

CITIES@HEART

TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE

2nd QUARTERLY NETWORK REPORT ♥

April 2024
June 2024



URBACT



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

♥ Table of contents

1. Cities@Heart	3
2. Our pathway to the City Centres Toolbox	4
3. What is going on in our URBACT local groups?	6
4. The third transnational meeting: Quadrilatero Urbano	11
5. Our quarterly best practices	20
• 5.1 Learnings from Quadrilatero Urbano's transnational meeting	21
• 5.2 Cities@Heart After Dark webinar	26
6. Next steps	27

♥ 1. Cities@Heart

Cities@Heart mobilises ten European urban areas. Led by the Greater Paris Metropolis (a public entity with a sound track record in downtown revitalisation policy), network partners work together to understand the way **city centres** function and create a new framework to be used in city centre improvement initiatives.

- Quadrilatero Urbano** (Portugal)
- Granada** (Spain)
- Sligo** (Ireland)
- The Greater Paris Metropolis** (France)
- Fleurus** (Belgium)
- Cesena** (Italy)
- Celje** (Slovenia)
- Osijek** (Croatia)
- Krakow Metropolis** (Poland)
- Amfiktyonies** (Greece)



♥ 2. Where are we in our pathway to the City Centres toolbox?

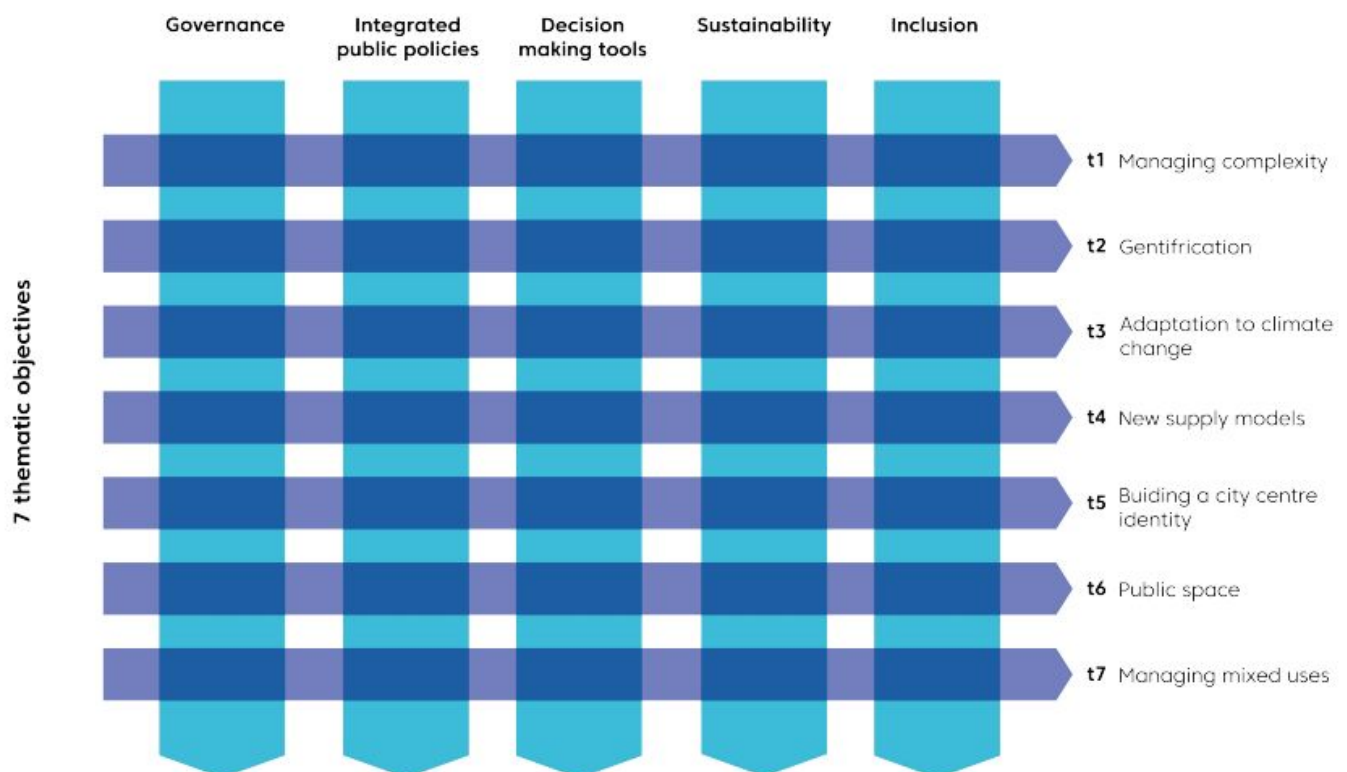
Our roadmap proposes to exchange best practices and define indicators for public policies deployed in the city centre to generate a series of thematic objectives.

After one year of network activity, through meetings and dedicated workshops, we have explored the management of complexity, gentrification, adaptation to climate change, new supply models and the creation of a city centre identity.

Governance, integration, decision-making tools, sustainability and inclusions have been transversal drivers of all our learning pathway.

The 1st year highlights

3 transnational meetings
5 strategic objectives
3 online webinars



This quarter, we have been working specifically on the following challenges:

New models of supply (t4)

This topic focuses on revitalising and diversifying commercial offerings. Strategies include identifying and managing vacant spaces, strengthening local and proximity consumption circuits, including digital marketplaces, and exploring new commercial models such as ecommerce and last-mile logistics

Building a city centre identity (t5)

Defining the various roles of the urban centre, whether as a meeting place, service hub, or space for differentiated experiences, through strategies like place-making or animation is fundamental. However, it is important to consider how these strategies may complement or conflict with the primary role of the centre as a living environment for local communities. It is also essential to reflect on the shared identity of multiple users, with heritage and public space being key elements.



♥ 3. What is going on in our URBACT Local Groups

During this second quarter, the URBACT Local Groups in each city have held various meetings where they have continued their work. This quarter was focusing on planning and designing the Integrated Action Plans structure, adapted to their respective contexts.

The various ULG coordinators have been also disseminating the insights gained from the network's meetings.



What is going on?

Celje ULG

The meeting organised by the Celje ULG this quarter focused on the creation of a one-page document containing all the essential information for providers operating in the city centre, with the aim of improving the accessibility of key data. They also proposed a call for economic ideas, co-founded and supervised by the municipality.

Cesena ULG

The ULG from Cesena has been working on the development of the small actions and the capitalisation of the knowledge shared in the Granada TNM. They have met three times this quarter, the first time to involve citizens in the decision-making process and in the design of the small actions and to share the best actions explained in Granada. The second and third were focused on starting the design of the Small Scale Actions, where specific designers are starting to be involved.

The IAP Vision

Celje vision for the IAP

Celje's aims to transform its city centre into a vibrant 'urban oasis'. This means a vibrant and diverse, compact city centre where businesses can flourish while improving the quality of life for residents.

Cesena vision for the IAP

Cesena aims at improving the accessibility to the urban centre, enhancing the quality of the public space by retrofitting the street leading to the central squares and providing a space for the local associations to organise small events and revitalise the city centre.

What is going on?

Fleurus ULG meeting

The Fleurus ULG meeting this quarter was characterised by the participation of a wide range of business stakeholders who discussed how to revitalise the city centre economy through topics such as the implementation of shop & go locations, festivals and terraces among other interesting initiatives.

Granada ULG meeting

In spite of the fact that there has not been an ULG meeting this quarter, the participation of some stakeholders in the previous TNM was key to understand the Granada context.

The IAP Vision

Fleurus' vision for the IAP

Fleurus is planning how the Integrated Action Plan can implement ten actions that will contribute to the development of public spaces and services in the city centre, contribute to the economic revitalisation of the Fleurus city centre and aim for a holistic approach that achieves a functional mix.

Granada's vision for the IAP

Using the Integrated Action Plan, Granada ULG aims at achieving an environmentally, clean and sustainable city centre, that helps to establish a young population and provides a friendly environment for its citizens.

What is going on?

Greater Paris Metropolis ULG meeting

Having been able to meet once this quarter, the MGP ULG has focused on developing an appropriate methodology to better involve citizens in the decision-making process. Among other activities, they carried out a "sensitive" walk in the centre of Montrouge to explore another way to understand the customer's point of view.

Krakow Metropolitan Area ULG meeting

The Krakow Metropolis ULG has met three times this quarter. In the first and second meetings, the core members of the ULG first discussed the analysis of the Niepolomice centre and then the specific challenges of areas around primary schools and planned pilot activities. In the third one, the ULG includes supra-local stakeholders with whom the ULG discusses the role of village centres in the context of the Krakow Metropolitan Area.

The IAP Vision

Greater Paris Metropolis vision for the IAP

The Integrated Action Plan will focus on levers to revitalise the city centres of the Metropolis by putting the citizens and their demands at the heart of the policies develop by the Metropolis.

Krakow Metropolis' vision for the IAP

The Integrated Action Plan will focus on improving the functionality, accessibility and quality of life and use of Niepolomice, especially in regards the balance between the heavy traffic and the pedestrians spaces.

What is going on?

Amfiktyonies meeting

The ULG meetings in Lamia communicated the need for the Integrated Action Plan and the importance of small-scale actions to its members. This led to an open discussion on how to approach both in the Lamia context.

Osijek ULG meeting

The ULG of Osijek welcomed new members in the ULG meeting of this quarter, where they also talked about what are the most important challenges to address with the Integration Action Plan and concluded that the most important ones are (t1) managing complexity, (t3) adapting to climate change and (t6) public space. In addition, the knowledge shared in the Granada TNM was transferred to the ULG members.

The IAP Vision

Amfiktyonies' vision for the IAP

The main objective will be to improve the quality of life for the inhabitants of the city but also for visitors and tourists, revitalising the city centre economy and enhancing its liveability.

Osijek vision for the IAP

The Plan will promote different initiatives in order to make the city centre more appealing for citizens and tourists by tackling different challenges identified by local stakeholders, like opening new green spaces to the public and make the existing ones more appealing.

What is going on?

Quadrilatero Urbano ULG meeting

The Quadrilatero ULG has supported the network in the Transnational Meeting, where some of its participants provide the rest of the partners with the context and existing good practices around the four cities. In addition, they have managed to meet several times, where they have made progress on the design of their IAP.

Sligo ULG meeting

The Sligo ULG has managed to meet several times this quarter! They have had different sessions with different participants, but in general they are starting to organise and design the small scale actions, focusing specifically on the different methodologies and data already available in the city centre.

The IAP Vision

Quadrilatero vision for the IAP

The main focus of the plan will be on how to empower citizens for an open governance of the different city centres by establishing living labs, launching a research programme and different initiatives that promote the identification between the citizens and their city centres.

Sligo vision for the IAP

The Sligo Integrated Action Plan will work to deliver a more balanced city centre, that can improve the life of its citizens and visitors, by focusing on housing and public spaces.

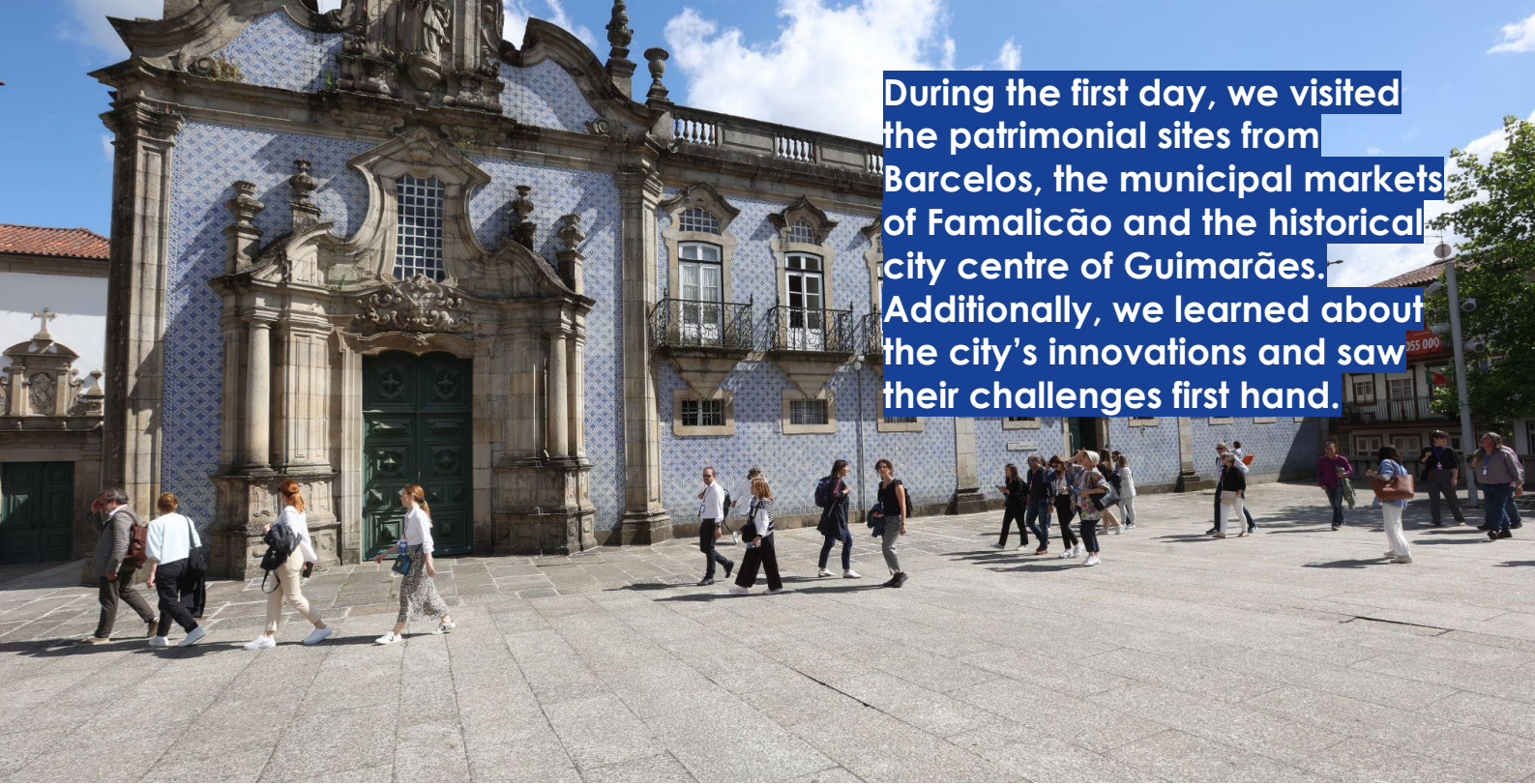
♥ 4. The third Transnational meeting: Quadrilatero

Day 1

On the first day of the Transnational Meeting, we had the pleasure of visiting the four cities that form the basis of the Quadrilatero Urbano's Association. These visits, led by local authorities and experts, gave the partners technical and historical background on the cities and how they are tackling contemporary challenges, including mobility management and the balancing of heritage with culture, creativity and livability. We then learned about local initiatives designed to promote a different city centre identity in each of the cities

Cities@Heart launched the third URBACT transnational network meeting in Quadrilatero, delving into new themes and local insights.





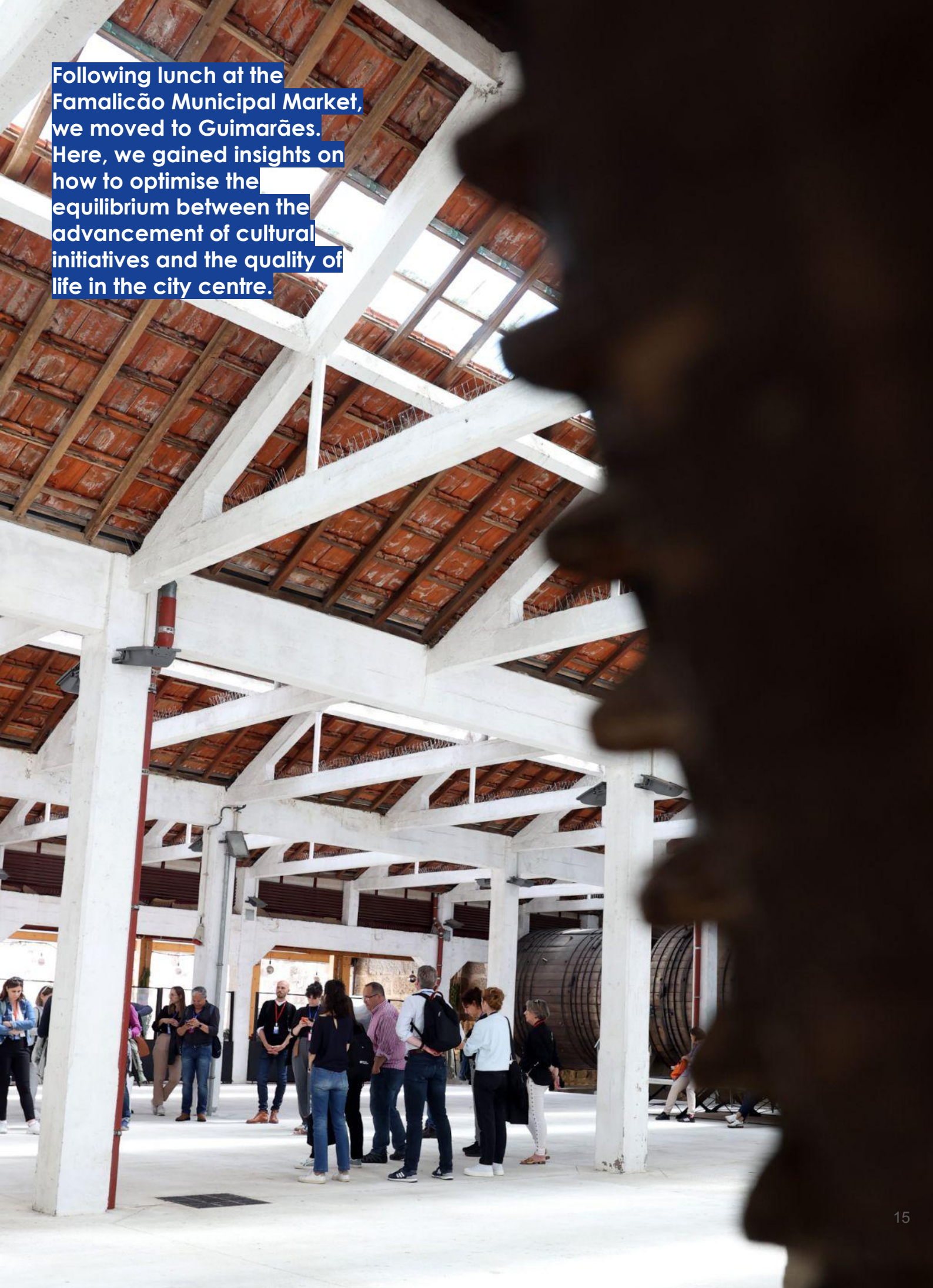
During the first day, we visited the patrimonial sites from Barcelos, the municipal markets of Famalicão and the historical city centre of Guimarães. Additionally, we learned about the city's innovations and saw their challenges first hand.



The day started with a visit to the pottery museum in Barcelos, where we gained insight into the local traditions. After ascending the medieval tower, we were able to appreciate the city centre from a panoramic vantage point. We then proceeded to Famalicão, where we gained valuable insight into their data platform and how data can be leveraged to enhance urban management.



Following lunch at the Famalicão Municipal Market, we moved to Guimarães. Here, we gained insights on how to optimise the equilibrium between the advancement of cultural initiatives and the quality of life in the city centre.



Day 2

After a lively roundtable discussion on culture and heritage management, technology and the promotion of unique identities for city centres, the partners proceeded to a series of engaging workshops on the approach to be taken with regard to their different Integrated Action Plans and the implementation of Small Scale Actions in different scenarios.

Our third URBACT Cities@Heart transnational meeting in Quadrilatero came to a close with an afternoon of inspiring exchanges with city stakeholders.

Following the workshops, which also focused on new models of supply and city centre identity, the meeting concluded with a final tour of Braga, during which we gained insight into various local projects.





They talk about the mission, the
responsibilities of the mission, the



♥ 4.1 The workshops

At the Quadrilatero Urbano's Transnational meeting, the partners participated in a series of workshops to design their **Integrated Action Plan** first structures. A roundtable discussion triggered the workshop, where several representatives from the four cities in the Quadrilatero Association presented and reflected on how they are addressing the challenges of developing a **city centre identity** and the **new forms of supply**.

Following the round table, the partners made three rounds of practical exercises:

- **Block 1** was dedicated to the **conceptual development of an Integrated Action Plan**, from the overall vision to the specific actions required to achieve it.
- **Block 2** addressed how to **address integration** in the Action Plans. This involved analysing several aspects, including the stakeholders involved and the cross-cutting issues.
- **Block 3** proposed that participants design **small-scale actions** in three different scenarios: one in which **funding** is unavailable, one in which funding is available in the form of a large budget, and one in which funding is available in the form of a moderate budget.

Celje

One page to compile and summarise all the relevant information for the business owners and use it to promote new activities and revitalise the city centre.

Cesena

Improve the accessibility of the city centre by developing a high quality open space not only in the centre but in the adjacent streets.

Fleurus

Artistic interventions in strategic locations in the city centre to improve the urban landscape.

Granada

Low emission zone related strategies to balance transport, economy and quality of life.

Greater Paris Metropolis

Workshop to Improve the skills of urban managers, enhance their ability to interact with local stakeholders and to involve more citizens in the decision-making process.

Krakow Metropolitan Area

Redesign the access to a primary school in the city centre to change traffic behaviour and organise an improved public space around the school.

Lamia

Day without cars to ban car traffic in the city centre at weekends and develop some measures to improve pedestrian accessibility.

Osijek

Temporarily pedestrianising the northern axis to the city centre street and designing public events that will revitalise the area.

Quadrilatero Urbano

Create a Urban Winter University for knowledge exchange on urban issues (from local speakers to international keynotes) to improve the capacity of local stakeholders.

Sligo

Promote and measure the impact of festivals in the city centre. Quantify already implemented policies (commercial vacancy and housing stock enhancement).

The Integrated Action Plans are the main output of cities participating in the network, aiming to set out how the city will practically address the selected challenge.

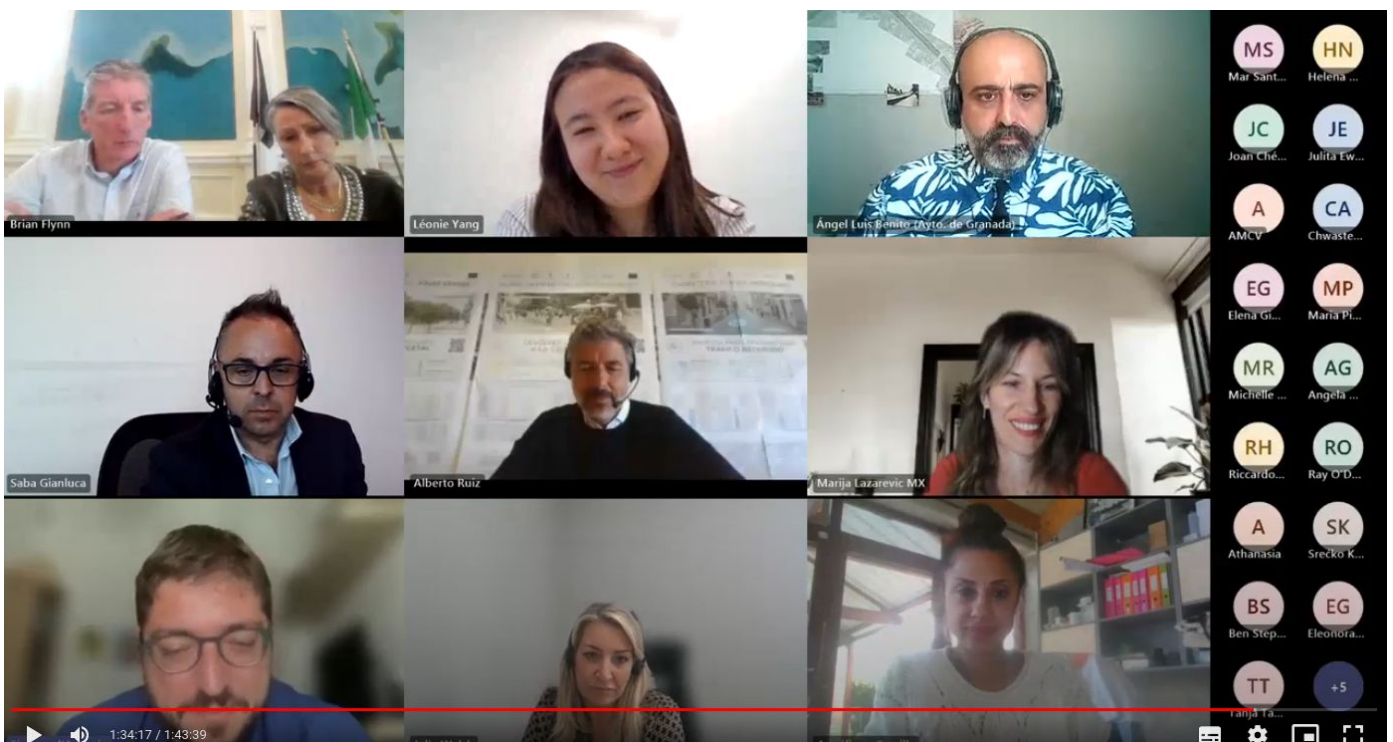


♥ 5. Our quarterly learnings

At the Cuadrilátero Urbano's meeting, several local experts presented **successful projects** implemented in the different historic centres, which could be of interest to other participating cities.

Additionally, in May, we organised our first thematic webinar to explore **night-time policies** and strategies to revive city centres, and make them more attractive and inclusive for all.

The experiences of Genoa, Malaga and Sligo offered useful elements to discuss how night-time policies can improve business and cultural vibrancy but also social cohesion and safety.



♥ 5.1 Learnings from Quadrilatero

The most relevant best practices include projects and strategies in the fields of culture, public space and data sovereignty.

House of Creativity in Barcelos

Culture Department, Municipality of Barcelos

B-Smart Platform

Vitor Moreira, Municipality of Famalicão

A living place, not a museum

Vitor Marques & Ricardo Rodrigues,
Municipality of Guimaras

Braga 2030 Cultural Strategy

Joana Meneses Fernandes, Teatro Circo,
Braga

♥ House of creativity in Barcelos

The space, situated in close proximity to the urban centre and constructed through the **refurbishment of a historical building**, has been designed with the objective of facilitating creative experiences. It serves as a bridge between the local creative culture and the arts and crafts tradition in Barcelos. The objective is to **enhance the economic and cultural value** of the city centre.

The facility serves as the management headquarters for Barcelos' connection with UNESCO, acting as a central point for sustainable development based on creativity.



♥ B-Smart Platform, Famalicão

The data platform in Famalicão is designed to enhance the city's management and **promote transparency** in local authority decision-making. It does this by making data from the municipality available for analysis and the development of public policies and initiatives.

The platform provides citizens with the **tools to enhance communication** with the municipality and gain insight into various aspects of city life, including the environment, energy, mobility, sociodemographic data, the economy and lifestyle.

Finally, the comprehensive nature of the data platform helps to **overcome the silo culture** that can exist within municipal departments.



♥ Guimarães. A living place, not a museum

Guimarães is a city with a rich history and a prominent place in Portuguese culture. It is home to the **birthplace of Portugal** and boasts an impressive, well-preserved historical centre. This centre has been recognised by UNESCO as a **World Heritage Site** since 2001 and is currently undergoing an expansion process to increase its boundaries. The historical city centre has undergone significant **urban regeneration** in recent decades, with a series of projects transforming the public space and enhancing the heritage values of the city centre.

This has led to an increase in tourist pressure on the city centre inhabitants, prompting the municipality to implement a series of initiatives to ensure a balance between local quality of life and the economic prosperity of the urban centre.



♥ Braga 2030 Culture Strategy

In order to apply for the title of **European Capital of Culture** in 2027, Braga has developed a series of initiatives through Braga Cultura 2030. They have collaborated with local citizens, international and local artists, cultural agents, businesses, and associations to ascertain Braga's needs, both for the application and for the next 10 years. The project identifies **culture as a central focus**, seeking to achieve a balance between cultural, economic, social inclusion and environmental considerations in order to develop a diverse and vibrant future for Braga.

A series of refurbishments have been promoted, with a particular focus on theatres and public facilities. New activities have been introduced in these locations, increasing the number of cultural activities available in the city. Services have been enhanced and improved, offering a more balanced and improved experience to citizens.



Cultura 2030

Estratégia
Cultural de Braga
2020—2030

Bra
cul

Estra
ltural c
2020—2

Braga
Cultura 2030

Estratégia
Cultural de Braga
2020—2030

♥ 5.2 Cities@Heart After Dark

How can a city centre rethink the “small hours” of the day? The webinar, led by the expert Simone d’Antonio, went beyond the usual themes of dining, bars and cultural events to examine how cities can encourage **inclusion**, consider **gender** and manage a **balance** of uses.

In the webinar, the partners have received the knowledge on how the implementation of a night strategy can increase the perception of **safety**, while promoting community spirit and sense of place among different categories of residents. This was demonstrated by the presentation of key case studies by representatives from Malaga, Sligo and Genoa.

Balance the residents quality of life with the night time economy is crucial to ensure the safety and attractiveness of the city centres.



Image from Braga After Dark activities. Source: [Cities After Dark](#)

♥ 6. Upcoming milestones

FOURTH TRANSNATIONAL MEETING Cesena - October 2024

Quadrilatero hosted the third transnational meeting, marking the middle of the planning phase. This phase, which aims to strengthen the practical knowledge and skills of the partners in the defined policy areas, to draw lessons from the exchanges on an ongoing basis and to apply them at local level, will end in the fall with the **Transnational Meeting in Cesena (9-10th of October)**.

In Cesena, we will focus on addressing **public space** and **mixed-used** issues in the city centre, following the pattern of previous Transnational Meetings. We will also conduct our **Mid-Term Reflection process**.

CITY TO CITY EXCHANGES AND THEMATIC WEBINARS

In addition to the transnational meetings, we will be organising what we call "City-to-City Exchanges", where we will focus on specific topics of interest to the partners.

Save the date!

HOW TO USE DATA TO SHAPE PUBLIC POLICY? 8 July 2024

Led by network expert Mar Santamaría, we will focus on understanding how the different types of data are useful for evaluating and designing appropriate responses in the public realm, and we will learn about different best practices.

LAST-MILE LOGISTICS End of September 2024

Focusing on the second network challenge

THE YOUTH & THE ELDERLY IN CITY CENTRES End of November 2024

Focusing on the second network challenge

Thank you,
And keep posted for more!



[LinkedIn](#)



[Cities@Heart](#)

URBACT



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg