost complete and the team is commencing work on the design and construction of the necessary road infrastructure to bring general employment and high technology-zoned lands to market with the aim of promoting local employment and stimulating the local economy in a sustainable and inclusive way.

The IAP will focus on informing the Stephenstown Industrial Estate masterplan and harnessing shared value opportunities for the wider integrated sustainable development of Balbriggan from a social, economic and environmental perspective. Taking into account land acquisitions currently under negotiation, the Stephenstown landbank will incorporate approximately 150 acres of commercial land which represents a considerable strategic development opportunity for the town.

Through an integrated approach the IAP will seek to address local demographic challenges by launching new initiatives to grow the local economy in a low-carbon and sustainable way in accordance with the EU's Green Deal. This will be especially challenging for Balbriggan, one of Ireland's youngest, most diverse and fastest-growing towns, situated in a transport corridor that produces high levels of GHG emissions. Another challenge will be to support existing businesses in Balbriggan to switch to more sustainable energy sources and practices and to harness regional strategic industrial development opportunities in a sustainable and future-focused way.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Existing stakeholder networks
- Strategic location in Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, coastal with access to future renewable energy sources
- Council-owned lands in strategic transport corridor (proximity to port, airport, M1 with rail connectivity)
- Existing local strategies e.g. active travel, skills strategy, rejuvenation plan
- Young population & diverse human resource potential
- Diversity (people, place)

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of sufficiently zoned land to attract diverse businesses
- Lack of future focussed industrial development plan for Council lands
- Competition & lack of co-operation in DBEC for a whole package approach
- Lack of 3rd level attainment locally
- Knowledge gap – to identify industrial sector opportunities to inform strategy development
- Lack of 3rd level facilities for the town's young population

OPPORTUNITIES

- Branding & Marketing strategy
- Evolving cultural offering
- Build on existing sectors e.g. agrifood
- 4 national ministers in Fingal
- Harness blue economy
- Development of a green industrial hub & regional strategic framing
- Remote working including hubs
- Diverse green jobs
- Renewable energy
- Magnetism (people, business)
- Brexit (business relocation)
- Education (e.g. satellite campus, apprenticeships etc).
- Shared value via industrial aftercare

THREATS

- Lack of housing & affordability
- Economic vulnerability
- Quality of life offering & lack of night time economy
- Infrastructure upgrades
- Funding: lack of it and/or systematic capacity to process & spend it
- Attractive & affordable childcare
- Lack of green industrial plan with clear tasks & strategic partners
- Lack of vertical integration (support at regional & national level)
- Fragmented placemaking
- Political change (elections)
- Planning & regulatory barriers

URBACT Local Group

An experienced URBACT partner, Fingal County Council has established a core URBACT Local Group (ULG) with 17 members. The core group includes local political representatives, business, strategic development and university representatives as well as staff from various departments within the Council (property development, regeneration, smart/digital, climate and active travel).

The first ULG meeting took place on 25th July 2023 during the Lead Expert's visit. A follow-up ULG meeting is anticipated in October 2023 with a minimum of one ULG meeting to be held between each transnational meeting thereafter to ensure effective learning flow between the transnational and local levels and vice versa.

For broad and diverse participation, the team plan a series of targeted public participation events including visioning initiative targeting local teenagers in partnership with second-level schools, as well as a world-café event or hackathon targeting citizens and college students in partnership with the Smart Balbriggan Team.

The project team will harness opportunities to seek input from existing local initiatives including the Fingal Enterprising Women's Network which operates across the whole of Fingal and runs regular events with recent attendance levels of 140 female entrepreneurs. It provides a wide range of mentoring, business, training and grants support for start-ups and entrepreneurs.

URBACT Local Group

The project team will also engage with the following key stakeholders in the town at various points in the action-planning process:

Credit: Fingal County Council

1 Empower is a local development company that runs the SICAP Programme (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme) in the municipality, promotes equal access to training and development and particularly targets disadvantaged cohorts.

2 The Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan has a Local Economy Pillar which is independently chaired and comprises key local stakeholders in the town. The project team will engage with the Pillar Group at their quarterly meetings on this project.

3 The Fingal Skills Strategy Team has an Education, Training & Skills Pillar which comprises key local education stakeholders. The project team will engage with the Pillar Group at quarterly meetings and liaise with the Our Balbriggan Programme Office to engage with local schools gaining insights from young people.

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Branding & Marketing
- Leveraging (strategic) & embedding renewable energy (local)
- Supporting business to implement changes in energy sources, biodiversity and mobility (awareness raising & behaviour change)
- How to incorporate sustainability (NBS, circularity, energy, transport) in new & existing industrial developments (planning & regulation)
- Promoting industrial collaboration
- Encouraging regional cooperation & leveraging strategic location opportunities including blue economy opportunities
- Matching local skills with local employment
- Harnessing shared value opportunities to support quality of life and citizen wellbeing

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Accessing funding for the IAP
- Governance Models for Strategic industrial corridors including cross border
- ULG evolution and coordination
- Digital Twin as a powerful planning & citizen engagement tool
- Public engagement and community led-local development
- Facilitating engagement between industry and education/training providers
- Reducing car dependency and promoting behavioural change for sustainable transport measures
- Regional collaboration and accessing funding for regional opportunities

UA Dubrovnik

Urban Area of Dubrovnik

The population of the Urban Area of Dubrovnik is 60,510. This functional urban area includes the City of Dubrovnik and the municipalities of Dubrovačko Primorje, Konavle, and Župa Dubrovačka, incorporating 102 settlements.

The old city of Dubrovnik, is part of UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage. In 2019, tourism in Dubrovnik-Neretva County contributed 3.2% to Croatia's GDP. The county's average unemployment rate is 8.9%, with a large range of maximum and minimum unemployment due to seasonal employment and fixed-term work for tourism, which mainly occurs in summer.

Dubrovnik is geographically isolated due to its southern location in Croatia and enclosure by the Dinaric Alps and Adriatic Sea. It has limited space for development and transportation is a major challenge with a single entry and exit road causing heavy congestion and delays. A highway construction along the Dalmatian coast is planned in the coming years.

The economic situation in UA Dubrovnik is challenging. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the city's vulnerability due to over-reliance on tourism, which has bounced back but with no signs of the necessary economic diversification. Tourism has also driven up the cost of living along with inflation and the transition to the Euro, resulting in economic challenges for local residents.

A popular cruise tourism destination, the Port Authority strives to increase sustainability and has switched entirely to an LED, remotely operated smart lighting system, reducing lighting costs by 50%. They have also introduced a fleet of e-cars and bikes for passenger and staff transportation and hope to install onshore power infrastructure for e-vessels. A retrofit of the port building is also imminent.

Policy Framework

The Urban dimension of the EU Cohesion Policy guides the City of Dubrovnik. The city strives to implement the objectives of a smarter, greener, connected, social Europe, and Europe closer to citizens in all its documents and policies for the benefit of the population and to guide future urban development.

The Dubrovnik Urban Area Development Strategy for example is aligned with strategic documents adopted at the level of the European Union. Therefore, the goals and related measures and activities comply with the European Green Deal and its priorities such as economic sustainability, sustainable transport, green building sectors, and climate neutrality.

The city and its key stakeholders have benefitted greatly from EU funding in recent years and are highly experienced partners in EU projects.[4] URBACT is one of the many ways in which the City of Dubrovnik implements a Sustainable Urban Development policy. They have participated previously in four networks namely Second Chance, Tech Town, Active NGO, and Tourism Friendly Cities, and currently lead the REMOTE-IT network which they hope to synergise with the work of EcoCore.

The city of Dubrovnik is a member of several European Networks including Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), Europa Nostra, the Organisation of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), Lighting Urban Community International (LUCI) – the international network of cities on urban lighting, as well as Forum on Adriatic and Ionian Cities and MEDCITIES which provides a voice for Mediterranean local authorities and focusses on capacity building for sustainable local development.

[4] A sample list of previous EU projects in Dubrovnik is provided in the annex.

Key Policies

The following is a list of some EcoCore relevant key policy documents at national, regional and local levels.

National

- National Development Strategy 2030
- Digital Croatia 2020
- National Strategy for Gender Equality (2011-2015)
- Smart Specialisation Strategy 2023 -2029
- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2040 -2070
- National Low-Carbon Development Strategy 2030 - 2050
- Industrial Transition Plan of the Adriatic Croatia
- National Action Plan for Green Skills Development (energy & earthquake renovation)

Regional

- The Development Plan of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County until 2027
- The Dubrovnik Urban Area Development Strategy 2021-2027

Local

- The Action Plan for Energy Sustainable Development & Climate Change (SECAP) of the City of Dubrovnik
- Strategy for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities of the City of Dubrovnik 2021 - 2025
- Management Plan for UNESCO World Heritage site “The Old City of Dubrovnik
- Local Action Plan for Integrated and Sustainable Tourism
- The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan

Potential IAP focus

The IAP will promote a greener low-carbon economic diversification of the Dubrovnik Urban Area to tackle some of the key challenges identified, such as over-reliance on seasonal tourism with a too narrow focus on the old town, high cost of living and lack of sustainable transportation options. Work will focus on brownfield areas with the potential to improve the economic, ecological, and social environment of the UA by green businesses reusing unused areas as part of the goal to diversify the local economy.

EcoCore will seek to synergise with some parallel initiatives including the URBACT REMOTE-IT network which focuses on proactive policy-making for remote and hybrid work. It will also synergise with the revitalisation of the 'TUP' Carbon Graphite and Electrical Contact Products Factory into a new urban cultural and social incubator. The TUP will be a vibrant multifunctional incubator for sustainable transformation focussed on cultural and creative activities, education, tourism, and collaborative coworking.

Located in the port district it can act as a think-and-do tank to develop and incubate new (green) business ideas and related strategic planning regulations. A space for collaboration and cohesion it will showcase small-scale decarbonisation initiatives that can be scaled up across the urban area.

Some potential challenges which could be addressed include:

-How to diversify the tourism offering beyond the city walls and into the rural areas
-How to promote more high-value tourism
-How to improve awareness of the green port initiatives
-How to diversify the economy beyond tourism towards more green business
-How to regulate to ensure any new business developed is a sustainable business?
-How can existing businesses be supported towards more sustainable practices?
-How can the port support more diverse, reliable, and sustainable transport modes?
-How can owners of smaller day-tripping boats be better informed & regulated towards more sustainable practices?

The SRUP (Urban Area Development Strategy) will serve as a basis for guiding actions to be included in the IAP, thus ensuring that the project is aligned with plans and goals at the regional and national level.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Safety & Security – low crime rate
- Attractive tourism destination
- Rich cultural heritage
- Good air & water quality
- High quality environment and nature
- Open & welcoming culture
- Attractive & clean public space
- University city
- Geographic location
- Pleasant climate
- Worldwide recognition

WEAKNESSES

- Space constraints
- High cost of living
- Limited road infrastructure
- Seasonal tourism industry
- Traffic congestion & car dependency
- Lack of mobility infrastructure
- Lack of synergy & collaboration between various bodies responsible for e.g., tourism
- Depopulation
- Lack of capacity in electricity grid

OPPORTUNITIES

- Collaboration for efficiency, innovation and enterprise development
- Wine & Gastronomy Destination
- Off season offering
- TUP Factory
- Renewable Energy Generation
- Rural Development & islands
- Agri Tourism
- Young people & new skills
- Remote working location
- Film, audio visual & gaming industry

THREATS

- Bureaucracy
- Economic Structure Vulnerability
- Property Speculation
- Air B & B
- Competition: neighbouring countries
- Low wages
- Taxi market deregulation
- Gentrification
- Mass tourism
- Climate Change & Earthquakes
- Geopolitical insecurity & Pandemics
- Poor migrant integration

URBACT Local Group

The core ULG consists of 10 stakeholders and includes representatives from the public, private, and academic sectors across the Urban Area of Dubrovnik.

The first ULG meeting took place during the Lead Expert and Lead Partner city visit on 14th September. There were 11 stakeholders in attendance with representation from the Dubrovnik airport, the City of Dubrovnik Tourism Board, the Municipality of Konavle, and the Croatian Chamber of Commerce among others. The next ULG meeting will be organized as soon as the ULG coordinator is elected through the public procurement procedure, no later than December 2023.

The project team will plan a minimum of one ULG meeting after each transnational meeting in 2024 and 2025. If necessary ULG meetings will also be held in advance of transnational meetings.

A hackathon is also envisaged in 2024 or early in 2025 with the aim of further expanding stakeholder engagement. The exact format and topics to be addressed will be discussed and decided by the ULG stakeholders.

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Economic diversification towards greener & more sustainable industry
- Diversifying & expanding the tourism offer in terms of space, time, and resources
- Developing skills pipeline
- Supporting businesses with green transition & boosting CSR
- Reducing car dependency
- Migrant integration

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- TUP & related activities
- Green port initiatives (LEDs & remote app., e-cars & bikes, recycling, e-infrastructure installation, air quality dashboard, collaboration with university etc.)
- Digital mobility solutions e.g., parking app
- Port information service for blind people
- City grants to support women entrepreneurs

Ormož

Ormož

Ormož with 11,800 people is in north-eastern Slovenia, at the junction of the main motorways connecting eastern and south-eastern Europe. Unemployment stands at 3.4% for men and 4.8% for women. A high proportion, 11.6% of the working-age population from Podravje region commutes daily to Austria for higher wages. Its location is picturesque and its natural beauty as well as plentiful vineyards serves as an attraction for tourists. 15,281 overnight stays were recorded in Destination Jerusalem Slovenia in 2022 and the Tourist Information Centre Ormož was visited by 6,175 domestic and foreign visitors.

Home to the Ormož Basins Nature Reserve, nature conservation is important in the area. The Ormož Basins nature reserve sits in the former wastewater basins of the Ormož Sugar Factory. After the sugar factory closed in 2006, nature conservation organization (DOPPS – Bird life Slovenia) and TSO (Ormož Sugar Factory) management proposed the Ormož basins area be converted into a nature reserve which today is a designated Natura 2000 site, of great national and international importance due to the significant number of species breeding there.

Energy efficiency and the knowledge economy are of strategic importance in Ormož. The municipality supports the development of renewable energy sources and the improvement of energy efficiency in public buildings and households. Thanks to the existence of a natural hot water spring, it is exploring the use of geothermal energy to support new local businesses as part of the development of a new 67-hectare business zone located on municipality-owned land in an old clay mine. It is also researching the potential for developing energy communities, where individual areas could be connected to a common solar PV system.

Policy Framework

Slovenia has over 200 municipalities each with its own mayor and municipal council. Officially it follows a decentralised system of government although regional government does not have extensive legislative powers and in practical terms it is felt that central government holds a lot of power. The Leipzig Charter guides the urban-rural balance of the city of Ormož and its region of Podravje, which is reflected in policy documents at national, regional and local level.

National

- **Roadmap towards the Circular Economy in Slovenia**
- **Smart Specialisation Strategy (S4)**
- **National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)**
- **Slovenian Development Strategy**

Regional

- **Regional Development Plan and the Renewable Energy Strategy**

Local

- **Integrated Transport Strategy of the Municipality of Ormož**
- **Strategy for the location and management of business zones in the municipality of Ormož**
- **Digital Strategy (under development)**

Potential IAP focus

The municipality wants to develop an innovative and knowledge-based economy, promoting creativity, education and entrepreneurship. It's business incubator supports entrepreneurship and it cooperates actively with other knowledge institutions. It invests in infrastructure for business zones, to attract new businesses and investors. EcoCore partner RRC Ormož, as a development agency directly works with businesses in the city.

The municipality has started infrastructure development on a new technology park, to attract new businesses and support the local economy. The park is located directly in the business zone and will act as a hub for the Ormož economy. Plans incorporate green technologies, accessibility for the mobility challenged as well as green and blue infrastructure. Development work on the park will finish at the end of 2024.

The IAP will have three key aims. Firstly, it will seek to promote increased collaboration between existing businesses and stakeholders to promote symbiosis, green transition, innovation and up-scaling.

Secondly, it will identify actions to support the sustainable development, maintenance and management of two new green business zones in the city namely the centrally located 3-hectare zone in the short term and the larger 67-hectare landbank in the longer term.

Thirdly it will identify strategic actions to influence the supporting sustainable business environment in Ormož including for example, rail connectivity with surrounding cities, affordable housing, developing the skills pipeline, financial support for the upfront costs of installing renewable and efficient energy solutions, regulatory and bureaucratic barriers.

Ormož wants to become a frontrunner in Slovenia when it comes to the development and management of green business zones. RCC will build on work already undertaken with businesses in its incubation programme.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- High quality natural environment
- Tourism, Gastronomy & wine region
- Education & Development programming for 18 - 25-year-olds
- Free mobility service for elderly
- Family Centre
- Low unemployment
- Sufficient water resources
- Space for industrial development
- Continuing professional development opportunities (adults)
- Safety & Security (low crime)
- High quality of life
- Entrepreneur supports

WEAKNESSES

- Brain Drain
- Ageing Population
- Long spatial planning procedures (5 years)
- Weak electricity network
- Infrequent and few bus connections between rural areas and town centre
- High amount of vacant property in private ownership
- Poor road connections
- Lack of affordable housing
- Poor sports infrastructure rurally
- Centralised system of government
- Gender equality

OPPORTUNITIES

- Green & boutique tourism
- Sports tourism (handball & outdoor)
- New €6 education & training centre planned
- Solar energy production (Ormož has most sunny days per year in Slovenia)
- Better (& more sustainable) public transport
- Circular & Bioeconomy
- Respite & Recuperation Service Sector
- Reopening of train connection between Ormož & Hungary, Croatia
- Green Deal & Green Transition

THREATS

- Ability to provide skills pipeline for industry
- Reliant on imports & vulnerability to global supply chains
- Traditional resistance to change
- Lack of financial resources
- Frequency of political change
- Lack of critical mass
- Deforestation (due to development of transnational gas & electricity lines
- High number of daily commuters to e.g. Austria for higher wages
- Bureaucracy

URBACT Local Group

The ULG consists of a core team pulled from a variety of different stakeholder groups with representatives from the public, private and civil society sectors. At the moment, they do not yet have a representative from the education sector, but they would like to recruit one from the ULG. The first ULG meeting took place on 6th September. A presentation of the project to representatives from the municipality itself as well as to two neighbouring municipalities took place on 30th August. A further ULG meeting was held during the Lead Partner and Lead Expert city visit on 12th & 13th September with the next ULG planned for November to discuss the draft roadmap and share learning from the transnational meeting in Dublin.

Looking ahead the project team plan a minimum of one ULG meeting after each transnational meeting in 2024 and 2025 between 4 and 6 meetings per year, and of course intermediate meetings as needed and as the project develops. At the first meeting of the current ULG, it was decided that the meetings would be held on a rotational basis. So, each meeting will be held once with one of the ULG members, which will help to bring the different stakeholders together more and to create a more relaxed atmosphere.

The project team wants to involve as many representatives of different companies as possible, as well as the general public. They intend to run a series of activities including surveys, a hackathon and public engagement events to achieve this aim. They also want to ensure close connection with the Regional Development Agency, responsible for economic development at regional level which they intend to do through various thematic events that coincide with the project itself, inviting them to join some of the transnational meetings and sharing targeted communication content.

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Supporting businesses with green transition & boosting CSR
- Local Jobs & Skills for the Green & Just Economy
- Improving women's participation in business and the workforce
- Attracting green & sustainable businesses with high-quality jobs
- How to maintain and manage the green business zone once operational
- Green Procurement Criteria
- Collaboration for innovation

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Repurposing a disused clay pit as a new green business zone and its integration with the natural environment
- Using the natural environment to create quality of living destination
- Issues relating to Natura 2000 sites near Green Business Zones – how activities e.g. sustainable mobility impacts these, how to set guidelines for habitat protection
- Transforming old industrial land into Natura 2000 wetlands
- Migrant Integration Programmes (Ormož People's University)
- Social enterprise & employment of people far from the labour market
- Most bee-friendly municipality in Slovenia

Alba Iulia

Alba Iulia

Alba Iulia in the heart of Transylvania, is strategically located in a transport corridor with important rail networks (Bucharest-Budapest) intersecting. It is also at the intersection of two highways under construction, including the pan-European Corridor 4 Bucharest-Nadlac and the Sebeş-Turda highway.

The city is a famous tourist destination with rich cultural heritage assets within the walls of the citadel. It is home to Romania's largest milk and poultry producer and has two major porcelain producers, including one that supplies IKEA. The main industrial area has significant employers in the food, engineering, and construction sectors.

The city’s university campus (1918) has 6,000 students offering studies in computers, law, public administration, economics, history, sport and nursing. Cluj Napoca Technical University also has a campus there. Industries however still face a challenge in finding skilled workers and are recruiting from other countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

The city has the potential to become a 15-minute city due to its compact nature, but it heavily relies on cars with 40,000 cars in a city of 74,000 people. Over 50% of the workforce commute by car, and there are no school buses. The high volume of commercial traffic adds to the traffic problem, noise, and air pollution. Several mobility projects are underway, but the construction work exacerbates the traffic issue.

The municipality of Alba Iulia is taking a strategic approach to address development challenges, including securing funding for the creation of green recreational space and reimagining the city's relationship with its river. The city is committed to driving positive transformations in the future

Policy Framework

The Urban Policy of Romania designed in accordance with the provisions of the New Leipzig Charter and based on the development trajectories of the New Urban Agenda, guides Alba Iulia's Integrated Urban Development Strategy 2021-2030.

The city is part of a number of strategic European initiatives which are relevant to the EcoCore topic including the Covenant of Mayors, Green City Accord, ICLEI and Energy Cities.

Here follows a summary of some key strategic planning documents of relevance to EcoCore.

National

- **The Urban Policy of Romania**

Regional

- **Centru Region Development Strategy for 2021-2027**

Local

- **Alba Iulia Smart City Strategy 2021-2030**
- **Action Plan of Equality 2022-2025**
- **Integrated Urban Mobility Plan**
- **Climate and Energy Action Plan**
- **Bold City vision 2050**
- **Circular Economy Action Plan**

Potential IAP focus

The city has identified 200 hectares of land for industrial development adjacent to an existing industrial zone owned by the neighbouring village Ciugud, where a high percentage% of workers in Alba Iulia commute to daily. 170 hectares of this is privately owned in small plots. However technical planning documents to guide the development of the publicly owned 30 hectares have been published and there is high level of interest from firms wishing to locate there.

A key priority is the installation of infrastructure and utilities to enable the development of this land and avoid the loss of potential investors who are forced to look outside the municipality for industrial development space. A plan is in place to install this infrastructure in partnership with a private automotive company in need of local expansion. Plans include the development of a 1 hectare photovoltaic plant to power the industrial area, built by the municipality with EU funding.

Through the integrated action planning process, stakeholders will define additional actions that promote and align with the green transition such as the greening of this industrial zone, sustainable mobility solutions, as well as softer actions that can support the green transition within the businesses themselves, thereby promoting competitive advantage.

Another challenge to be tackled within the action planning process is to combat the current brain drain trend of young people going to larger university cities such as Sibiu and Cluj Napoca and settling there after their studies. Stakeholders will identify actions to retain and attract talent, ensuring an effective skills pipeline for new and existing businesses.

Potential IAP Focus

A series of mobility projects are underway in the city at present including the construction of 37km of protected cycle ways. It is hoped that these will reduce traffic congestion when complete, however behavioural change programmes as well as extensive measures to incentivise people away from car dependency will be essential to ensure effective modal shift. This will be a key challenge to be tackled in the IAP.

The local university actively seeks to integrate real world societal challenges into their learning programmes. There is an opportunity to increase collaboration between it and both the public and private sectors for mutual benefit. This will be explored within the ULG and may include strategic long term actions to support the development of an effective innovation ecosystem as well as more immediate actions such as common data visualisation and communication projects to promote increased environmental awareness and behavioural change.

Finally the city is home to a number of remarkable and imposing old industrial buildings which could be reimagined to support entrepreneurship and economic development. The EcoCore Project will be an opportunity for local stakeholders in Alba Iulia to gain insights from the initiatives of partners how limited resources can be creatively maximised to transform these spaces.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Strategic transport corridor location
- Economic and administrative centre of significant influence in the region
- Open minded municipality
- Safe and secure location
- Great place to raise families
- Geographically compact
- Smart city pilots
- Eco-mobility projects underway
- City brand attractive for businesses
- Tourism assets
- Small city where stakeholders know each other
- Employment opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- Insufficient green spaces
- High car dependency
- Insufficient city hygiene
- Pollution (noise, air, water)
- Lack of leisure offering for youth
- Lack of cultural offering e.g. theatre
- Lack of community spirit
- Too much bureaucracy
- Lack of sewage and road infrastructure in some areas
- Lack of e-vehicle charging stations
- Lack of attractions to retain youths
- Lack of grid capacity to support prosumers

OPPORTUNITIES

- Potential to be a regional pioneer city in the urban circular economy.
- Becoming destination for major companies investing in Romania
- Space to develop
- Extension of bus lanes
- Increase protected cycle lanes
- Increase collaboration between university and public & private sectors
- Education, awareness & mobility behaviour change
- Develop an innovation ecosystem
- Dual education campus development
- Sustainability education & awareness campaigns
- Green space development

THREATS

- Bureaucracy
- Lack of ambition and faith in possibilities to make positive change
- Traffic jams and lack of alternative traffic routes from main settlements
- No multistorey or underground parking
- Emigration – brain drain
- Regular political and legislative changes
- Over focus on tourism
- Magnetism of bigger Romanian cities
- Unwillingness to adopt more sustainable transport modes.
- Lack of skilled workers

URBACT Local Group

The first ULG meeting took place during the visit by the Lead Partner and Lead Expert on the 9th and 10th October.

A total of 6 stakeholders were in attendance including representatives from various departments within the municipality such as the planning department, the international relations department, the EU funding and economic development department. External stakeholders included the Chamber of Commerce, representatives from a private packaging firm, a large automotive firm, the university, the city's largest retail mall and a representative from the road traffic department of the police.

The ULG composition may be adapted to include relevant stakeholders as the IAP focus evolves. The project team have direct contact with the Mayor who supports the project and in particular the opportunity to transfer some innovative ideas from partner cities with regard to transport and mobility solutions.

The next ULG meeting will take place in early December after the November transnational meeting in Dublin in order to share the roadmap and work plan as well as thematic learning and information gathered during that meeting.

The project team will plan a minimum of one ULG meeting after each transnational meeting in 2024 and 2025. ULG meetings will also be held in advance of transnational meetings when required and to ensure effective stakeholder input into the action planning process.
A hackathon will be planned together with stakeholders in 2024 with the aim of further expanding engagement and participation in the action planning process. The exact format and topics to be addressed will be discussed and decided by the ULG.

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Incentives to promote modal shift away from car dependency
- Initiatives to grow and nurture an effective innovation ecosystem
- Industrial branding & marketing
- Measures to support entrepreneurship
- Strategic lobbying for city projects
- Reimagining old industrial spaces
- Fast tracking industrial infrastructure
- Data visualisation as a communication tool to grow environmental awareness

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Capitalising on strategic European networks and initiatives in support of local policy objectives
- Mapping industrial skills and machinery needs for new dual education campus project
- Student climathon experience
- City branding
- Large firm good practices e.g. Kangoo Pack – packaging reduction solutions, VCST - energy capture and reuse, internal innovation process.
- Digitalisation of the planning system
- Energy poverty mapping
- Sustainable mobility initiatives (e-car charging infrastructure, low taxes and free parking for electric and hybrid cars, e-buses, cycle lanes, school bus etc.)

Ķekava Municipality

Ķekava Municipality

Ķekava town with a population of 5,400 is the administrative centre of Ķekava municipality, which has a total population of 32,500 people. The municipality also includes the urban centers of Baldone (3,900 people) and Baloži (7,100 people).

Ķekava town is a part of the Riga metropolitan area and is located around 18 km away from the center of Riga. It is situated on two TEN-T roads, namely the Via Baltica and the Riga bypass. The new Rail Baltic project, a high-speed railway that connects Warsaw, Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn, will also cross Ķekava with regional stations located in Ķekava and Baldone towns respectively.

The main industries in the area are logistics, poultry processing (producing 95% of all poultry in Latvia), peat packing, and manufacturing facilities, including those of international companies. However, these sectors contribute to high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and the number of jobs is insufficient for the working-age population.

Around 50% of Ķekava municipality workers commute to Riga, making it mainly a residential area since the pace of new housing construction has been much faster than that of industrial development. The unemployment rate is low at 2.6%.

The development of Ķekava is heavily influenced both positively and negatively by its proximity to Riga. It is one of the few areas of population growth in Latvia and is a popular living destination for those working in Riga. The municipality has a vision to become the most bicycle friendly municipality in Latvia and 20 km of bicycle lanes connect the municipality with Riga city centre with ambitions to extend this eventually to Baldone and Daugmale.

Policy Framework

Policy and strategy in Ķekava Municipality and the Riga Planning region embody the values of the New Leipzig Charter for integrated urban development with a place-based, multi-level and participatory approach.

Ķekava is experienced in EU projects and partnered in the URBACT APN Cities4CSR, an Interreg project on Revitalising Industrial Heritage for Tourism, as well as a EUKI project on energy efficiency. It is also a partner in the URBACT APN Agents of Co-Existence with a focus on social innovation and citizen participation in local governance.

Here follows a summary of some of the key national, regional and local strategic planning documents which align with the objectives of EcoCore.

National

- **Digital Transformation Guidelines for 2021-2027**
- **Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) for Latvia**
- **The Plan for the Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men 2021-2023**
- **Social Protection and Labour Market Policy Guidelines 2021-2027**

Regional

- **Riga Planning Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2030**

Local

Potential IAP focus

There are several potential areas of focus under consideration by the project team.

Ķekava town itself developed historically around the poultry production facility and this features heavily in its town and municipality branding today. While this is highly valued Ķekava has an abundance of natural assets and a diversity of offerings not currently reflected in the town's brand. There is scope to have this reflected in the future branding and marketing of the municipality.

There is a clear opportunity to develop a sustainable tourism industry within the municipality as a whole with a focus on the three urban centres, while harnessing the many natural assets already existing in the municipality including the Daugava river itself, the river island, the high quality natural environment, historical places and monuments, the town of Baldone and its sulphur springs as a resort as well as the cultural and creative community.

Ķekava wants to be a knowledgeable, integrated, growth-oriented sustainable society, living in a healthy environment knowing how to reduce its own waste and effectively use its own resources. The municipality has a few of derelict industrial buildings in its ownership which could be considered for redevelopment with a focus on green industrialisation, creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation.

In addition there is scope to develop an innovation ecosystem taking into account existing businesses within the community and nearby academic institutions in Riga. There is also scope to incentivise and support businesses towards the green transition e.g. through collaboration, awards etc. Finally there is an opportunity to promote green entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship across various sectors of society including the cultural and creative community, young people, elders and the general public.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- E-government Services
- High quality natural environment
- Fast, cheap internet
- Business Council of Ķekava Municipality
- Latvian Enterprise Agency
- Bicycle City
- Space for development (not necessarily in public ownership)
- Well connected location, close to Riga
- High quality of life, family friendly
- Companies of national & international importance (incl. logistics)
- Growing population
- Wood based energy resources
- Young entrepreneurs
- Well educated citizens
- Shared mobility companies

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of publicly owned land for development
- Lack of local labour force
- Lack of incentives for green transition
- Weak accessibility & inclusivity for disabled and migrant groups
- Bureaucracy & slow decision making
- No night time economy
- Low accessibility to river (private ownership along the river bank)
- Availability & affordability of housing
- Education Infrastructure
- Lack of capacity to realise ideas
- Air quality
- Lack of leisure facilities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Incentivisation of green business transition
- Build on Riga Tech Girls network
- Rail Baltic & regional stops in Ķekava
- School programmes to support green transition
- Collaboration between enterprise & schools for training & education programmes e.g. ERASMUS+
- Entrepreneurship development programme for schools, elders and/or public
- Sustainable Tourism Development (river, island, water sports, history, art)
- River mobility solutions
- Increase business networking & collaboration

THREATS

- National legislation supporting green transition is limited or not yet ready e.g. energy communities
- Changing political visions, lack of long term certainty
- Rate of infrastructure development is not keeping pace with population growth
- Expensive electricity (monopoly)
- Conflict between profit & sustainability
- NIMBYism
- Proximity to Riga
- Regional policy – domination of Riga metropolitan area
- Housing policy

URBACT Local Group

The first ULG meeting took place on 28th September during the city visit by the Lead Partner and Lead Expert. Fourteen stakeholders were present nine of whom were from various departments within the municipality (planning, culture and education, finance etc.) and five of whom were external. External stakeholders included the Sustainability Officer from Latvia's largest poultry producers based in Ķekava as well as the CEO of an international coffee roaster company. Further stakeholders representing the business and academic community will join in future ULG meetings.

Outside of the core ULG the project team intend to inform the general public through regular updates to their website and social media channels. They also plan more active public engagement through synergising with other public events taking place throughout the year as well as through proactive collaboration with local schools.

The next ULG meeting will be organized in December 2023 to share learnings from the transnational meeting in Dublin and to plan the next steps.

The project team will plan a minimum of one ULG meeting after each transnational meeting in 2024 and 2025. If necessary ULG meetings will also be held in advance of transnational meetings.

A hackathon is also envisaged in 2024 or early in 2025 with the aim of further expanding stakeholder engagement. The exact format and topics to be addressed will be discussed and decided by the ULG stakeholders.

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Developing an innovation ecosystem
- Developing the night time economy
- Incentivisation and collaborative programmes in support of the green transition
- Developing sustainable tourism
- Green industrial renaissance of derelict buildings
- City Branding

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Showcasing progress towards more sustainable business using the case study: Ķekava Poultry Plant
- Ķekava – A bicycle friendly city
- Lessons from URBACT APN Agents of Co-Existence (social innovation and inclusion in local government)
- Showcasing Riga Tech Girls (Encouraging women's participation in STEAM)
- Culture and creativity as economic drivers
- Showcasing public utility company that is using more sustainable energy sources for heating, e.g. wooden chips, solar.

Santo Tirso

Santo Tirso

Santo Tirso is an industrial city in northern Portugal with a population of 67,700. It is located in the greater Porto Metropolitan area, which has a diversified economy and competes at an international level. The city is becoming a popular business investment destination, with the opening of a new Airbus factory in 2022 and a Municipal Interest Project (PIM) that offers tax benefits for local investments.

The city is strategically located near the road and rail networks with close proximity to Porto's main airport and the port of Leixões, both 20kms away. This makes it an attractive destination for investment due to lower transport costs. It is also close to universities and technological centers which support local workforce training and the creation of new knowledge for economic activity.

Santo Tirso has a rich history in the textile sector and remains a manufacturing hub for textiles, plastics, and polymers. The Santo Thyrso Spinning and Fabric Factory, founded in 1898, has been transformed into a modern cultural and creative quarter with activities dedicated to economic dynamism and the attraction of young entrepreneurs. It includes a fashion and design incubator, business and innovation centre, art centre, training centre, among other activities.

Invest Santo Tirso is a division within the municipality dedicated to proactively supporting economic diversification in Santo Tirso, aiming to attract new businesses to the area. Since its creation in 2015, it has contributed to the establishment of 662 new companies and reduced unemployment to 6%.

New challenges however are emerging with companies across sectors struggling to find skilled staff for open roles, a growing traffic problem, sustainable water management and the city in need for additional land for industrial development.

Policy Framework

The just, green and productive city envisioned by the New Liepzig Charter inspires policy development from the national to local level in Santo Tirso.

The city is actively engaged in a range of EU projects that support this vision including a Green Deal project on the circular economy, the Capacita project focussed on the inclusion of people with disabilities far from the labour market, an Interreg Atlantic Area project called ATLIC (Atlantic InnoBlue Communities) focussed on supporting enterprise and innovation by young people in the blue economy and a Smart Water Management project (GIATEX) focussed on tackling the sustainable water management challenges presented by the textile industry.

Here follows a summary of some key policy documents of relevance to EcoCore:

National

- **Portugal 2030 Strategy**

Regional

- **NORTE 2030 (Northern Regional Program 2021-2027)**
- **Smart Specialisation Strategy**

Local

- **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP)**
- **Municipal Environmental Plan**
- **Municipal Regulation on Tax Incentives for Investment**
- **Strategy to support the climate and digital transition in business**

Potential IAP focus

A key challenge is to maintain Santo Tirso's reputation as an attractive location for business in an environment which increasingly prioritises the green transition. The ULG will reflect on the impact of ESG and CSRD for businesses, investors and economic development stakeholders working in cities. It will propose actions to position the municipality at a competitive advantage for new green businesses and capitalize on branding and marketing opportunities for the city.

Actions may include adapting the city's tax incentives and development fast tracking methodologies to align better with current development challenges and priorities within the city and to better reflect and support CSRD and ESG criteria – increasingly important from an investor perspective.

The ULG will explore strategic renewable energy opportunities and define actions to proactively support the development of energy communities. It will reflect on the possibilities for the redistribution of excess energy production in industrial areas during downtimes.

Actions such as education, awareness raising and training to promote behavioural change across the broad spectrum of green transition will be considered - targeting citizens, the municipality and businesses to empower all actors in a collective effort. Actions may focus for example on mobility, circularity, sustainable water management and energy efficiency.

The development of the IAP will provide an opportunity to define actions which focus on the greening of the industrial areas, increasing biodiversity and creating collaborative and communal spaces to support innovation. Actions may include biodiversity competitions between companies, related awards or the development of a points system.

Finally the city will use this opportunity to define actions to attract and retain young people. Stakeholders will identify a set of actions which can enable Santo Tirso to provide a friendly, efficient co-working environment. This could include the development of modern fit for purpose co-working spaces to support a collaborative and innovative remote working community. Other opportunities could include providing a matchmaking service for individual designers to partner with large industries in the textile cluster.

These and other opportunities will be explored by stakeholders during the action planning process.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Open collaborative mindset
- Willing to cooperate with new investors
- 15 minute city possibility
- Natural assets, urban parks, river beaches, thermal baths
- Strategic location & future train station
- Formal and non-formal education centres nearby supporting reskilling
- E bike & car charging points
- Diverse economy
- 30km of cycle lanes
- Established innovation ecosystem
- Industrial development fast tracking and tax incentives
- Close municipal - business relationship

WEAKNESSES

- Car dependency
- Traffic, especially at rush hour
- Lack of protected bike lanes
- Lack of university in Santo Tirso
- No political ambassadors for green transition – priority is investment
- Green transition is not at the top of agenda – price still wins
- RE – lack of ambition for strategic connections with France & Spain
- Lack of cargo train station
- Lack of capacity in municipality
- Bureaucracy
- Resistance to change
- Relatively homogenous population
- Silos – lack of information sharing

OPPORTUNITIES

- Improved connectivity between airport and seaport
- Solar power development
- Energy communities and energy redistribution
- Green Procurement e.g. Eco360
- Circular Economy
- Cycleways, e-bikes, interconnection of polynucleated settlements
- Public transport improvements
- Cargo rail station
- Engaging older people
- Increased communication and information sharing

THREATS

- Ageing population
- Changing the mindset of the businesses & investors (green Vs price)
- Cheaper to use road than rail
- Energy dependency on fossil fuels
- Land demand from logistics companies regardless of lack of cargo rail station
- Product substitution from developing countries
- Non use of cycle ways
- Fear of change
- Low salaries – work/life balance
- Housing affordability and availability

URBACT Local Group

The first ULG meeting took place during the visit of the LP and LE on 11th October 2023. A total of twelve stakeholders were in attendance including representatives from various departments within the municipality such as Invest Santo Tirso, the EU funding department, the environment department as well as a representative from the mobility and public space department. External stakeholders included representatives from the University of Minho, a business association, the industrial design and build developer García & García, a business association and a local consulting firm. In addition a representative from a private company providing e-vehicle charging points joined remotely.

Additional stakeholders have agreed to join the ULG in future meetings (list provided in the annex). As the focus of the IAP evolves the ULG composition may be adapted accordingly. The ULG includes high level technical staff from within the municipality and the project team work directly with the Mayor who supports and is regularly updated on EcoCore activities.

The next meeting will take place in early December, to share the roadmap and workplan as well as thematic learning gathered during the November transnational meeting in Dublin.

The project team plan a minimum of one ULG meeting after each transnational meeting in 2024 and 2025. ULG meetings will also be held in advance of transnational meetings when required and to ensure effective stakeholder input into the action planning process.

A hackathon will be planned together with stakeholders in 2024 to further expand engagement and participation in the action planning process. The exact format and topics to be addressed will be discussed and decided by the ULG.

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Greening of industrial zones including mobility, energy & nature based solutions
- Retaining and attracting young skilled workers
- Developing attractive co-working spaces with associated collaborative, supportive and innovative environment for remote workers and digital nomads
- Supporting energy communities
- Impact of CSRD & ESG on businesses, investors and cities. Aligning development criteria with green transition.
- Behavioural change initiatives
- How to proactively position the municipality as a competitive location for investment in light of green transition
- Redistribution of excess energy production in industrial

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Developer led (design and build) industrial development
- Fábrica Santo Thyrso – reimagining old industrial space in support of innovation and diversification
- Municipality's active engagement and close relationship with the business community including active support for employee allocation and reallocation within industries
- System and criteria for fast tracking and incentivising industrial development in Santo Tirso (Municipal Interest Project)
- Municipality walking the talk (local food sourced for canteen, local market promotion etc)
- Sustainable mobility initiatives (mobility plans for industrial areas, intermodal ticketing, collaboration with neighbouring municipalities, e-bike facilities, cycleways, influencing scheduling of public transport)
- Inventory of existing zones suitable for industry and also some other potentially available land.
- International marketing of the city to industry
- Well-developed innovation ecosystem

Credit: Kristian Pikner, Visit Pärnu

Pärnu

Pärnu

Pärnu, a city with 52,000 people, is a summer tourist destination with its own cruise and industrial port. It is strategically positioned, connected to Tallinn, Riga, and Helsinki Vantaa via the Via Baltica (E67) highway and a local airport. Its international connectivity is further developing and it will soon have a new station for the Rail Baltica fast train service. The Council is also building a new 300m long bridge and plans to develop a new commercial downtown centre in addition to the original 'old' town centre.

The city is well-suited for manufacturing industries due to its transport connectivity, with successful wood processing and textile manufacturing industries. There is a growing demand for industrial space, and the city has planned to add new industrial areas (approximately 60 hectares) to the north-west Pärnu industrial area.

The city is already making strides towards the green transition with efforts to promote and incentivise solar panel installation, sustainable mobility and car reduction measures. In 2019 the Council opened its own 5MW solar powerplant on top of an old waste plant. All public buses are fuelled by natural biogas from local sources. It is also planning for the construction of two off-shore wind farms with a total of 600 turbines.

The priority of Pärnu Council, in cooperation with the regional Pärnu County Authority, is to diversify the local economy, specifically to minimise seasonality impacts and low wages in services which are typical of tourist destinations. A further key economic development aim is to create the best living quality and standards in the city which will attract people and industry.

Credit: Juhani Särglep & Katri Palm, Visit Pärnu

Policy Framework

Pärnu City Council is committed to steering the development of the city and its hinterland towards a more sustainable and resilient future especially to take account of the effects of climate change. The City Council is incorporating the policy guidelines of the EU Cohesion Policy namely Smarter, Greener, Connected, Social and Europe closer to citizens as a guiding framework into its future development plans.

Pärnu subscribes to the various dimensions of the New Leipzig Charter - the just, green, productive and digital city. The city has embraced digitalisation and actively promotes the adoption of new technologies displacing older carbon intensive practices.

Through EcoCore the city aims to support the implementation of some of the key policy objectives found in the following national and local level policy documents.

National

- **Estonia 2035 Strategy**
- **Estonia Digital Agenda 2030**
- **Estonian Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021—2035 (RDIE)**
- **Welfare Development Plan 2023-2030**

Local

- **Pärnu City Development Plan**
- **Pärnu's Climate Action Plan**
- **Pärnu General Plan**

Potential IAP focus


Credit: Priidu Saart, Visit Pärnu

The municipality is anticipating the arrival of the Rail Baltica project which will connect Helsinki with Warsaw and cities like Tallinn, Pärnu, Riga and Kaunas. Phase 1 will connect Pärnu with Tallinn in only 30 minutes down from the current time of 1 hour 50 minutes by road. The council anticipates a resulting 19% population increase (10,000 people).

The Rail Baltica project represents a significant opportunity for Pärnu. The development of the IAP will focus efforts on ensuring that this opportunity is harnessed.

Many existing and greenfield industrial areas are within the vicinity of the city including 250 hectares at the airport. The challenge is to align developments in these areas to the European and national objectives and targets for more sustainable local development, especially with regard to transitioning away from fossil fuels. The ambition is to guide development towards a more low-carbon economy with a strong emphasis on circularity.

In line with this, there is an opportunity (Estonian Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021—2035) to grow sectors such as the IT and gaming sectors, as well as to develop the circular and bioeconomy. A clear strategy is needed to respond to these sectoral needs and guide their future development in a sustainable way. Education and skills must also be developed to strengthen local workforce capabilities in tandem with attracting new industries to the city.

In addition there is scope to build and expand on the budding regional innovation ecosystem. Pärnu already has a variety of successful businesses across sectors such as tourism, fishing, forestry and manufacturing. There is an opportunity to integrate these into a supportive innovation ecosystem, supporting collaboration and clustering for shared value e.g. collaborative purchasing of sustainable solutions, improved brand presence, improving business efficiency, increasing innovation capacity etc.

While Pärnu is well known for its tourism, it's natural assets and cultural offering are attractive to remote workers. There is scope to capitalise on this by identifying a series of actions to attract this growing cohort and nurture their entrepreneurial and replicator potential.

Finally there is scope to reimagine the branding and marketing of the city towards an audience of entrepreneurs, businesses and innovators.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- E-residency - remote entrepreneurship
- Strategic location
- High quality environment including air
- Plentiful natural assets
- E-government services
- Safety and security
- Relatively low corruption
- Returning immigrants
- Simple process to establish a company
- No tax on company profits unspent or reinvested
- Renewable Energy Resources
- Strong cultural offering

WEAKNESSES

- Salary : cost of living mismatch
- Shortage of human resources
- Lack of local government financial autonomy
- Lack of capacity in electricity grid to support hydrogen development
- Lack of autonomy to drive airport related strategic growth
- Relatively shallow riverbed liming port activity
- Lack of young people

OPPORTUNITIES

- Rail Baltica improving connectivity
- Increased tourism demand
- Gaming industry as interdisciplinary anchor
- Staff relocation from large corporates due to wages & e-services
- Attraction of digital nomads & related entrepreneurship opportunities
- Airfield (250 ha) for development
- Inclusive & equitable development
- Extension of tourism season
- Circular & bioeconomy
- Logistics & aviation industries
- Regional College of Tartu

THREATS

- Climate Change – Floods & Fires
- Increasing cost of Living
- High energy prices (for businesses especially)
- Rail Baltica – could lead to dormancy & the development of Pärnu as a commuter city
- Increasing bureaucratic delays
- War in Ukraine – lack of Russian tourists, fear from international tourists due to proximity with Russia
- Growing dominance of far right
- Resistance to change

URBACT Local Group

The first ULG meeting took place on 27th September during the city visit by the Lead Partner and Lead Expert. Ten stakeholders were present including representatives from the municipality such as the Deputy Mayor, as well as a Development Specialist and an Environmental Specialist. There were seven external stakeholders in attendance including a representative from the Development Centre, an owner of several hotels in the area, a representative of the Chamber of Commerce, a representative of Enterprise Estonia and the Managing Director of Destination Pärnu.

Several ULG members come from an existing infrastructure committee which includes members from the Chamber of Commerce. Additional stakeholders will join future meetings (list provided in the annex). Once the focus of the IAP evolves the ULG composition may be adapted accordingly.

The next ULG meeting will take place in mid-November and another after the November transnational meeting in Dublin to share learning and information from that. A ULG meeting will be held after each transnational meeting in 2024 and 2025. If necessary they will also be held in advance of transnational meetings.

A hackathon is also envisaged in 2024 with the aim of further expanding stakeholder engagement. The exact format and topics to be addressed will be discussed and decided by the ULG stakeholders.

Credit: Priidu Saart, Visit Pärnu

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Sustainable mobility solutions for connectivity between the rail terminal and the port
- How to encourage more added value industry (adding value to raw materials)
- How to plan for the sustainable development of greenfield industrial land from the outset
- How to attract & support digital nomads
- How to further develop, expand and market the regional innovation ecosystem
- City branding and marketing
- Extending & diversifying the tourism offering

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Green urban development (car dependency reduction measures, housing construction policy, cycle way/roads policy, parks, methane extraction from landfill etc).
- E-residency, entrepreneurship supports
- Developing an innovation ecosystem (including clubs, tubes & bio booster hackathons)
- Co-working & incubator spaces
- Metsa Plywood Manufacturing – digital transition supporting efficiency
- Off-shore wind farm development
- Women’s business network

Villlena

Villena

Villena, with a stable population of 34,000, has a history of trade due to its shoe and wine industry since the 19th century. It sits in an important industrial region and benefits from a strategic location at the interface of several Spanish provinces. Today, logistics is the backbone of the city's economy arising from the need to distribute products from traditional industries including agriculture, shoe, and bag manufacturing.

Villena's transport infrastructure is critical in shaping its future economic prosperity. The city is very well connected with several strategic motorways such as the A31 connecting Alicante to Madrid and the A33 and A35 to Valencia and Albacete. In addition, Villena is connected with the A7, the Autovía del Mediterráneo (to be complete by 2030) which is Spain's coastal transport corridor from Girona to Cádiz.

Villena has important rail connections, including the AVE high-speed train to Madrid and a RENFE station to Alicante and Valencia in the city center. However, the station for the AVE train is currently remote and poorly connected to the city center. A new high-speed train line connecting Barcelona to Alicante with a stop in Villena will open in 2026.

These transport links contextualise the strategic importance of the proposed dry port (inland container hub) to be located near the industrial area of Bulilla that will rely on the rail freight connections to the coastal ports of Alicante, Valencia and Castellón.

The proposed dry port was first envisaged 15 years (2008) ago as a next-level development in logistics and since then the city has worked tirelessly to drive the project forward. Various circumstances have hampered progress including the 2009 economic crisis and a changing regional strategy in 2011. Nevertheless, the municipality remains fully committed to making the dry port a reality and has the support of surrounding municipalities as well as all political parties locally.

The city has been trying to attract private investment in conjunction with the public commitment which includes the building of two key bridges to improve connectivity between the high-speed rail station and the adjoining industrial lands in the next three years. The municipality is also lobbying the regional government to change the land zoning in the area to align with the dry port vision. The city will play a key role in marketing this industrial zone and in securing an operator for the dry port.

Studies confirm that the logistics node is economically and environmentally viable because rail transport to the ports produces less CO2 emissions compared to road transport. It would also support a decongestion of activity in the seaports. Local companies are already factoring in the dry port as a reality in their business planning and local schools have initiated courses in logistics in anticipation of this project becoming a reality.

Policy Framework

The municipality is actively building multi-level governance relations in order to progress the development of the dry port. EcoCore is part of that effort to raise the importance of this project on the political agenda. The dry port is a project of key regional importance and aligns with policy objectives at the national, regional and local levels.

Some of these policy documents are listed in the following table

National

- **The Spanish Urban Agenda**
- **Spain’s Entrepreneurial National Strategy**
- **Spanish Strategy for Industry 2030**

Regional

- **Regional Strategy of Climate Change& Energy 2030.**
- **Urban Agenda of Comunidad Valenciana**

Local

- **The Urban Agenda for Villena 2022**
- **Municipal Plan for Equality of Women and Men in Villena (2023-2026)**
- **Villena's Innovation and Economic Promotion Plan (2017)**

Potential IAP focus

The IAP will focus on the industrial area of Bulilla and its adjoining (privately owned) lands which encompass 1 million m2 and extend as far as the high-speed train station. This is the proposed location of the dry port. Actions identified will ensure the development of the dry port in a sustainable and future-proofed way benefitting the entire city not only from an economic but from an environmental and social perspective also.

With the proper planning and development of the dry port, Villena will become a magnetic, dynamic and vibrant city, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, well-connected and accessible with a thriving economy and high quality of life.

The dry port will create 100 jobs directly while the logistics node is also expected to attract new companies and facilitate internationalization of existing companies, creating a potential 2,000 jobs in total. These new jobs and workers will bring new energy and dynamism to all the services in the area and help reduce the current unemployment rate of 20% in the city.

The City Council will contribute up to €4 million to the dry port project, but needs private investment as well as the support of the provincial and regional governments, since the project will benefit the entire region.

The emphasis is to gain direct economic benefit from connecting with Europe by rail. Investing in the city's strategic location will also boost competitiveness and provide growth opportunities for local companies.

Villena is committed to aligning the dry port with the principles of sustainable development and the green energy transition, aligning with circularity guidelines. They city has a flourishing cultural scene and invests in public art while aiming for European Capital of Culture status. The EcoCore project will advance the dry port initiative and seek synergy with other city initiatives, strengthening the urban agenda and economic sustainability strategies. The team plans to learn from partners and experts during the process.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Strategic Location & connectivity
- Hub of industrial and market activity
- Large industrial & urban land bank
- Profitable & competitive land price
- Diversity of manufacturing industries
- High quality of life
- Low cost of living
- Excellent cultural offering
- Integration of logistics in local education
- 3 VET centres
- Extensive stakeholder familiarity & support for the dry port

WEAKNESSES

- Mostly micro businesses < 10 staff
- Lack of B2B collaboration
- Lack of housing to support growth
- Social integration challenges in certain districts
- Lack of hotel accommodation
- Lack of qualified professionals
- More demand than jobs available
- Poor connectivity between city & high speed rail stop
- Lack of large-scale (scale-up) entrepreneurial culture (only micro)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Regional-level industrial activity
- Creation of industrial clusters
- Renewable energy production
- Dry port as a driver of economy
- Improved connectivity & accessibility
- Develop a strong logistics sector
- Business scale-up support
- Build on existing business network (Levante Interior) to drive cohesion
- Industrial area fuelled by solar
- Synergise with Capital of Culture application & New European Bauhaus
- Improved connectivity between city centre & high speed train station

THREATS

- Land zoning plan is 30 years old
- Competing magnetism of the coast
- Excessive bureaucracy
- Climate change
- Water challenges (drought & flooding) increases building cost
- Growth dependent on large infrastructure investment
- Competing with nearby industrial poles (considered less bureaucratic) for new industrial investment
- Closure of RENFE station in centre for passenger transport
- Representation of women in senior business positions (25%)

URBACT Local Group

The core ULG has stakeholders from a variety of sectors including the municipality itself, the education sector (VEC & university) , citizen interest groups and the business community. The first meeting took place during the city visit by the Lead Partner and Lead Expert on 16th August 2023 with representatives from the municipality (elected representatives and staff) as well as the local development agency, the logistics sector and representatives from local industrial estates. It included representatives from 'Levante Interior', an association of entrepreneurs in the city, that played a key role in generating consensus around the industrial future of the municipality, involving not only entrepreneurs but also civil society and institutions.

A further ULG meeting was held in November. ULG meetings will take place after each core network meeting with 12-15 ULG members envisaged. The focus will be on progressing the development of the IAP and exploring synergies with wider city initiatives while ensuring effective knowledge flow between the transnational and local levels.

To support diverse participation in the action planning process a hackathon will see citizens i troubleshooting some local development challenges e.g. how to increase the use of cycle lanes and/or public transport. The final design of the hackathon will be decided by the ULG.

Wider stakeholder participation e.g. regional government representatives, will also be ensured by inviting some targeted stakeholders to attend core transnational network meetings and specific ULG sessions as appropriate

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Integrating circular economy in the dry port
- Place branding & marketing
- Attracting private investment
- Harnessing shared value opportunities between industry & urban development broadly
- Scale-up support initiatives
- Local Jobs & Skills for the Green & Just Economy
- Supporting businesses with green transition & boosting CSR (including traditional businesses)

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Plan-led development - logistics dry port
- Vertical integration (multi- level governance collaboration)
- Solar energy development & biodiversity side by side
- Car dependency reduction (behaviour change)
- Skills forward planning
- Widespread consensus (including political) for a city vision


Credit: Tuusula municipality / Antti Kallio

TUUSULA

Tuusula

Tuusula with more than 41,000 people is located just north of Helsinki and adjacent to the North Sea - Baltic transport corridor, one of the nine Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T) corridors of Europe. This corridor connects Tuusula with cities such as Tampere, Lahti and Oulu via main roads and railways.

Tuusula's strategic location drives population growth (6th fastest growing municipality in Finland) and enables public and private investments, despite the current negative economic climate in Europe.The Finnish government has a decentralized structure, with strong autonomy at the local level. The city's land policy program includes the purchase of at least 30 hectares of land each year to allow for development.

Tuusula is expecting a significant influx of private investments in the next five years, with close to 100 hectares of land being sold or leased for commercial use. The city is investing heavily in infrastructure and services, including education, housing, and public space, in preparation for projected population growth (44,000 people by 2030). Tuusula aims to become a leading municipality in education and learning. A strong tax base is necessary to fund infrastructure investment.

The municipality has a 250-hectare land bank called 'Focus' adjoining Helsinki-Vantaa airport, along with a further 250 hectares in private ownership. Developing this land for industry has been an ambition for two decades, and EcoCore will support the planning of its sustainable economic development with construction expected to commence in 2027.

Credit: Tuusula municipality / Kari Kohvakka

Tuusula

The main challenge for Tuusula Municipality and its stakeholders is to create a placed-based approach for the development of the local circular economy. This includes zoning the targeted industrial areas as 'circular economy areas' and to introduce regulations and incentives to advance circular economy activities in those areas.

3,500 companies

30% are value added

68% are services

Tuusula's main industries are wholesale, construction, and manufacturing.

Most of the companies are in the value added (30%) or service business (68%). Tuusula is attracting significant private investments, especially from logistics companies which will require the future-proofing of fuelling infrastructure for transportation to facilitate the green transition.

There are 3,500 companies in Tuusula, the majority of which are one person companies.

Credit: Tuusula municipality / Kari Kohvakka

Policy Framework

Tuusula municipality's strategy aligns with EU Cohesion Policy objectives. It continues to develop democratic and citizen participation methods and wants to build a sustainable future, promoting climate action in all the municipality's activities. It cherishes the green environment, water areas and their accessibility, as well as its natural diversity.

The Municipality is committed to addressing affordability and social segregation (Just City), to mitigate and adapt to climate change (Green City), to improve the city with new technology (Digitalisation) and to enable the circular economy (Productive City).

Through EcoCore the city aims to support the implementation of some of the key policy objectives found in the following national, regional and local level policy documents.

National

- **The Circular Economy Action Plan**

Regional

- **Smart Specialisation Strategy**
- **Helsinki-Uusimaa regional roadmap for carbon neutrality by 2030**

Local

- **Municipal strategy of Tuusula 2021-2025**
- **Digitalization program 2021-2025**

Potential IAP focus

Credit: Tuusula municipality / Antti Kallio

The IAP will plan for the development of the industrial landbank by the airport 'Focus' in a future focussed way, prioritising sustainable industry and circular economy. With regard to the general industrial area in 'Focus', the specific target sectors have yet to be decided. In terms of the area focussed on circular economy the city has commissioned a scoping study to determine the target industries for this area. The city wants to attract circular economy front runners while also supporting traditional waste management services.

The municipality will develop the necessary enabling infrastructure and sell the plots. The first step is to determine and set criteria for the target industries. The IAP will also consider how the municipality can support the development of the related skills pipeline as well as an enabling environment for business growth, development and sustainable innovation. The municipality wants to ensure local economic growth while reducing the city's overall carbon footprint. This will require increased efficiency in the use of resources with an emphasis on new technologies, innovation, re-use and waste minimisation.

The municipality understands the importance of its role in leading the enormous cultural and operational shift towards the green transition. It wants to effectively use all of the tools at its disposal and will explore these in the context of the IAP. For example, it sees effective public procurement as playing an important role in accelerating the green transition and intends to capitalise on exchange and learning in EcoCore to build capacity in this area.

The city must walk the talk in this systemic shift, this means new actions will be required to sustain biodiversity, to measure and take care of the city's carbon sinks, and actively reduce carbon emissions. Citizen participation is central to the success of this. Finally the city has a role in promoting effective communication between industry and citizens, particularly in terms of communicating the local environmental impact of industrial activity. Through EcoCore the municipality will seek effective digital solutions enabled through cross sectoral collaboration to support this aim.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Location close to airport and capital
- No traffic
- Cheaper land than in the capital
- Small, agile organisation
- Close to powerlines
- Proactive culture
- Alternative lifestyle offering
- Availability of land for development
- Natural assets & quality environment
- Good logistics connectivity
- Affordable housing
- Demand trends (space, education, quality of life are in Tuusula)
- Clear laws and regulations
- Political and governance stability

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of critical mass & low density
- 69% of companies are 1 person
- Many businesses don't view green transition as a priority
- Ability to finance projects
- Political short termism
- Insufficient cooperation within and across sectors
- Low level of ambition 'thinking small'
- Lack of recognisable city brand
- Lack of immigrant support services
- Too heavy focus & reliance on the planned Ring IV road (vulnerable)
- Bureaucracy

OPPORTUNITIES

- Helsinki Ring of Industry
- New renewable fuel infrastructure
- Defence sector
- Green investments, green certificates
- A new vision for the 'Focus' industrial area
- To attract new external companies
- Increased cooperation between municipalities
- Increased business collaboration
- Driving innovation ecosystem
- International marketing of the region
- To be a frontrunner – a proactive, respected innovative and sustainable area
- Tuusula Vantaa Circular Valley

THREATS

- Proximity to Russia
- Changing urban planning laws
- Human resource laws as a barrier to growth (difficult to fire staff)
- Resistance to change
- National level cluster policy could see Helsinki drive circular economy
- Political climate
- Low neighbouring municipal support
- All talk, no action
- Lack of skilled workforce
- Losing stakeholder support due to slow pace of development
- Investing in the wrong things
- Competing financial needs
- Lack of affordable housing
- Demographic structure

URBACT Local Group

Ten stakeholders were present at the first meeting on 25th September, including urban planners, as well as staff from the economic development department, community planning and the traffic division. The Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce was also present. The Chamber represents both large national companies as well as companies located in Tuusula and are a key player in seeking to achieve national strategic influence while also supporting local business needs. The national logistics centre cluster LIMOWA and the Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce was also invited to the group, but they felt that their impact would be more significant at a later phase in the project. Stakeholders participated in a vision exercise as well as a SWOT analysis of the current enabling ecosystem.

The next meeting in December will share learning from the first transnational meeting in Dublin and plan next steps. This will include the full cohort of ULG members as listed in the appendix, including representatives from the vocational school, the business development agency, local universities and a local logistics company. There will be a ULG meeting after each transnational meeting with additional meetings as needed for effective progress in developing the IAP.

Outside of the core ULG, other strategic stakeholders will be engaged including the Tuusula Growth and Environment Sector by seeking their active feedback on local EcoCore progress and plans. Similarly the team will communicate with the Central Uusimaa Environment Centre seeking their direct input into the planning of the circular economy area. They will present the project and its intentions to the Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council Economic Expert Group and seek feedback from the KUUMA-regional Economic Development Group 2025.

A hackathon will be co-designed with the ULG to take place in 2024. The ULG composition may evolve and adapt as the action planning process evolves.

Learning Give & Take

LEARNING NEEDS

- Inspiration on development, management and maintenance of the new industrial areas
- How to future proof new business and logistics areas & infrastructure in this green transition phase
- How to keep people involved in the ongoing development of the city centre
- Communal activities & spaces in the city for citizen engagement & collaboration
- EU funding and related opportunities
- Digital solutions for effective communication between residents & businesses (complaints & environmental impact)
- Good practice examples of circular and sustainable industrial zones
- Maintaining business engagement against slow progress and political change
- Tackling citizen resistance and resentment towards growth.
- How to support and attract circular economy businesses
- Developing effective innovation ecosystem
- Integration of migrants and minorities

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

- Scoping study: What businesses to target for the Circular economy area
- Municipality leading the green transition: Calculating carbon emissions of municipality purchases; adopting new procurement criteria, with incentives for tenderers to lower emissions.
- Regulations & incentives to enhance circular economy activities
- Involving other strategic groups not directly involved in ULG
- Example of large logistics company seeking to become net zero
- How to plan for district heating from the outset: redistribution of datacentre heat to local houses selling excess heat to network
- Investing in infrastructure (housing fair, education, quality of life)
- Supporting tourism businesses to become carbon neutral & achieve Sustainable Travel Finland certification.
- Joint commercial marketing campaign with 10 municipalities
- Citizen & stakeholder participation methods: Participatory budgeting, hackathons, facilitating heated discussions (campfire)
- Business network with 440 companies

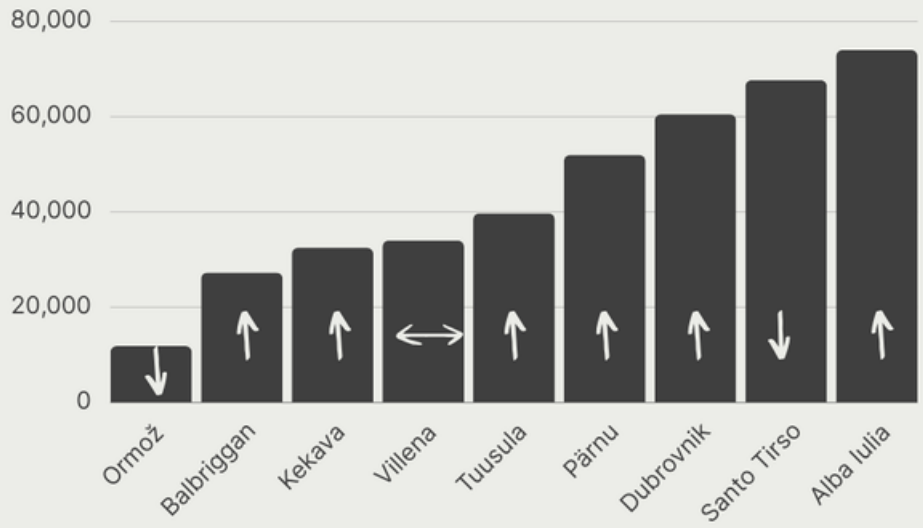
Credit: Priidu Saart, Visit Pärnu

Synthesis, Methodology and Network Roadmap

Synthesis

Field visits to each of the partner cites, along with available data allow us to draw some conclusions on the network as a whole which have aided in the design of our exchange and learning programme.

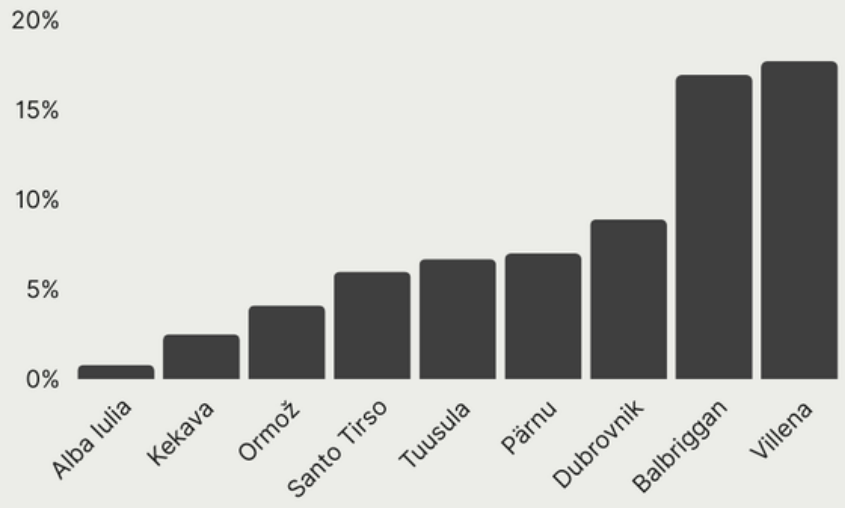
From a population perspective there are certainly differences across the network with Ormož representing the lower end of the population scale at 11,833 and Alba Iulia at the top end with 74,000 people. The graph below highlights the population variations between each partner and the arrow denotes population change.



Graph 1: EcoCore Partner City by Population Size and Change

The majority of cities are experiencing population growth which represents its own challenges such as infrastructure and employment provision. On the other hand cities such as Ormož and Santo Tirso are experiencing low level population decline which represent a risk in terms of their ability to harness green transition development opportunities. The population of Villena is relatively stable, however it possesses some key location and transport assets which represent a valuable economic opportunity for the city.

From an unemployment perspective there are also strong variations between EcoCore cities which is highlighted in the following graph.



Graph 2: Unemployment in EcoCore Partner Cities

Alba Iulia has a very low unemployment rate reflecting the fact that local industry is plentiful but since most of the jobs are mid-level skilled, young workers still choose to emigrate in search of higher value employment. Higher unemployment levels are seen in partner cities such as Balbriggan and Villena which reflect challenges related to rapid population growth and economic restructuring respectively.

Looking behind the raw data however we can see that in spite of population growth and sometimes low unemployment rates, all partners battle with brain drain and attracting high value jobs. A key challenge for all of them will be to attract and retain talent and ensure a viable skills pipeline for the existing and new high value green economy businesses as the green transition progresses.

Like all small cities, EcoCore partners face a particular set of challenges when it comes to transitioning toa green economy including for example access to finance, lack of critical mass, resistance to change and competing for policy support. This is particularly pertinent for EcoCore cities most of whom are located a short distance from major urban centres.

Their location however within strategic transport corridors – close to airports, ports, strategically important railway lines and motorways is also what sets them apart. This aspect places them at a competitive advantage when it comes to attracting industry. In addition, as small cities they have the opportunity of being closer to stakeholders on the ground and this advantage can be used to build a solid foundation for success.

Throughout the activation phase, partners together with their stakeholders have reflected intensely on how they can best capitalise on EcoCore locally to future proof their economic development plans and set conditions in place to ensure that they become the location of choice for new green businesses while supporting existing businesses in the green transition process.

The following pages captures the main elements of that reflection process including the main challenges to be addressed in each partner city, the potential focus of the IAP and its alignment with existing policy, as well as the changes anticipated in each partner city arising from the action planning process.

Credit: Priidu Saart, Visit Pärnu

Balbriggan

Main Challenges

- Lack of local jobs for local population
- To develop the existing industrial landbank that positions Balbriggan at a competitive advantage in light of the Green Transition
- Competition for regional strategic industrial development opportunities
- Barriers to and slow place of green transition in existing businesses

Focus of IAP

- Attracting industry that can provide a variety of jobs for the local population
- Future proofing the development of the industrial landbank for optimum social, economic and environmental benefit for Balbriggan
- Harnessing regional strategic industrial development opportunities
- Supporting green transition in existing businesses
- Branding and marketing of the industrial opportunities

Expected Changes

- Clear pathway towards the development of a state of the art industrial zone giving Balbriggan competitive advantage and supporting its integrated urban development
- Alignment of stakeholders on a common path with clear objectives, roles, timelines and funding possibilities
- Enhanced competitive advantage to benefit from upcoming opportunities (funding, investment, development etc)

Dubrovnik Urban Area

Main Challenges

- Over reliance on seasonal tourism focussed on old town
- High cost of living
- Lack of sustainable transport options
- Barriers to and slow pace of green transition in existing businesses

Focus of IAP

- Actions to promote greener low-carbon economic diversification
- Reimagining brownfield sites to improve economic, ecological and social environment
- Actions to support sustainable mobility
- Supporting existing businesses towards the green transition
- Branding and marketing of the industrial opportunities

Expected Changes

- Set of actions supported by cross-sectoral stakeholders that can promote enterprise development, economic diversification, and innovation, improve the sustainability of tourism, offer solutions to promote sustainable mobility, and support green transition in existing business
- Alignment of stakeholders on a common path with clear objectives, roles, timelines, and funding possibilities

Ormož

Main Challenges

- Brain Drain & Lack of Skills Pipeline
- Lack of local jobs that can compete with higher salaries in Austria
- Lack of critical mass
- Lack of collaborative strategy to drive competitive advantage of the area
- Lack of business awareness of the importance of the green transition and its implementation in day-to-day business operations.

Focus of IAP

- Increased collaboration between existing businesses and stakeholders to promote symbiosis, green transition, innovation and up-scaling
- Supporting the sustainable development, maintenance and management of two new green business zones in the city
- Strategic actions to influence the supporting sustainable business environment in Ormož (skills, housing, rail connectivity, RE etc)

Expected Changes

- An innovation ecosystem that promotes high value enterprise and innovation
- Alignment of stakeholders on a common path with clear objectives, roles, timelines and funding possibilities
- Enhanced competitive advantage to attract investment and industry

Alba Iulia

Main Challenges

- Car dependency and traffic
- Lack of local skilled workers - brain drain
- Lack of investment ready industrial land within city area
- Noise and air pollution
- Limited effective collaboration between public, private and academic sectors
- Lack of logistics&freight mobility hub at local level

Focus of IAP

- Incentivising modal shift
- Supporting green transition in existing businesses
- University-Public-Private collaboration
- Developing an effective innovation ecosystem
- Retain and attract talent
- Mobility & freight solutions
- Green Deal partnerships
- Increasing the visibility of the Economic Zone of Alba Iulia for green businesses

Expected Changes

- Implementable measures to support modal shift
- A clear pathway towards the development of the innovation ecosystem
- Alignment of stakeholders on a common path with clear objectives, roles, timelines and funding possibilities
- Green Deal partnerships facilitating green transition
- Improved regional attractiveness and visibility of Alba Iulia Economic Zone

Kekava

Main Challenges

- Not sufficient utilization of potentially high value natural and historical tourism assets
- Limited effective collaboration between public, private and academic sectors
- Barriers to and slow place of green transition in exisiting businesses Barriers to and slow place of green transition in exisiting businesses
- Car dependency and rush hour traffic

Focus of IAP

- Identifying actions towards sustainable use of natural and historical assets across the municipality for promoting green tourism and diversifying municipality branding
- Supporting increased collaboration between the university and public and private actors towards the green transition
- Developing an effective innovation ecosystem
- Actions to incentivise modal shift and support sustainable mobility

Expected Changes

- Diversified municipality branding with emphasising sustainable tourism
- Alignment of stakeholders on a common path with clear objectives, roles, timelines and funding possibilities
- A clear pathway towards and understanding amongst all stakeholders of the mutual benefits related to the development of the innovation ecosystem
- A package of implementable measures to support modal shift (targeting commuters)

Santo Tirso

Main Challenges

- Maintaining its reputation as an attractive location for business in an environment which increasingly prioritises the green transition
- Ensuring industrial spaces align with, support and meet the needs of green transition
- Reducing car dependency and related traffic
- Attracting and retaining talent
- Managing and reducing negative industrial impact (direct and indirect) on the environment

Focus of IAP

- Adapt fast tracking criteria to reflect city development priorities and CSRD, ESG
- Explore strategic RE opportunities. Proactively support energy communities
- Broad spectrum green transition education, awareness raising and training to promote behavioural change
- Greening industrial areas, creating collaborative spaces
- Attracting and retaining young people through e.g. attractive co-working offers

Expected Changes

- Planning and regulatory environment in line with green transition
- Green transition thinking integrated across municipality departments
- ST poised ahead of the curve with competitive advantage aligned with green transition
- Alignment of stakeholders on a common path with clear objectives, roles, timelines and funding possibilities

Pärnu

Main Challenges

- Seasonal tourism dependency
- Brain drain
- Salary: living costs imbalance
- Lack of local financial autonomy
- Latent potential of value added & high value industry
- Lack of visibility of and choice in the university
- Rail Baltic currently lacks physical infrastructure. Uncertain timing of activities until the railway is ready.
- Get the airport actively working
- Energy efficiency of buildings
- Relatively high share of co2 emissions from transit transport

Focus of IAP

- Harnessing Rail Baltica development opportunities
- Regulating road traffic
- Developing and expanding the innovation ecosystem
- Developing a strategy that responds to the needs of the IT, gaming and bioeconomy sectors as priority sectors
- Identify and plan for skills needs of new industries
- Attract remote workers, nurture entrepreneurship
- Industrial branding and marketing

Expected Changes

- Common vison for resilient, high value and sustainable economic development post Rail Baltica
- Reduced CO2 emissions, improved quality of life (cycle paths and fast connections to urban centres).
- Increasingly impactful innovation ecosystem
- Stakeholder alignment with clear objectives, roles, timelines and funding
- Pärnu as an innovation hub and an attractive destination for remote workers

Villena

Main Challenges

- Lack of connectivity between high speed rail station and city centre
- Competing with attractive coastal locations
- Prioritising the dry port development on the national and regional political agendas
- Car dependency and resistance to modal shift
- Balancing economic gain with environmental protection

Focus of IAP

- Raising priority of dry port on political agenda
- Regulating the dry port in a sustainable and future-proofed way for economic, environmental and social benefit
- Exploring synergies between the dry port development and other city initiatives
- Incentivising modal shift
- Support green transition in existing businesses
- Planning for the dry port related population growth

Expected Changes

- Dry port development prioritised for implementation on political agenda
- Alignment of stakeholders on a common path with clear objectives, roles, timelines and funding possibilities with regard to the development of the dry port in a future proofed and integrated manner
- Synergies between dry port and exisitng/planned projects in Villena are harnessed
- SMART plan to incentivise modal shift

Tuusula

Main Challenges

- Positive and negative effects of green transition on business
- Regional co-operation & political will
- Municipal capacity building on green transition and biodiversity
- Uncertainty of future fuels or transport power source
- Shocks and resilience
- Lack of skilled workers
- Lack of vision, willingness, and capability to take risks

Focus of IAP

- Carbon Neutral Tuusula 2040
- Participatory city planning and budget
- Gender equality in decision making
- Adopting circular economy
- Sustainable transportation
- Using sustainable technologies and materials

Expected Changes

- Carbon neutrality by 2035 (scope 1 and 2) and 2040 (scope 3)
- Strong and exponential growth of foreign labour
- Investments in carbon neutral economy (synthetic fuels, recycling, upcycling, infrastructure)
- Adopting AI and other new technologies

Methodology

The EcoCore methodology takes an extensive desk study and literature review on the topic of green industrialisation as its basis. Key challenges identified during the desk study are described in the EU overview section of this document and include for example the development and deployment of green technologies, access to funding and financing, consumer awareness and demand, strong operational governance as well as ensuring a reliable skills pipeline. For small cities this list extends to include for example lack of critical mass, limited capacity and resistance to change.

Armed with an awareness of these challenges we kicked off the lead partner and lead expert city visits to each of the EcoCore partner cities in late July 2023, finishing in October. We looked for impact pathways in each city – points of opportunity for our partners to facilitate change and to put in place conditions to ensure that they are in a prime position to capitalise on the opportunities of the green industrial transition.

Five key pathways or areas of intervention were identified and agreed by partners which we term ‘transition drivers’. These represent the key themes of our network and our nine Core Network meetings will reflect on these topics and showcase inspiring initiatives within these overarching themes. The transition drivers identified are as follows:

1. Planning & Development for Green Industrial Transition
2. Developing and Nurturing the Green Transition Innovation Ecosystem
3. Supporting the Green Transition Skills Pipeline
4. Municipality as Green Transition Leader
5. Branding and Marketing

The following diagram showcases some transition driver practical examples that were identified in the partner cities. A more extensive list or ‘menu’ of transition drivers in each partner city is included in the appendix.

Partners will co-create the agenda of each core network meeting, part of which will involve selecting from the menu of transition drivers (see appendix) to determine the site visits and focus areas for each meeting.

Diagram 1: EcoCore Green Industrial Transition Drivers Locally

Core network meetings will be in person meetings with an average duration of two days and will incorporate site visits to each partner city, along with a diverse mix of presentations, panel discussions, workshops and activities supported by a variety of tools and methods.

They will follow the format of the first core network meeting which took place in Balbriggan (Fingal County Council) in November 2023. Each CNM will reflect on the URBACT cross cutting themes of gender equality and digitalisation and showcase local initiatives on these topics relative to the green transition. CNMs will also include a period of peer reflection where partners will act as a critical friend to the CNMs host(s) using the start, stop, continue method.

A series of seven online masterclasses will complement these, where external speakers and ad hoc experts will be invited to design tailor made masterclasses to fill knowledge gaps identified within the network. Masterclasses will include both theoretical and practical elements. They will take place online and be of between 2-3 hours duration.

Preliminary masterclass titles have been identified and this programme of masterclasses (along with the entire roadmap) will be reviewed at each Core Network Meeting between May 2024 and May 2025 to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose. A co-creation process (using a Miro board) will ensure the co-design of each masterclass to ensure a session which addresses network wide needs. Masterclass titles have been identified as follows:

No.	Masterclass Title	Date
1	Facilitative Leadership Skills for Green Transition	January ‘24
2	ESG & CSRD: What does it mean for Green Transition in Business & Cities ?	February ‘24
3	Attracting Green Investments in Small Cities	April ‘24
4	Procurement as a Green Transition Tool	July ‘24
5	Funding & Financing for Green Transition	October ‘24
6	Cleantech Driving Green Transition	April ’25
7	Communicating, Negotiating for Green Transition Impact	July ‘25

Together with ongoing group and one to one support from the lead expert, as well as knowledge exchange between the local and transnational level, this represents a varied yet reliable exchange and learning framework to support our action planning journey. Three learning nodes, working in harmony represent the cornerstones of our EcoCore action planning framework namely, masterclasses, core network meetings and the URBACT local groups (ULGs).

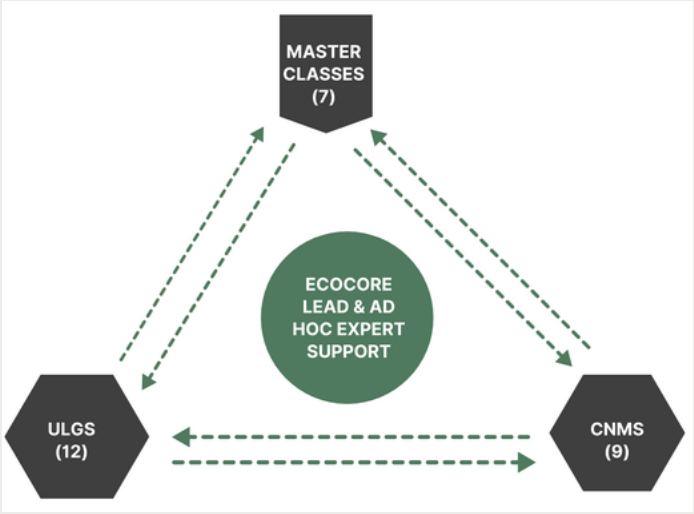


Diagram 2: Three Key Learning Nodes in EcoCore Exchange & Learning Programme

Each of these play an important and interconnected role in ensuring impact at the local level, but it is the motivation and willingness of the URBACT local group which is the most critical factor for success.

The ULG is the local transition catalyst. Together with the project partner, their ability to strategically connect transnational learning to transition opportunities locally is critical in driving impact.

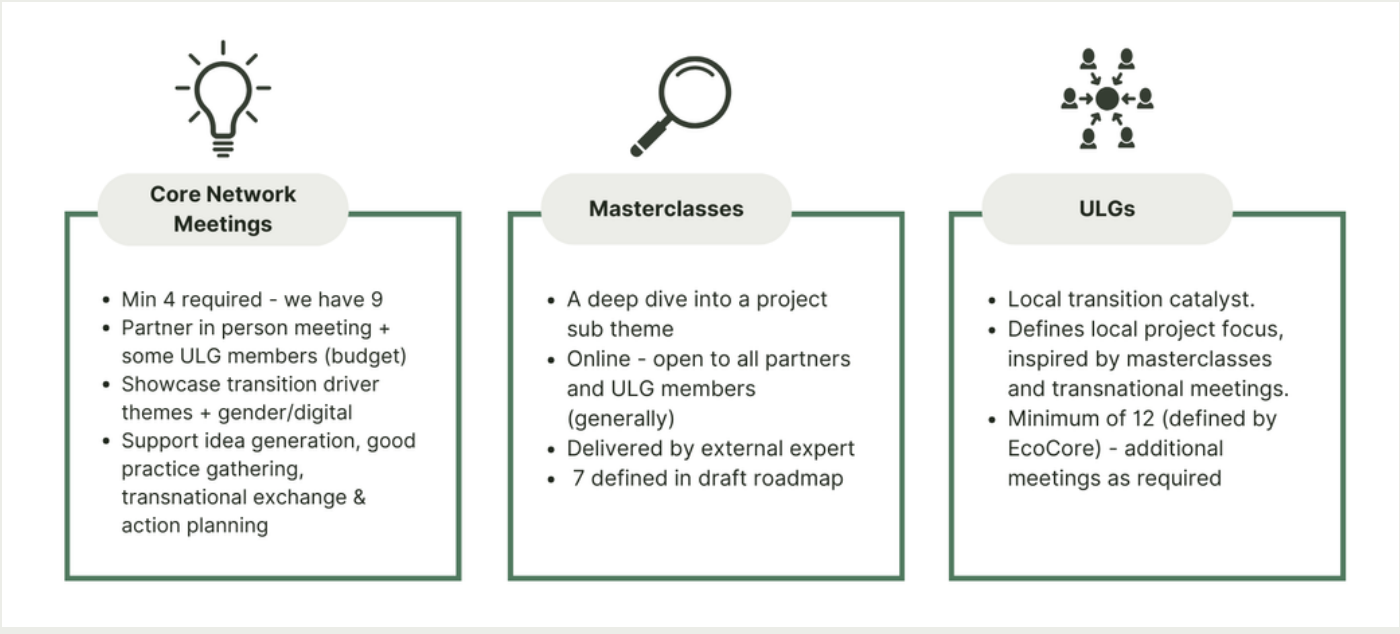


Diagram 3: Three Key Learning Nodes Description

The following diagram illustrates the continuous flow of learning and sharing between these learning nodes at the transnational and the local level using the period from November 2023 to March 2024 as an example.

Diagram 4: EcoCore Exchange and Learning Process

This flow of exchange and learning between macro and micro levels will continue throughout the network lifetime. Partner cities will follow a common process throughout the network journey which will require them to reflect on and contribute to activities undertaken during previous and subsequent CNMs. This will be supported by pre and post meeting briefing notes as well as thematic and methodological outputs. At the same time partners will be supported one to one, by the lead expert and ULG network coordinator in order to adapt methodologies introduced during the CNMs to suit their local needs and contexts at ULG level.

A series of risks to the action planning process have been identified by partners both at network and local level as follows:

Risk Identified	Mitigation Measures
Staff transitions results in a change to local project team compositions	Clear, accessible project management procedures locally, regular project team communication
Developing fundable and implementable actions	Aligning project actions with policy and engaging with funding stakeholders
Local support and resources	Dynamic meetings, diverse methods, communicating in advance on aim and agenda to target relevant stakeholders
Political support in the production and approval of the IAP	Aligning actions with political priorities, involving politicians in the process
Ensuring strong implementation planning and a smooth transition from planning to implementation	Reflecting on and planning for ULG life after EcoCore throughout the network
Balancing local public procurement requirements with URBACT rules and timeline	Timely, clear communication between URBACT Secretariat, LP and partners on rules and timelines. Timely local planning.
Limitations to involve stakeholders in CNMs due to inflation and rising travel/accommodation costs	Careful budgeting and early booking of travel tickets to avail of lower prices

The rating (high, medium, low) applied to each of the identified risks, varies from partner to partner depending on their local context. Partners will reflect on the status of each of these risks at the local and transnational level during ULG and core network meetings.

A facilitated discussion will provide a fruitful exchange on mitigating and lowering the risk rating of these risks while providing an opportunity to reflect, identify and mitigate against any new risks as they arise.

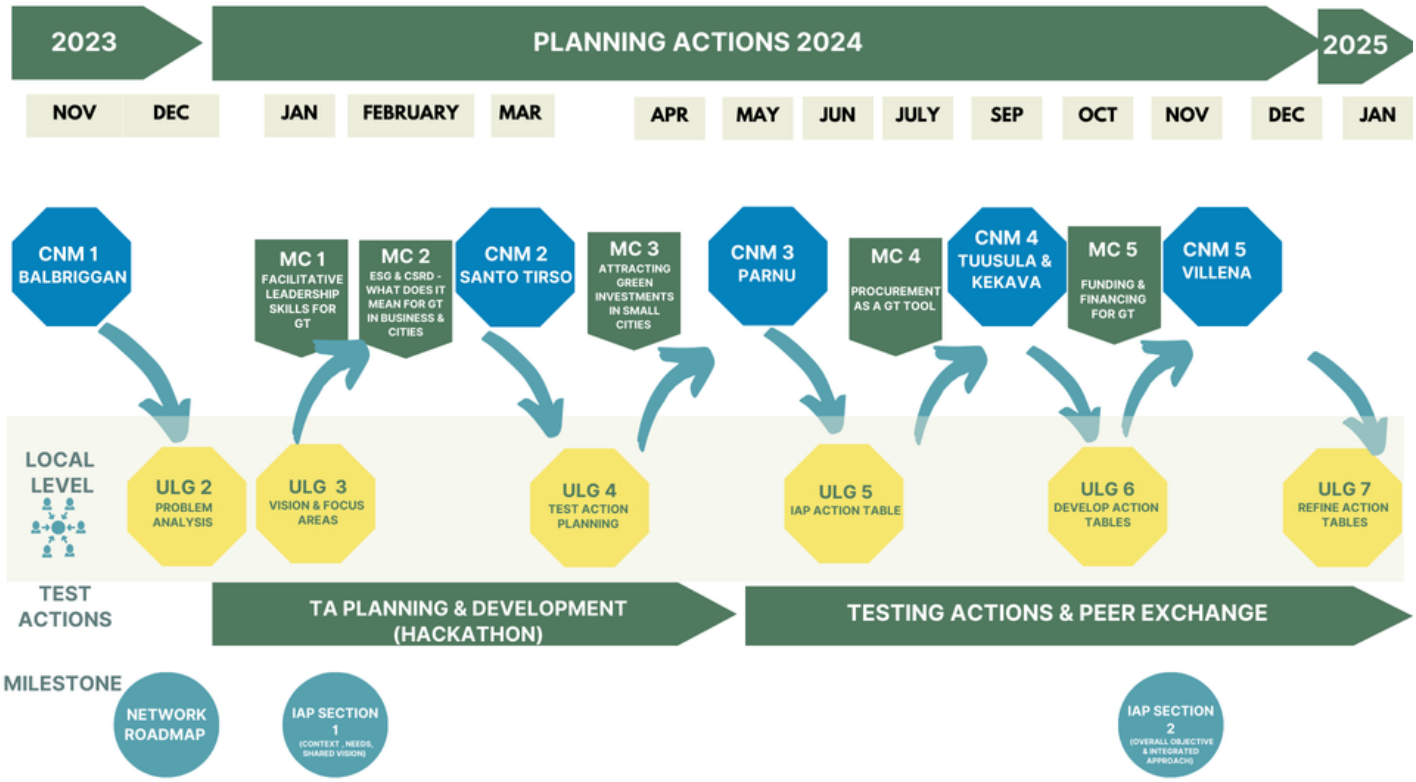
In terms of cross network collaboration and in addition to In4Green, EcoCore has identified potential synergies with E-Connecting, Let's Go Circular, C4Talent and PUMA. Depending on the design and focus of the final event there may be opportunities to join together with some of these networks to share common findings with a unified voice. In addition we will continue to communicate and explore the possibilities to collaborate on masterclasses and to organise a joint peer review as the action planning process progresses.

Credit: Tuusula municipality / Antti Kallio

Network Roadmap

A detailed network roadmap showcasing the who, what, where, when and how of our exchange and learning workplan has been formulated using Excel. The roadmap is a living document, it provides an important guide and framework for our exchange and learning programme. Importantly, it is not fixed or set in stone. The roadmap is open for comment and revision throughout the network lifetime with the precondition that it continues to meet key URBACT requirements. The roadmap will be actively reviewed during each Core Network Meeting between May 2024 and May 2025. It will be assessed and revised to ensure it remains fit for purpose and optimised to meet network partner learning needs.

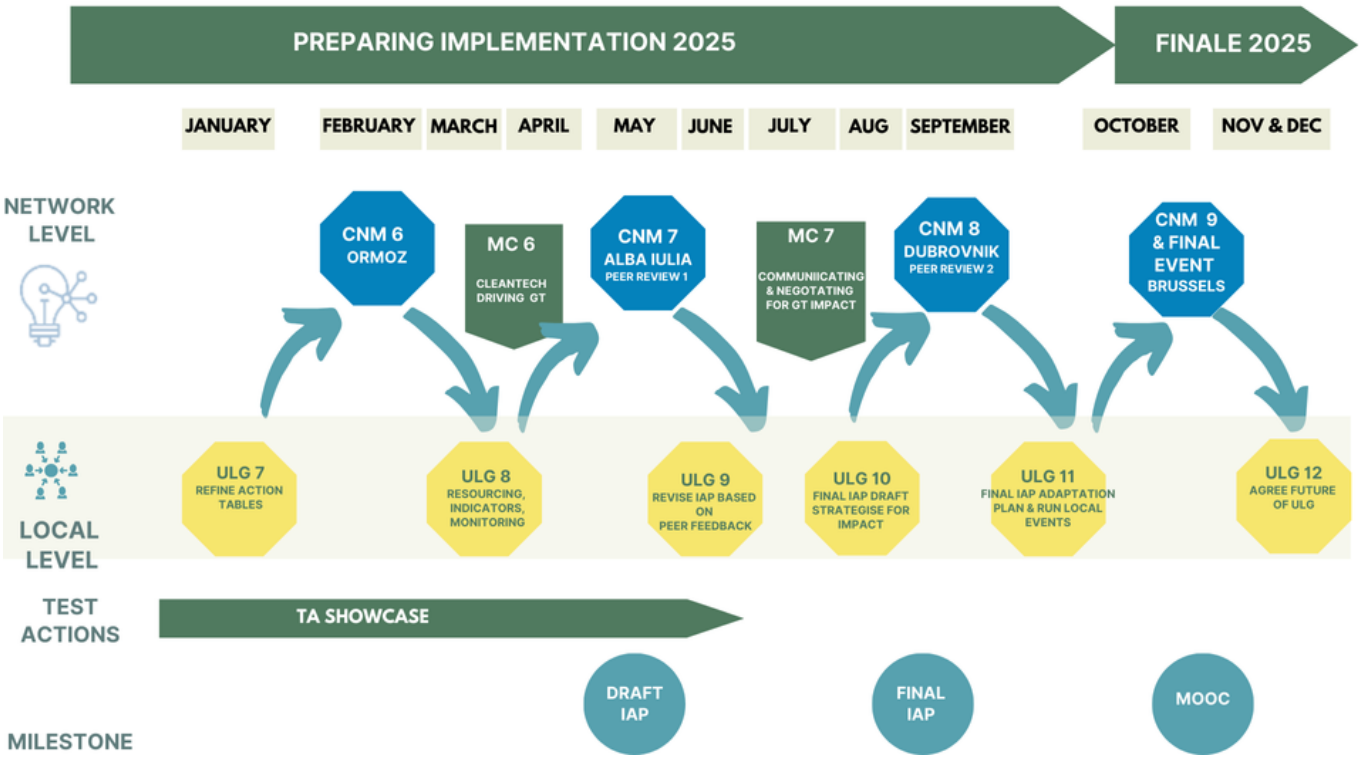
The detailed Excel workplan can be found here on Google Sheets but for the purposes of more digestible illustration and explanation the following series of visualisations provide a snapshot of the contents.



The programme front loads thematic learning as much as possible. In 2024 the network will hold four core network meetings, visiting five partner cities to maximise the sharing of ideas and support the local co-creation process.

In 2025 three partner cities will be visited, with the focus shifting in the second half of the year towards reviewing and refining the draft action plan through a series of peer reviews. A final event and core network meeting is planned to take place in Brussels during the European Week of Regions and Cities. The possibility of planning a joint event with other related URBACT Action Planning Networks such as In4Green will be explored as the network activities progress.

The aim of the event will be to highlight key learnings and messages to policy makers arising from the network, with a focus on challenges and opportunities for small towns and cities in the green industrial transition.



A smooth transfer of knowledge from the transnational exchange and learning programme to the local level is ensured through regular ULG meetings. At least one ULG meeting will take place in each partner city between each transnational meeting. This will ensure both an opportunity to transfer learning at the local level and will also enable the gathering of partner input and the collection of local information that will be required for optimum knowledge sharing and the exchange of good practices at the next core network meeting. A continuous knowledge flow back and forth between the transnational and the local level is therefore ensured.

Communication and thematic outputs designed to transfer learning in a compact, usable and easily understandable manner will support knowledge transfer to the local level and beyond. Outputs such as post-meeting briefing notes, articles, case studies, podcasts and quarterly reports will be produced and these will help to feed the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) which has been chosen as our final network product.

Prior to each of the transnational meetings, a pre-meeting briefing note will be produced to be shared with the ULG, outlining the content of the meetings and any collection of information or input that is required prior to the meeting. A post meeting briefing note will highlight key learning from each transnational meeting and summarise next steps for each partner.

Conclusion

Careful planning and preparation during the application stage has ensured excellent synergy between partners. All partner cities bring a unique set of strengths and opportunities for learning to the network and this is capitalised upon in the work programme.

Throughout our network journey we will also capitalise on synergies with existing projects on the ground in partner cities, with other URBACT networks related to our topic and sub- topics, as well as learning from previous networks and projects. There will in some instances be a need to bring in experience and expertise from outside the network in order to develop new capacities.

There are without doubt, strong opportunities here to influence policy and practice at the local level within individual cities, regions and member states but also at the European level through the Committee of the Regions for example.

Harnessing opportunities thanks to enhanced integration in our planning practice will be vital in ensuring maximum impact for this high potential network both at the local and transnational level.

Credit: Ķekava Municipality

Appendix 1: Menu of Transition Drivers

	1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
Balbriggan	• Economic Corridor Strategy (Governance Model) • Digital solutions driving green transition	• Women in business network • Creative Innovation Hub	• Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Strategy - Public engagement and community led local development • Reducing car dependency, promoting behavioural change for sustainable transport measures	• Enterprise & Training Centre • Skills strategy • Facilitating engagement between industry and education providers	

	1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
Pärnu	• Metsa Plywood Manufacturing – digital transition supporting efficiency • Biofuel and Hydrogenvalley • Pärnu city general planning • Off-shore wind farm development	• E-residency, entrepreneurship supports • Local infrastructure round table • Developing an innovation ecosystem (incl. clubs, tubes & biobooster hackathons) • Co-working & incubator spaces • Women's business network	• Green urban development (car dependency reduction measures, housing construction policy, cycle way/roads policy, parks, biogas buses, methane extraction from landfill etc).	• Facilitating engagement between industry and education providers,	• Local DMO (Destination Management Organisation) • Green Destination • Visit Estonia • Green Key

Tuusula

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
• Scoping study: What businesses to target for the Circular industrial area • Regulations & incentives to enhance circular economy activities • Involving other strategic groups not directly involved in ULG • Logistics company seeking to become net zero • Facilitating heated discussions (campfire) in the planning of industrial spaces	• Citizen & stakeholder participation methods: Participatory budgeting, hackathons • Logistics industry of 100 companies, business network with 440 companies • Several nationally significant logistics companies	• Calculating carbon emissions of municipality purchases; adopting new procurement criteria, with incentives for tenderers to lower emissions. • How to plan for district heating from the outset, example of redistribution of datacentre heat to local houses selling excess heat to network • Investing in education, playgrounds, housing fair, quality of life	• Education possibilities locally about responsible leadership, circular economy, and green transition • Using organic and locally sourced food	• Supporting tourism businesses to become carbon neutral & achieve Sustainable Travel Finland certification. • Joint commercial marketing campaign with 10 municipalities: Helsinki Ring of Industry • Co-operation with airport network and airport logistics • Taking care of well-being and nature brand despite strong industrial development

Kekava

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
• Green Renaissance of old Industrial Spaces - museum railway on a former peat extraction bog • Showcasing progress towards more sustainable business using the case study: Kekava Poultry Plant	• Showcasing Riga Tech Girls (Encouraging women's participation in STEAM)	• Kekava – A cycle friendly city • Lessons from URBACT APN Agents of Co-Existence (social innovation & inclusion in local government) • Culture & creativity as economic drivers (forest gallery) • Public utility company using more sustainable energy sources for heat (e.g. wood chips, solar.)		

Santo Tirso

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
• Fast tracking and incentivising industrial development • Fábrica Santo Thyrso • Support for mobility plans in industrial zones	• Incubation and matchmaking programme in Fábrica ST • Presence and operation of textile cluster • Culture of efficient collaboration between public, private and academic sectors	• Municipality walking the talk (local food sourced for canteen, local market promotion etc) • Sustainable mobility initiatives (intermodal ticketing, e-bikes, cycleways, collaboration with rail company and other municipalities)	• Invest Santo Tirso employee allocation and reallocation programme)	• International marketing of the city to industry

Alba Iulia

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
• Solar PV powering industrial zone • 40% of industrial land must be constructed (not e.g. car park)	• Student Climathon	• Energy poverty mapping • Sustainable and additional mobility initiatives • Renewable Energy solutions for the swimming pool • Digitisation of the planning system	• Mapping HR needs & machinery needs of companies for next 5 years • Dual Education campus project	• City branding

Villena

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
• Planning of the logistics dry port through multi-level governance collaboration • Solar farm development & biodiversity side by side		• Car dependency reduction measures • Cycle lane network • EU projects supporting local policy objectives	• Skills forward planning & integration of logistics in local educational offering	

Ormož

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
• Green Renaissance of old Industrial Spaces - creating space for nature, citizen awareness & ecological tourism • Green infrastructure development in new business zone • Planning the transformation of a disused claypit to new green industrial zone • Managing industrial development near Natura 2000 sites	• Business incubator - multi-level support for young entrepreneurs, both in terms of know how and the possibility of using offices for business development. • Municipal funding calls for tenders to help start-ups, sole traders, employment and various investments in equipment • Municipal scholarships for students	• Circular Repair Café & employment of people far from the labour market • Slovenia's most bee friendly municipality • Migrant Integration Programmes (Ormož People's University)	• Mapping the needs of entrepreneurs, companies and future entrepreneurs to support the green transition skills	• Sustainable Tourism Certification

Dubrovnik

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
• Green Port infrastructure (LEDs & remote app., e-cars & bikes, recycling, e-infrastructure installation) • Green Renaissance of old Industrial Spaces - creating space for citizen participation: TUP • Park'n' Ride & Multi-Modal Integration as tools to relieve traffic • Green Infrastructure: Parks development & upgrade contribute to the city's green vision	• Port collaboration with university, air quality dashboard, seabed impacts etc. • City grants to support women entrepreneurs • RemoteIT APN	• Digital mobility solutions e.g., parking app • Respect the City • Plastic Smart Cities - Action plan: The City of Dubrovnik as the first Croatian Plastic Smart City (from 2020) ; Action Plan to reduce plastic pollution in the city of Dubrovnik	• Plastic Smart City Dubrovnik: Green hospitality workshop - focused on ways of environmentall y responsible action in the hospitality sector, with an emphasis on composting and reduction of single-use plastics; Aimed at catering and hospitality students	• Plastic Smart City

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Balbriggan ULG Members

- Natalie Dineen (F) Property Services Section, Fingal County Council
- Declan Ryan (M) Town Regeneration Officer, Fingal County Council
- Martin Daly (M) Balbriggan Enterprise Centre
- Richard Berney (M) Chair, Balbriggan Chamber of Commerce
- Cllr Tony Murphy (M) Fingal County Council (Independent)
- Cllr Karen Power (F) Fingal County Council (Green Party)
- Cllr Grainne Maguire (F) Fingal County Council (Independent)
- Cllr Brendan Ryan (M) Fingal County Council (The Labour Party)
- Cllr Tom O'Leary (M) Fingal County Council (Fine Gael)
- Deiric O'Broin (M) Dublin City University
- Conor Simpson (M) Industrial Development Authority (IDA)
- David Storey (M) Director of Services, Fingal County Council Climate Action & Active Travel
- Caroline Power (F) Regional Enterprise Office
- Amanda Smyth (F) Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Programme Manager
- Aishling Hyland (F) Digital Strategy Manager, Fingal County Council
- Deirdre Carroll (F) Fingal Local Enterprise Office
- TBC Technological University Dublin representative (TBC)

Balbriggan Project Team

- Aoife Sheridan (F) Project Co-ordinator
- Áine Donlon Kavanagh (F) ULG Co-ordinator
- Alison Foster (F) Financial Officer
- Gavin Cusack (M) Communications Officer

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Urban Area of Dubrovnik ULG Members

- Vlaho Margaretić (M) City of Dubrovnik Department For Tourism, Economy & Sea
- Blaženka Kordić Aleksić (F) City of Dubrovnik Tourist Board
- Marijana Vrlić (F) Municipality of Dubrovačko Primorje
- Hrvoje Spremić (M) Dubrovnik Airport
- Marija Galiot (F) Municipality of Konavle
- Miho Baće (M) TUP - UTD Ragusa
- Mila Koludrović (F) Croatian Chamber of Commerce (County Level)
- Ivan Deranja (M) Sanitat Dubrovnik Ltd.
- Nikša Grljević (M) Libertas Dubrovnik Ltd.
- Kristina Laptalo (F) Dubrovnik Port Authority
- Dario Barbarić (M) Dubrovnik Port Authority

Urban Area of Dubrovnik Project Team

- Ms. Kristina N. Vujanović (F) Project Coordinator
- Ms. Mia Kurtović (F) Administrative Officer
- Ms. Ivana Katurić (F) ULG Coordinator

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Ormož ULG Members

- Sandra Kumer (F) Youth Representative
- Denis Žuran (M) Representative for Young Entrepreneurs
- Mitja Mar (M) Representative of the Municipality of Ormož
- Ana Vaupotič (F) NGO Representative
- Jelka Zidarič Trstenjak (F) Director of the Municipality Središče ob Dravi
- Sebastjan Šimon (M) SME Representative

Ormož Project Team

- Polona Kukovec Lakota (F) Project Coordinator
- Nina Prelog (F) Communication Officer
- Matej Rogač (M) Finance Officer
- Matjaž Kosi (M) ULG Coordinator

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Alba Iulia ULG Members

- Dan Toma (M) Chief of Municipal Police Dep.
- Anca Orzea (F) Chamber of Commerce
- Mariel Petric (M) CEO of Kangoo Pack
- Mihai Corcheș (M) „1 December 1918" University
- Gyongyi Huniadi (F) VCST
- Dorin Fleser (M) CEO of Delex (TBC) and member of bikers association Biciclim
- Nicolae Miclăuș (M) Biciclim Association
- Alexandru Damian (M) Chief architect of Alba Iulia Municipality
- Ecaterina Bălăneanu (F) Chief of Office for GIS
- Paul Cosma (M) Carolina Mall

Alba Iulia Project Team

- Tudor Drâmbărean (M) Project manager
- Nicolae Neag (M) PR and communication manager
- Liviu Stanciu (M) ULG coordinator

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Ķekava ULG Members

- Ervīns Lasmanis (M) SIA Zemguss, Ķekava Municipality Business Council (KMBC) chairman
- Iveta Bikse (F) JSC Putnu fabrika "Ķekava" (poultry producer)
- Artis Cicens (M) SIA Natural Cudless, KMBC board member
- Māris Logins (M) SIA Konfelāde, KMBC board member
- Aiga Smiltāne (F) Local action group "Daugavkrasts"
- Dace Helmane (F)Institute for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility
- Rūdolfs Cimdiņš (M) A representative of Riga Planning Region
- Andis Damlics (M) "Baložu komunālā saimniecība" (municipal utility company)
- A representative of Riga Technical University (spatial planning expert)
- A representative of logistics company "Dominante"
- A representative of the business centre "Rāmava" (sustainable business)
- A representative of NGO "Bānīša draugu klubs" (peat museum railway in Baloži)

Ķekava Project Team

- Iveta Bikse (F) ULG Co-ordinator
- Ligita Pudža (F) Project coordinator
- Ginta Vecroze (F) Finance Officer
- Inga Bilko (F) Communication Officer
- Kristine Danovska (F) Project Expert
- Māris Ozoliņš (M) Project Expert

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Santo Tirso ULG Members

- Filioa Franco (F) WOWPLUG (charging stations for electric vehicles)
- Pedro Costa (M) SOPSA Eco Innovation
- Ana Sousa (F) Etuk Factory
- Rui Barros Garcia (M) GARCIA GARCIA, S.A.
- André Machado (M) LOGICOR
- Hugo Assoreira (M) ACIST
- Luís Bragança (M) Minho's University
- Vera Araújo (F) INVEST Santo Tirso Municipal Division
- Mariana Gomes (F) European Funds Division
- Adelaide Leite (F) Public Space Management Division
- Carla Moreira (F) Environment and Sustainability Division
- TBC Porto Metropolitan Area
- TBC Mobility and Transport Authority
- Nuno Ferreira (M) CIM AVE - Ave Mobilidade
- Pedro Castro Lopes (M) TIP - Porto Intermodal Transport
- Ana Lopes (F) TRANSDEV MOBILIDADE, SA
- TBC AdEPorto – Porto Energy Agency

Santo Tirso Project Team

- Vera Araújo (F) Project Coordinator
- Mariana Gomes (F) Finance Officer
- Cátia Sofia Dias (F) Project Manager
- Gustavo Paranhos (M) Financial Support

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Pärnu ULG Members

- Andres Sooniste (M) Chamber of Pärnu Entrepreneurs (50+ members)
- Silver Smeljanski (M) Deputy Mayor Pärnu City Government
- Garri Raagmaa (M) Director of Pärnu College
- Tori County - TBC
- Aivo Lepp (M) Development specialist Pärnu City Government
- Priit Pruul (M) Communication Manager Rail Baltic Estonia
- Siim Orav (M) City Architect Pärnu City Government
- Eveli Uisk (F)Head of Development Department Pärnu City Government
- Jaana Junson (M) Head of Planning Commission Pärnu City Council
- Toomas Rõhu (M) Head of Tõstamaa Pärnu District Municipality
- Marika Valter (F) Head of Paikuse District Municipality
- Priit Annus (M) Head of Audru District Municipality
- Mihkel Kärg (M) Enterprise Estonia Regional Investment Consultant District Municipality
- Margus Randmäe (M) Managing Director Destination Pärnu
- Erik Reinhold (M) Pärnu Development Centre
- Svea Uusen (F) Pärnu Development Centre
- Sander Kilk (M) Pärnu Port
- Estonian Transport Authority - TBC
- Pärnu Airport - TBC

Pärnu Project Team

- Silver Smeljanski (M) Expert, ULG Coordinator
- Elen Kuningas (F) Project Coordinator
- Aivo Lepp (M) Project Coordinator
- Erik Reinhold (M) Expert

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Villena ULG Members

- Manuel Amorós (M) Chief of Villena City Develoment Agency
- Eva Tomás (F) Villena City Develoment Agency´s agent
- Mª José Sauco (F)Chief of Villena´s Comerce and services association
- Mª Ángeles García (F) Villena´s Villena´s Comerce and services association´s agent
- Jorge García Ferre (M) Business Owner and Villena´s Nodo Logistico Platform´s coordinator
- Cristina Picazo (F) Architech
- Mª Virtudes Navarro (F) Architech
- Alvaro Hernandez (M) Wasting Control Technician
- Mariví Pardo (F) Villena´s Nodo Logistico Platform´s member
- Pepe Ferri (M) Bussiness owner and Villena´s Nodo Logistico Platform´s member

Villena Project Team

- Alberto Lorente (M) External Consultant
- Jordi Ortiz Gisbert (M) External Consultant
- Fulgencio Cerdán (M) Villena City Council - Mayor
- Cllr. Javier Martínez (M) Villena City Council – Project Coordinator
- Lorena López Chico (F) Financial control
- Gemma Pella Alsina (F) Communication
- Eva Tomás Motos (F) ULG Coordinator

Appendix 2: ULG & Team Members

Tuusula ULG Members

- Juha Heltimoinen (M) Tuusula Entrepreneurs Association
- Kristiina Salo (F) Tuusula Municipality (TM)
- Heikki Lahtinen (M) LIMOWA (Transportation and logistics network) and a member of the EU logistics networks ALICE & EUROPLATFORMS EEIG
- Timo Mattila (M) Zoning Planner (TM)
- Petteri Puputti (M) Project Manager Focus Industrial Area (TM)
- Taina Toivanen (F) Traffic Planning Engineer, Zoning Department (TM)
- Jukka-Matti Laakso (M) Traffic Engineer, Public Transportation Unit (TM)
- Heidi Hagman (F) Participatory Approach Leader and Development Manager, Strategic Planning Unit (TM)
- Elina Sinivuori (F) Keuda Group, Vocational Education and Training
- Katja Humalainen (F) Helsinki Ring of Industry
- Elina Pekkarinen (F) Keuke Business Development
- Riikka Vataja (F) Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce (TBC)
- Outi Toivanen-Visti (F) Helsinki Region Chamber of Commerce (TBC)
- Tiia Bister (F) Alfaroc Logistics Oy (TBC)
- Teemu Hirko (M) Logitri Oy (TBC)
- Markus Autio (M) Velox logistiikka Oy (TBC)
- Helsinki University (TBC)
- Aalto University (TBC)

Tuusula Project Team

- Kristiina Salo (F) Project Coordinator
- Toni Popovic (M) ULG Coordinator
- Seija Lahtinen (F) ULG Secretary
- Timo Nurmi (M) Communications Expert
- TBC due to staff change - Financial Officer

The EcoCore Project

Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

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