

\\ Quarterly Report 02 ///

Stories and updates from U.R IMPACT Network



In this report we explore what cities are doing locally to test and prove their Theories of Change. We will also tell you about a peer visit from and finally offer some tools we have used

July 2024



NETWORK OVERVIEW



U.R. Impact, co-funded by the URBACT IV European program, is spearheaded by the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo. Its primary aim is to craft an Integrated Action Plan assessing the societal impact of urban revitalisation initiatives.

Emphasising the significance of social impact and community engagement, this project seeks to reconceptualise urban renewal endeavours. This entails reorienting these actions to prioritise the welfare of citizens—addressing their social, economic, and environmental well-being at the core of these transformative processes. Additionally, by fostering a greater sense of belonging and encouraging civic involvement, the initiative aims to enhance community participation in these efforts.



Three key components for impact

The network core object is to learn and implement social impact management in their cities. the methodology around this aim is divided into three main elements:

Intentionality puts impact evaluation ex-ante, allowing planning designing for impact and includes constant monitoring and replanning

Additionality Taking into account various areas and stakeholders involved in the process.

Measurability Collecting valuable data and showcasing the impact.

City identity and key themes

Across the ten diverse cities engaged in this transformational journey, several key themes emerge, reflecting common challenges, innovative approaches, and distinctive characteristics intrinsic to each location.

Crafting a unique identity and safeguarding local heritage hold utmost significance for all U.R IMPACT cities. While some aim to establish a distinct identity and allure to draw in new permanent residents, others prioritise enhancing the sense of place for current inhabitants.

Social Inclusion	Sustainable Tourism
Brain drain and youth policy	Heritage and innovation
Governance models	Local commerce and proximity economy

Testing Actions: Driving change through experimentation



Experimentation is key to driving change, which is why URBACT has introduced testing actions into the integrated action-planning process. These testing actions are designed to quickly and effectively address doubts and refine solutions before full implementation. URBACT's latest study highlights the positive impact of these testing actions, showing that even rough and quick tests can provide valuable insights. Twelve out of hundreds of examples are presented in the Testing Action Catalogue. Partner cities are strongly encouraged to follow a participatory approach, bringing together diverse perspectives through URBACT Local Groups. This collaborative method ensures that solutions are inclusive and effective.

Testing Actions within the U.R. Impact Framework

In the context of U.R. Impact, **testing actions play a crucial role in the impact evaluation methodology.** This approach aligns with the core objectives of intentionality, additionality, and measurability, forming an essential component of the project's strategy to ensure effective urban revitalization.

Intentionality

Testing actions are implemented with clear intent, allowing cities to plan and design interventions with a focus on anticipated impacts. By incorporating ex-ante impact evaluation, cities can monitor and replan their strategies based on the outcomes of these preliminary tests. For example, a city might test a new community engagement platform on a small scale before rolling it out city-wide, using feedback from this trial to refine the platform.

Additionality

The testing actions involve various stakeholders, ensuring a comprehensive approach that takes into account the diverse areas affected by urban revitalization efforts. Involving stakeholders from different sectors helps identify potential issues and benefits that might not be evident from a single perspective. For instance, a city could pilot a new public transport route with input from residents, businesses, and environmental groups, ensuring that the final plan addresses the needs and concerns of all parties involved.

Measurability

Collecting valuable data from testing actions is fundamental to the U.R. Impact's commitment to measurability. By documenting the outcomes and processes of these tests, cities can build a robust evidence base to showcase the impact of their initiatives. This data-driven approach not only helps in refining current actions but also in planning future interventions. For example, a city might test different methods of reducing urban heat islands and measure the effectiveness of each, providing clear evidence of what works best.

What are the cities in U.R Impact planning to test?

Youth perception of the city centre - Mertola Organise a walk through the Historic Centre with children and youth, encouraging them to photograph the aspects they find appealing and those they consider problematic. Follow this with a creative writing workshop where participants articulate the meaning behind their photographs. The project will culminate in the compilation of a book, featuring the children's drawings, written descriptions, and photos, with the collaboration of an illustrator and a writer. This initiative aims to present a unique, youthful perspective of the Historic Centre, highlighting both its strengths and areas for improvement.



City centre open stage - Broumov Broumov is transforming its city centre, particularly the main square, into a dynamic open stage for community engagement. Citizens will be invited to propose and create a variety of events, making the heart of the city a vibrant hub of activity. To facilitate this initiative, a call for proposals will be issued, encouraging residents to bring their ideas to life. A dedicated coordinator will be appointed to manage and support these activities, ensuring smooth organisation and execution. This initiative aims to foster community spirit, encourage creativity, and make the city centre a lively and inclusive space for all.



“South Connection Exhibition” Murcia - Murcia is launching the "South Connection Exhibition," a visual showcase designed to help citizens see and understand the urban regeneration changes happening in their city. This exhibition will provide a platform for residents to share their ideas and engage directly with decision-makers. By facilitating this open dialogue, the initiative aims to ensure that urban development is transparent and inclusive, allowing the community to actively participate in shaping the future of their city. The exhibition will serve as a bridge between the public and the authorities, fostering a collaborative approach to urban regeneration.



Longford - Several ideas have emerged to enhance community involvement in the project. First, the publication of project details in multiple languages on the Municipality's website aims to inform and engage residents from diverse communities. Additionally, it has been suggested that the URBACT Local Group (ULG) set up a Facebook page to share information about their work, progress, and opportunities for public participation. Furthermore, the ULG plans to host a community open event, inviting various stakeholders to engage in discussions and activities over one or two days. These efforts aim to foster inclusivity and active participation in the project.



Kamza - As the city wants to create a new multifunctional green space in the western outskirts of the city, with the aim of revitalising unused spaces and transforming them into meeting points for people of all ages by offering multiple spaces and services (walking, sports activities, recreational activities, economical activities ect.) The Testing action will involve citizens – especially young people – in this place by simulating some creative and sporting activities and, ultimately, co-design the development of the green area with a multifunctional approach by collecting their opinions and ideas.



Bielsko Biala - Organise a research walk through the courtyards and staircases of buildings in the Biała district, led by experts in history and architecture. These experts will guide participants around the most intriguing corners of this part of the city. Participants will have the opportunity to photograph the most interesting elements of the spaces and objects they visit. The collected photographs will be used to create an exhibition showcasing the rich heritage of the Biała district, highlighting its historical and architectural significance.



Cinisello Balsamo - In our multicultural and reserved neighbourhood, we aim to enhance awareness of local services and strengthen community bonds. Inspired by "If Mohammed will not go to the mountain, the mountain must come to Mohammed," we plan an event where residents and stakeholders work together.

Working groups, each in different coloured t-shirts, will create colourful stencils on the ground, highlighting activities like language courses, book lending, and school programs. The event will conclude at Crocetta bridge with a top-down photo capturing the unified, vibrant image created by the mixed colours of the groups.

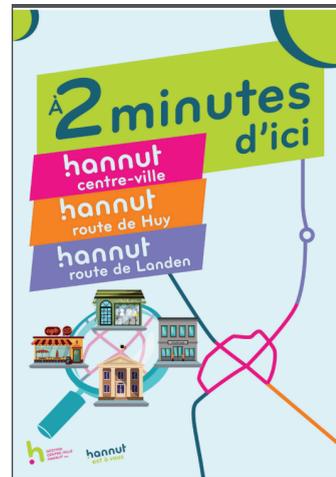


Targu Frumos Sustainable Mobility and Parking Initiative - To address parking challenges and promote sustainable mobility in Târgu Frumos, we propose a comprehensive initiative. First, we aim to encourage residents to walk or use bicycles more frequently. To facilitate this, we will create additional facilities for purchasing and using bicycles, along with enhancing infrastructure to support car-free travel options. Our primary action involves demolishing old garages to construct a new public parking lot, significantly increasing the number of available parking spaces.



Hannut

Hannut will implement two testing actions to improve connectivity between the city centre and a new point of interest, located just three minutes away. In September, during a major event near the future spot, the city will analyse pedestrian movement between the city centre and this location. Based on these findings, directional signs will be installed to enhance wayfinding. A follow-up analysis will take place in December, coinciding with the biggest event of the year. The goal is to strengthen community pride and positively impact the city centre by leveraging this new point of interest.



Bovec - To address the lack of attraction for young people in Bovec, we propose developing Buška izba as a safe, multifunctional space. This initiative includes creating a coworking area, organising youth-centric events, and fostering intergenerational socialising. These efforts aim to provide young people with a place to socialise, learn, work, and engage with the community, ultimately encouraging them to stay, return, and get involved in local politics. We will measure success through participation rates, satisfaction surveys, website functionality, and the impact on our target group.



MEASURABILITY

Focus on Impact Indicators



The recent coaching sessions led by Lidia Gryszkiewicz from April 15 to April 19, 2024, have provided significant insights into the progress and challenges faced by our partner cities in the U.R. Impact network. The primary focus was on refining the Theory of Change and enhancing the proposed impact indicators, which are crucial for effective impact measurement. This report highlights key findings and examples from various cities, emphasising the importance of these indicators in driving urban regeneration projects.

The Importance of Developing Indicators: Developing robust impact indicators is essential for several reasons. Firstly, indicators provide a clear and measurable way to track progress towards the goals outlined in the Theory of Change. They help cities understand whether their initiatives are making the desired impact and where adjustments may be needed. Secondly, well-defined indicators foster accountability and transparency, ensuring that all stakeholders, including citizens, government bodies, and funding organisations, can see the tangible results of urban regeneration efforts. Finally, indicators allow for the comparison of outcomes across different projects and cities, facilitating the sharing of best practices and lessons learned within the U.R. Impact network. This collective learning enhances the overall effectiveness and sustainability of urban revitalization initiatives.

Considering the “How Might We” questions (See Report 1), and thinking about the overall social impact objectives of the network (See BLS), These are possible common indicators:

Sense of Place	Social Cohesion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community satisfaction and pride surveys ● Number of cultural and heritage preservation projects ● Participation in local cultural and community events ● Public perception of local identity and attachment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Levels of social trust and cooperation (survey results) ● Participation rates in community activities and initiatives ● Diversity and inclusivity of social groups in community events ● Number of collaborative projects involving different social groups

<p style="text-align: center;">Ecological Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air and water quality indices • Biodiversity measures and conservation efforts • Sustainable resource use metrics (e.g., recycling rates, energy consumption) • Amount of green space per capita and its accessibility 	<p style="text-align: center;">Access to Safe and Inclusive Public Spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and availability of public spaces (e.g., parks, plazas) • Usage rates of public spaces for social interaction and recreational activities • Safety measures and crime rates in public spaces • Inclusivity measures (e.g., accessibility for people with disabilities)
<p style="text-align: center;">Healthier Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and mental health indicators (e.g., prevalence of diseases, mental health surveys) • Access to healthcare services • Community health outcomes (e.g., life expectancy, obesity rates) • Participation in health and wellness programs 	<p style="text-align: center;">Economic Vibrancy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new businesses and entrepreneurial ventures • Job creation and employment rates • Economic activity in regenerated areas (e.g., retail sales volume) • Investment in local infrastructure and business development

INTENTIONALITY

Learning to become more integrated - The peer visit of Cinisello Balsamo Directors to the city of Murcia



Between 27 and 29 May 2024, a delegation from the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo visited the city of Murcia for a peer visit. The idea of the integrated approach is at the basis of the project and aims at assessing the impact of urban regeneration actions on the territory and citizens. For this reason, getting to know and study the virtuous actions of the partners is useful: the trip is designed to deepen the activities undertaken in recent years by the Spanish city and which are revolutionising urban planning.



After an initial discussion on the U.R. Impact project with Spanish colleagues, the meeting focused on the exchange of good practices of cities. In order to get a concrete view, the Cinisello Balsamo delegation visited some pivotal sites of change to understand how the different activities were developed in the area. A first taste already in the choice of location for the meeting: the Cuartel de Artillería, the former barracks converted into a place of exchange and cultural centre. The different buildings in the square house multifunctional spaces, as well as the university, the library, a museum and exhibition spaces.



Thanks to a visit to the Segura riverfront - currently being redeveloped by the 'Murcia Rio' project - and the 'South Connection' project area, the managers were able to experience, with practical examples, the significance of this type of intervention. Above all, the importance of coordinated planning emerged, aimed at acting not individually but through collective and multi-sectoral planning, typical of Intentionality.



// Stories from the local level //



BOVEC - URBACT Local Group and Youth Strategy Progress

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) in Bovec held a meeting on June 13, 2024, at Buška izba, an evolving hub for intergenerational gatherings. During this meeting, the group thoroughly reviewed the Municipality of Bovec's new and first Youth Strategy. Two key testing activities were identified: creating a coworking space and preparing a package of activities for young people. The ULG is primarily composed of young individuals, including students, public and private sector employees, and NGO members.

This quarter, the ULG initiated a social event called "**Gaming Night,**" organised by a non-profit organisation. This event provided a space for young people to engage in board games and video games tournaments and VR experiences, fostering social interaction beyond the regular Buška izba schedule. The aim is to better connect with the youth, understand their needs, and adapt accordingly. The Youth Strategy's clear objectives and actions guide these efforts.

The Gaming Night highlighted the necessity of having a dedicated coordinator to oversee and engage participants. Additionally, it revealed that some young attendees prefer using advanced and costly digital equipment, which poses a challenge for future event planning.



\\ Stories from the local level //



LONGFORD - URBACT Local Group and testing actions

Our ULG has met on a monthly basis this quarter, with the primary focus being on **defining the strengths and challenges related to our project and to develop the testing actions**. This involved a series of workshop meetings to discuss and develop ideas, engaging the ULG members in the co-creation of the testing actions. The ULG are very interested in the development of testing actions to create awareness of the project and opportunities for the community in the Pobal le Cheile site.

The main stakeholders involved in the ULG are representatives of the **Town Team** which is an umbrella group for the wider town, the traders in the town, the new communities and the primary service providers of the space in question, as well as local community representatives. They are bringing diverse and new views to the table, enabling a wide discussion on the challenges facing the town and how this project can be used to improve the town. Workshops were used in the ULG meetings, breaking the group into smaller groups to allow free flowing discussions and ensure that everyone's voice is heard.

The ULG is at the early stages of developing the testing actions. Some of the ideas that have come forward include the **publication of details of the project in different languages on the Municipality website** to encourage people from the various communities to inform themselves about the project and encourage them to become involved. It has also been suggested that the ULG **set up a Facebook page to publish information on the work of the ULG** and the progress and opportunities for people to become involved. A further action will include the hosting of a **community open event**, inviting various stakeholders to engage over a day or two days. It is hoped through this engagement that there will be an increased number of people aware of the services and opportunities available, as well as engaging with the funding bodies and potential service providers to engage them further in the project and garner additional support.

One of the challenges related to the testing actions identified is to give ownership of those actions back to the ULG and to get them involved in the development and delivery of them. Further discussion is also required with the ULG on what do we want to measure through those actions and how that measurement will happen.

Two wider community engagement meetings were also held in April and May, inviting the public in to identify areas of the town that need to be improved and opportunities that they see in the town. The first event had a very poor turnout with only 6 people turning out. The second event was slightly better with approximately 25 people turning up to give their feedback and input. This has given us a baseline in terms of engagement and also made clear that we need to be more innovative in how events are promoted. The next events may have to look at different ways to engage the community and get them involved.



\\ Stories from the local level //



Broumov - URBACT Local Group and testing actions

Over the past few months, Broumov has seen significant local engagement and development through the initiatives of its URBACT Local Group (ULG). Throughout April, May, and June, the ULG met monthly, focusing on key topics that directly impact the community. **In April, discussions centred on the contentious issue of parking in the city centre, which continued into May with further deliberations and insights gathered from local stakeholders.** The latter part of May brought attention to testing activities and social impact measurements, highlighting the group's commitment to evidence-based decision-making. By June, the ULG turned its focus to **appointing a city centre manager**, marking a strategic move towards enhancing urban vitality and local business support.

The involvement of various stakeholders has been instrumental in driving these discussions forward. Local government officials, including the mayor and council members, alongside key city departments such as City Office and Technical Services, have actively contributed their expertise. The ULG also reached out to external experts, such as the head of municipal police and a parking systems specialist, demonstrating a **collaborative approach to tackling complex urban challenges.**

Initiatives launched during this period include **the introduction of outdoor furniture in the city centre**, aimed at creating vibrant public spaces conducive to social interactions. Additionally, **the ULG has proposed recommendations to the City Council regarding parking reforms** to prioritise pedestrians and reduce traffic congestion, reflecting a proactive stance on sustainable urban development.

Despite these strides, the ULG has faced challenges, particularly in overcoming initial scepticism and building public trust. Previous negative experiences have influenced perceptions, necessitating a strategic approach focused on incremental, visible improvements. Regular communication through local media channels and direct engagement with the community have been crucial in garnering early positive feedback. Residents and business owners alike have expressed enthusiasm for the tangible changes, such as the provision of free outdoor furniture, which has revitalised local spaces and fostered a sense of community pride.

Looking ahead, the Bromouv ULG remains committed to navigating these challenges and leveraging early successes to inform future initiatives. By continuing to prioritise local needs and inclusive planning, they aim to build upon these foundations of positive change, ensuring Broumov evolves into a more vibrant and sustainable urban environment.



TOOL FOCUS

Testing actions Canvas and the testing ideation workshop

What is the Testing Actions Canvas?

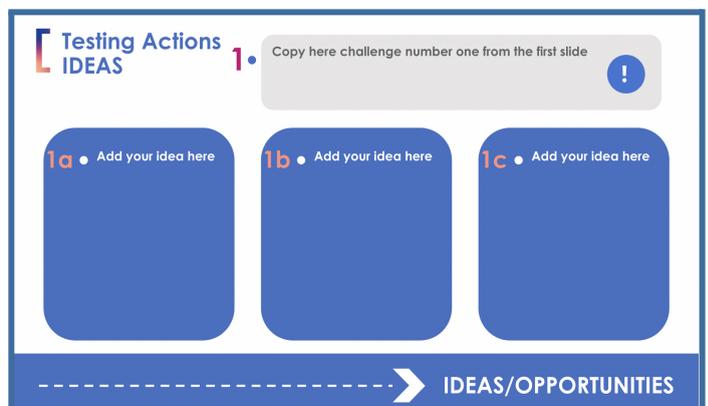
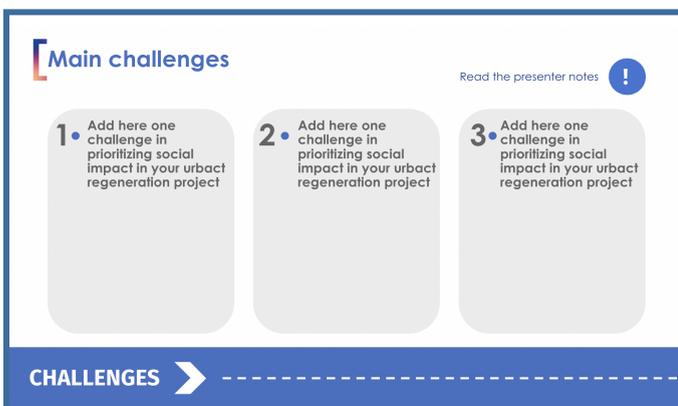
The Testing Actions Canvas is a tool designed to assist cities in planning, defining, and describing their testing actions. It aims to facilitate collaboration among local groups in developing ideas for testing actions that can effectively validate concepts or trial parts of a larger action before the implementation phase. The Canvas provides a structured framework to ensure that these testing actions are small-scale, quick, and cost-effective.

How to Use the Testing Actions Canvas

The Testing Actions Canvas can be utilised as part of a more comprehensive workshop for action planning and ideation. Here's how to use it:

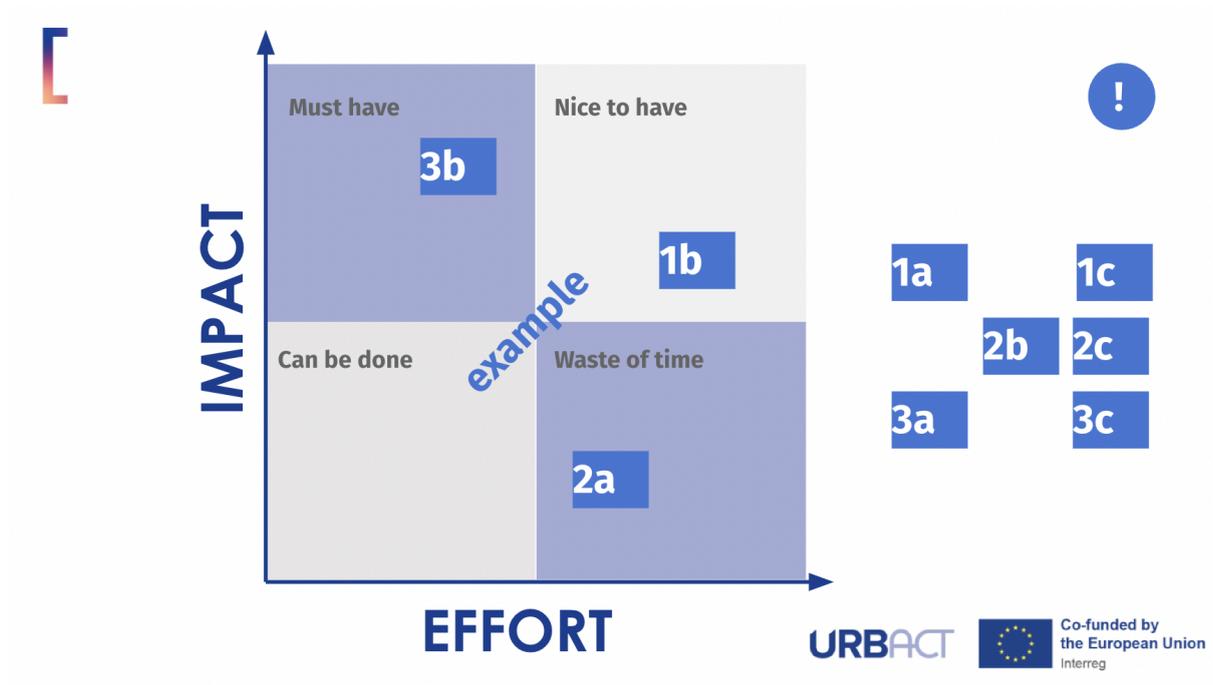
1. Workshop Setup:

- Identify Challenges: Begin by summarising the challenges that have already been defined.
- Break Down Challenges: Divide each challenge into three micro-challenges.
- Generate Ideas: For each micro-challenge, the Urban Local Group (ULG) should come up with three potential actions. This results in at least nine ideas, encouraging participants to explore diverse solutions while staying focused on the identified challenges.



2. Idea Selection:

- Use a simple effort-impact matrix to choose the most promising idea from the nine generated.



3. Complete the Testing Actions Canvas:

- Part 1: Rationale and Description:
 - Why: Document why the chosen idea was selected, summarising the challenge and the assumptions behind the action.
 - What: Describe what the testing action will entail and provide an initial overview of what will be evaluated.

Name of your city - Canvas part 1

The Challenge	What if...	We want to test if...
Write your specific challenge here	Formulate the question, the assumption you want to answer with, through your testing action	What exactly will you be able to test? Interest? Opinions? Feasibility? Availability? Be specific
Our IDEA		Measurement
Describe the precise format you will use. Be specific.		What are the elements you will be able to measure? Number of people, dissatisfaction (through a survey), unpredicted reactions..

- Part 2: Implementation:
 - Detail the specific actions, timing, and the individuals involved, including both the target group and those responsible for implementation.
 - Outline how the actions will be documented.

Name of your city - Canvas part 2

When	Roles	Target group
What is the best time for your testing action? How long will it last?	Who will be responsible for what?	Who will test it?
Actions		Documentation
List the sub-actions you are going to do in order to hold the testing actions		How will you guarantee the documentation of the activities?

- Part 3: Evaluation:

- Include a table specifying what will be measured, the indicators, the expected results, and the final outcomes achieved.

Name of your city - Canvas part 3

Measurement	indicator	Expected output	Actual output
Describe what is it that you want to measure	What is a useful indicator for that?	What is your expectation?	What really happened?

By following these steps, the Testing Actions Canvas helps to ideate, describe, plan, implement, and measure the effectiveness of testing actions, ensuring a thorough and systematic approach to urban planning and development.

WHAT NEXT?



U.R Impact partners will continue their testing actions, which will form the basis for the next phase of the Integrated Action Plans. The outcomes and overall evaluation of these actions will be summarised in a mid-term report. The mid-term meeting is scheduled for late September in Bovec, where partners will explore sustainable tourism and youth engagement. Following this, partners will resume their work at the local level.