



## Hydro~Heritage Cities

## Where Culture Meets Nature

## ITN Hydro-Heritage Cities Transferability study

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with the precious contributions from the ITN partner cities: Halandri, Elche, Roeselare, Rome, Serpa and Sombor.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Section 1 The Innovative Practice		Section 2 Partner Profiles		Section 3 Synthesis, overall transferability and methodology outline
INTRODUCTION	5	INTRODUCTION	23	INTRODUCTION
THE EUROPEAN POLICY CONTEXT	6	CITY OF ELCHE (SPAIN)	26	Hack and chop -breaking down the experience into potable elements How the modules fit into the itn journey
DESCRIPTION OF THE INNOVATIVE PRACTICE	7	CITY OF ROESELARE (BELGIUM)	32	METHODOLOGY
What next? Continuous improvement in Chalandri	18	CITY OF ROME (ITALY)	38	Hydro-heritage cities methodology and its elements explained
OVERALL TRANSFER POTENTIAL	21			A methodology based on water cycle metaphors
Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T.'s legacy and transferable lessons	21	CITY OF SERPA (PORTUGAL)	44	THE HYDRO-HERITAGE CITIES NAVIGATION CHART
		CITY OF SOMBOR (SERBIA)	50	Embedding the methodology in the overall ITN framework: the hydro-heritage cities navigation chart
		TRANSFER POTENTIAL	55	CONCLUSIONS & OVERALL

TRANSFER ASSESSMENT

# SECTION 1 The Innovative Practice

### Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T.: Breathing New Life into an Ancient Aqueduct

In the heart of Chalandri, in the suburbs of Athens (Greece) a centuries-old underground treasure has resurfaced—not just as a relic of the past but as a living force for sustainable urban transformation. The **Municipality of Chalandri**, together with a wide range of technical and cultural stakeholders, has taken the **Hadrian Aqueduct**, an almost forgotten hydraulic masterpiece, and turned it into the heart of a bold experiment in urban regeneration.

Funded by UIA, Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. is more than a heritage conservation project. It's an innovative blueprint for cities seeking to bridge their past with the urgent challenges of the present - climate resilience, water management, and community well-being. Chalandri's aqueduct is no longer just an artifact; it's a commons, a shared resource at the crossroads of history, sustainability, and civic action.

Through **participatory governance, technology, and cultural programming**, Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. has reimagined how a city can reconnect with its hydro-heritage. From **repurposing** its underground waters for non-potable urban use, to co-designing **new green public spaces**, engaging schools, and digitizing historical narratives, the project merges infrastructure, sense of belonging, and innovation.

But the real power of Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. has been its ability to inspire other cities. Now, five European cities—Elche, Rome, Roeselare, Serpa, and Sombor—are embarking on their own journeys, adapting Chalandri's model to their local contexts. How do you transfer a vision? How do you make an ancient aqueduct relevant again in the 21st century? The answers lie in collaboration, experimentation, and a commitment to rethinking water heritage as a cultural asset.

The next pages will take the readers into the story, methods, and lessons of the UIA project which has inspired the URBACT Hydro-Heritage Cities Network.

4

## INTRODUCTION

This study is the product of collaboration and joint efforts with the Innovative Practice city. For the UIA Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. project, this includes the city of Halandri (or Chalandri) in Attica, Greece, and the 5 Transfer Cities.

The study has three main purposes:

- To provide a detailed description of the Innovative Practice
- To set out profiles of the Innovative Practice city and all partner cities that have joined the URBACT Innovation Transfer Network (ITN)
- To assess the overall potential for the Innovative Practice transfer within the network and set out an appropriate methodology to support this.

This is a condensed analysis of the work done in the first six months of the project through city visits, analysis and interviews, and it is broken down into three sections:

Section 1: Chalandri's UIA project as Innovative Practice

Section 2: Transfer Partner profiles

Section 3: Synthesis, overall transferability and methodology









## THE EUROPEAN POLICY CONTEXT

The **Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.** project is embedded into global and European urban policy frameworks by positioning hydro heritage as a shared resource and a promoter for urban sustainability and social cohesion. Its innovative approach addresses the <u>UN-Habitat New Urban Agenda</u>'s call to leverage culture and innovation to enhance urban wellbeing, sustainability, and resilience. The project supports several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### Alignment with European Policies

The project reflects the priorities of the <u>European</u> <u>Cohesion Policy</u>, specifically:

- Policy Objective 1: A Smarter Europe: Advancing digitalisation through innovative co-management tools and platforms for urban resource management.
- Policy Objective 2: A Greener, Low-Carbon Europe: Supporting blue/green urban regeneration, sustainable water management, and the transition to a resource-efficient and circular economy while enhancing biodiversity and promoting sustainable urban mobility.

**Policy Objective 5:** A Europe Closer to Citizens: Fostering integrated and inclusive development by linking social, economic, and environmental dimensions with culture, natural heritage, and sustainable tourism.

#### Urban Agenda for the EU Thematic Partnerships

The project embodies principles outlined in the **<u>Urban Agenda for the EU</u>** and implements topics related to three thematic partnerships:

- 1. <u>Culture and Cultural Heritage</u>: By emphasising culture as a driver of urban sustainability, it balances preservation with innovation, addressing global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequality.
- 2. <u>Water-Sensitive Cities:</u> (Chalandri is part of this partnership) The project addresses pressing water-related challenges such as urban flooding, water scarcity, and inefficient management. It demonstrates integrated approaches to mitigate the risks posed by climate change, aging infrastructure, and landuse changes.

3. <u>Greening Cities:</u> Through its focus on bluegreen infrastructure and the regeneration of public spaces, the project supports the partnership's goals of enhancing urban biodiversity, improving climate resilience, and fostering sustainable, inclusive urban environments.

Additionally, its governance model aligns with the just, green, and productive pillars of the <u>New Leipzig</u> <u>Charter</u>, emphasising multi-level governance and participatory processes. It also implements the <u>New European Bauhaus</u> principles by harmonising sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusivity, transforming hydro-heritage into a shared cultural and environmental asset that fosters community well-being and inspires innovative, beautiful, and inclusive urban spaces.



## **DESCRIPTION OF THE INNOVATIVE PRACTICE**

## A χωριό across the millennia

Xαλάνδρι (Halandri or Chalandri- pop: 77.102) is a municipality located in the northern part of the Athens agglomeration, in Greece. It is part of the Attica region and is situated about 12 kilometres from the centre of Athens. The area corresponds with one of the 10 ancient demes (boroughs) of Athens, known as Phlya. Originally a small village ( $\chi ωρι \acute{o}$  -chori $\acute{o}$ ) surrounded by agricultural lands until the rapid expansion of Athens during the 1960s and 1970s, it has been an independent municipality since 1944.

The Hadrian Aqueduct, a Roman structure completed in 140 A.D., used to provide the North Athens Regional Unit of water. Although it became largely forgotten after the introduction of a new pipe system in the 1930s, until the municipality of Halandri initiated the project 'Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.' to revitalise the aqueduct and its surrounding areas.

Comparatively speaking, Halandri enjoys a **higher standard of living** compared to some other areas in Attica, although it still faces disparities and social issues related to income and risk of social exclusion, as unemployment data indicate.



The municipality has created extensive sports facilities, including an indoor and outdoor Olympicsize swimming pool. The city also hosts cultural events and festivals that celebrate its history and traditions.

Halandri's economy benefits from its proximity to Athens, with many residents commuting to the city for work. The suburb has a mix of **residential and commercial areas**, and some embassies are based in Halandri. The local economy also includes small businesses, shops, and services catering to the community.

Key sectors include retail and commerce, with numerous shops and shopping centres, and a robust service industry encompassing restaurants, cafes, and personal services. The real estate market is strong, driven by high demand for residential properties.

Halandri also hosts a growing technology and digital services sector, along with manufacturing companies specialising in industrial machinery. Tourism and hospitality are significant contributors to Chalandri's economy. The area attracts visitors with its variety of restaurants, bars, and shops, and it is well-connected to Athens and other suburbs through public transport.

Data	Figures
Population (2021) <sup>1</sup>	238.293
Population trend (over the past 20 years)	Increasing
Area	326.1 km2
% of foreign-born population (national data 2023) <sup>2</sup>	12,4%
Unemployment rate (regional- 2024)³	17,2%
Age dependency ratio (2019) <sup>4</sup>	30,69
Average income per year (2018)	€19,705
Poverty Headcount Ratio (national level- 2021) <sup>5</sup>	20,2%
Main economic sectors (regional 2023) <sup>6</sup>	
Services including commerce, transport and hospitality	76,7%
Industry and manufacturing	19,1%
Agriculture	4,2%
Notes: 1: Census 2021- Hellenic Statistical Authority 2: https://www.statistics.gr/ 3: DYPA – Public Employment Services Statistics, July 2024 4: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CITIES 5: World Development Indicators 6: https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/	

Το υδραγωγείο, δεν ξέρω από πού έρχεται αυτό [...] στην Κατοχή μέσα κει πηγαίναμε. Όταν αρχίζαν οι σειρήνες, μέσα κει. Κι είχε και νερό... Και κατεβαίναμε – είναι ΠΟΛΥ βαθύ αυτό. Κι όσοι δε φοβόντουσαν, κατεβαίνανε. Η μάνα μου και η αδελφή μου δεν κατεβήκαν ποτέ. Εκεί μέσα είχε υγρασία [...] Και κατεβαίναμε όλοι με ένα λαμπάκι [...] οι πιο πολλοί μ' ένα κερί· και μας είχανε κάνει κάτι σκαλοπάτια και κατεβαίναμε. Αλλά ΑΓΡΙΕΥΕΙΣ, βρε παιδί μου, δεν έχει ένα παράθυρο ούτε τίποτα [...]. Δηλαδή, ήντουσαν άνθρωποι μεγάλοι που δεν κατεβήκανε καθόλου. Η θεία δεν είχε κατεβεί καθόλου, ούτε η γιαγιά. Δε μπορούσε την κλειστοφοβία.

Μαρτυρία της Ελένης Γεωργίου, [αναφέρεται στα χρόνια 1936-44]

© Αρχείο της Ομάδας Προφορικής Ιστορίας Δήμου Χαλανδρίου

"The aqueduct, I do not know where it comes from [...] it is where we were hiding during the (Nazi) Occupation. When the sirens were starting, in there. And it had water... And we were descending - it is a *very* deep one. Those that were not afraid, were going down. My mum and my sister never went down. It was very humid in there [...] And we were going down with a small lamp [...] most people with a candle; and they had (created) some steps to go down. But it is *bewildering*, my dear, not a single window, nothing [...]. You see, they were old people that never went down. My uncle never went, neither did my grandmother. She could not bear claustrophobia."

Testimony of Eleni Georgiou, [refers to the years 1936-44] © Archive of the Oral History Group of the Municipality of Halandri



## MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE : Chalandri's innovation - a transformative culture-centred approach for community well-being and resilience

Chalandri's revitalisation efforts have presented challenges to residents' wellbeing and the city's resilience, including increased traffic, noise, and limited access to green spaces. With just  $2m^2$  of green space per resident—far below Athens' average of  $4.8m^2$ —the city aimed to balance economic growth with sustainability. The **Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.** project addresses these challenges by enhancing blue-green infrastructure, preserving cultural heritage, and reintroducing the Hadrian Aqueduct into urban life, blending environmental sustainability with historical significance.

By integrating **tangible and intangible cultural heritage**, the project fosters community well-being and identity. It combines the aqueduct's functional role as a water resource with participatory governance and cultural initiatives. Chiara Lucchini, UIA expert, describes it in her Journal as "the connecting point between heritage and community, physical and intangible actions, and sustainable resource use."

The project's innovation lies not only in technical solutions but in the processes driving them—collaborative governance, participatory urban design, and community engagement—offering a replicable model for urban regeneration. Through this approach, Chalandri demonstrates how to intertwine hydroheritage with sustainability, creating a cohesive urban narrative that addresses contemporary challenges while preserving historical identity.

#### Total Investment in the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. Project

The total investment amounted to **€8.376.049**, reflecting significant increases from the initial budget due to inflation and expanded project scope. In particular, the urban regeneration area tripled, from 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> to 25,100 m<sup>2</sup> and the nonpotable water system's capacity doubled, increasing from approximately 45-50 connections to 90-100 connections. Key expenditure included:

- Urban Regeneration Works: €5.096.330 (61% of the total investment, €1.487.900 from UIA funds)
- Non-Potable Water System: €1.280.000 (15% of the total investment €429.000 from UIA funds)

The project funding came from multiple sources:

- 1. **UIA Project: €3.916.619,50** (ERDF €3.133.295,60 and partners' own funds: €783.323,90)
- 2. Municipality of **Chalandri: €2.608.430** for urban regeneration works
- EYDAP (Public Water Company): €851.000 for the construction of the non-potable water network
- 4. **Greek Green Fund:** €1.000.000 for green and environmental regeneration

### The pivotal role of the municipality as enabler of ecosystemic change

The enabling role of the Municipality of Chalandri has been fundamental to the project's governance and implementation. One of the most innovative aspects of the project's governance lies in its **hybrid model**, which combines public, private, and community roles. Over the span of four years, the municipality has provided infrastructural and institutional support, while private and cooperative entities have supplied technical expertise and service delivery, and civil society organisations have managed participatory processes and preservation of shared resources. This collaboration has allowed for a **dynamic and adaptive governance** structure capable of responding to the project's evolving needs and adaptability to the many unforeseen events.

The integrated and transversal partnership led by the Municipality of Chalandri is made up of various stakeholders with complementary roles, which have worked together to provide effective **vertical**, **horizontal and territorial integration** with a Whole-of-Governance approach and the engagement of stakeholders representing the so-called <u>5-Helix Innovation Ecosystem</u> (cognitive institutions-sectoral entities-government-citizens-environment).

The public sector is represented by public bodies such as **EYDAP**, the water company of Athens, which contributed to the construction of the nonpotable water network and the **East Attica Ephorate of Antiquities** (Service of the Ministry of Culture), by private partners such as the <u>Commonspace</u>. <u>Cooperative</u> for participatory design and the <u>T.P.A. Architectural Firm</u> for urban regeneration. Cultural, Educational and Research Institutions have also had a key role: partners like <u>MedINA</u> (Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Human) contributed to research and documentation, <u>Ohi Paizoume - Urban</u> <u>Dig</u> supported the promotion of a new culture and "everydayness" in the management of common goods and the creation of a network of communities. Educational institutions like the <u>Regional Development Institute</u> of the <u>Panteion</u> <u>Public University</u> played a role in monitoring and evaluating the project's social impact. Through the Association of Parents of Chalandri Schools, thirteen schools have been also vital in reaching out to the community, and they have been involved in many activities to promote the activities and co-design part of the green spaces. Finally, but crucially, citizen-led organisations such as the Oral History Group of Chalandri (OPIDICH) have been actively engaged in documenting local histories and integrating cultural memory into the project, and Rematia SOS Citizens' Association also contributed to raise awareness on water management.



### The 2 + 4 innovative building blocks of Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T.

Building a connection between the ancient water-based heritage and the modern urban environment and the contemporary identity of Chalandri has entailed several actions and many iterations focused on **making sense** of and **regenerating** the hydro-heritage narrative into the city's current identity and cohesion.

The project can be broken down into six building blocks that together form a comprehensive approach to blue-green urban regeneration with hydro-heritage representing its core strategic asset. These blocks integrate green and nature-based infrastructure, digital technologies blended with heritage, and intangible cultural elements such as memory, identity, and community.

The first two building blocks focus on **hard investments**—infrastructure projects that enhance the aqueduct's functional and environmental value. These include green spaces and sustainable water management systems. The remaining four blocks balance **soft and smaller-scale investments**, encompassing activities such as oral history preservation, community-driven governance, cultural festivals, educational programs and technological solutions that reconnect heritage with modern urban life.

#### SOFT INVESTMENTS BLOCK 6: Diaital tools for BLOCK 5: community building BLOCK 4: Education, awareness and sustainable BLOCK 3: Water as a cultural and promotion lifestyles: Participatory design, and natural campaigns: HIDRANT **Digital Archive** civil society and Commons: Hadrian Festival, held annually "Drop-A-Message" citizen engagement: Community of since 2021 game, co-design workshops, Chalandri as a public, across different parts digital platform with citizens, private and social of Chalandri, school hadrian-net.gr, schoolchildren, and governance educational kits smart water meters local groups, over 80 and e-drohoos app oral testimonies **BLOCK 1:** Reintroducing the Hadrian aqueduct as **BLOCK 2:** Urban regeneration of green and blue a living and resourceful heritage: 4,2 KM of nonpublic spaces: a total of 25,100 m2 of regenerated potable water network along the aqueduct route public spaces mostly along the aqueduct's route

#### HARD INVESTMENTS

## 1. Reintroducing the Hadrian aqueduct as a living and 2 resourceful heritage

The project moved beyond the traditional monument-centred, touristic approach to redefine the Hadrian Aqueduct as a <u>living cultural and (quasi)</u> <u>natural asset</u> with a practical function in modern-day Chalandri. It has seen the larger-than-foreseen investment of the EYDAP, which more than doubled its financing to build 4,2 KM of non-potable water network along the aqueduct route under the city. By harnessing the aqueduct's water for irrigation and non-potable uses, the aqueduct is framed not only as ancient Roman technology but as a **nature-based system** that had operated harmoniously with the environment for centuries. **Archaeological excavations and studies** carried out during the project have proven decisive to making the aqueduct "visible" again, while also discovering new elements that offered a deeper understanding of its construction and functions.

#### 2. Urban regeneration of green and blue public spaces

The investment has regenerated <u>four major public spaces</u>, mostly along the aqueduct's course, with a total of **25,100 m2** of regenerated space. Some of the spaces have been claimed from encroached or closed public lands. The most interesting lesson from this investment has been the (failed) attempt to use new green and social public procurement standards that go beyond the pure lowest cost for these spaces. These interventions include visible markers of the aqueduct's path, such as translucent concrete paths and signage, making the hidden aqueduct visible within the urban landscape. Such green spaces enhance **public access to nature**, improve walkability, and create **microclimates** that counter urban heat, helping to improve the daily experience of residents while subtly embedding the aqueduct's presence into the city's modern identity.







#### 3. Participatory design, civil society and citizen engagement

The project involved the local community through <u>participatory design</u> <u>workshops</u>, in which citizens, schoolchildren, and local groups were invited to co-design elements of the regeneration and the use of the aqueduct's water. **Schools** played a critical role in this process, with students designing water tanks visuals connected to the aqueduct's water and developing educational materials (e.g., board games, posters) that relate to the aqueduct's history and environmental value. Children and youth, previously disconnected from the aqueduct's history, contributed creatively through work, walk-shops, and performances, bringing along their families from different backgrounds.

In addition to fostering engagement, the participatory design approach had an impact in terms of **social inclusion**, connecting generations and diverse communities. Older residents, often facing isolation, shared their memories in oral history sessions, reconnecting with their community. These **intergenerational interactions** built stronger community bonds, ensuring that voices across ages and socio-economic backgrounds shaped the project.

The **Oral History Group of Chalandri** (OPIDICH), one of the main promoters of the project, has documented over 80 testimonies from residents, sharing among other - **stories and memories** related to the aqueduct, such as its use during World War II as shelter or its role in local agriculture, with stories from diverse groups, including second and third-generation citizens with a refugee background.









#### 4. A new relationship between the city, its residents and its natural resources: water as a cultural and natural Commons

This is where water becomes both a **cultural ambassador** and <u>a commons</u> to be collectively managed. The aqueduct's water has been treated not just as an ancient resource but as a sustainable, contemporary asset that citizens could use in daily life. The creation of the **Hadrian Community of Chalandri** has been a key step in fostering collective management and ensuring the sustainable use of the aqueduct's water. This participatory governance structure empowers citizens to take responsibility for managing and using the aqueduct's water, embedding the resource into the city's shared identity.

The Hadrian Community therefore embodies a <u>three-dimensional model</u>: Public, Social and Solidarity Economy and Community-driven model apt for continuity and sustainability, as the result of the time-consuming and policy-driven process to define an innovative governance model of shared responsibility and ownership.

## 5. Education, awareness and promotion campaigns

The **HIDRANT Festival**, held annually since 2021, has become a flagship cultural event that celebrates the aqueduct's presence in Chalandri. The three editions of the festival included art installations, historical walks, theatre performances, and community-led activities, all of which revolved around the themes of water, heritage, and environmental sustainability. Decentralised across different parts of Chalandri, the festival and side events helped **embed the aqueduct into the city's cultural fabric**, bringing together several communities.

Environmental education has also been a major focus of the project, with schools leading initiatives to teach students about sustainable water use and the aqueduct's historical role. Workshops emphasised water as a commons, fostering a new cultural understanding of the relationship between heritage and environmental responsibility.





#### ΤΟΠΙΚΟ ΑΡΧΕΙΟ ΧΑΛΑΝΔΡΙΟΥ



## 6. Digital tools for community building and sustainable lifestyles

The **Digital Archive** <u>www.arChalandri.gr</u> is a digital repository where historical, archaeological, and technical documents about the aqueduct <u>have</u> <u>been collected</u>, combined with local testimonies and storytelling. This digital tool not only serves as a public resource but also allows residents to continue adding to the city's **collective knowledge** about the aqueduct and other forgotten stories. Interactive digital tools, such as the "**Drop-A-Message**" **game**, allow citizens to trace the aqueduct's route beneath their feet and explore the monument through a playful, educational tool.

The digital platform hadrian-net.gr, as the common digital space of the Hadrian Citizen Network, collects and provides information on the activities and tools that have been developed during the project and is now maintained by the citizens' network. The installation of smart water meters and the use of the e-drohoos app helped nurture a new water culture within Chalandri, empowering citizens to monitor their non-potable water consumption and encouraging responsible water use.

## The project in figures

#### Water infrastructure

- Total length of the new reengineered aqueduct network of non-potable water 4.2 km
- Connections to the network:90 (up to 100)
- Utilised water per year: up to 80,000 cubic .m.

#### Community involvement

- 13 schools and their communities
- 125 workshop sessions with a total of 709 participants
- 526 students
- 147 parents
- 36 teachers
- 8% of urban regeneration plans
- Designs for water distribution equipment (reservoirs, water-trucks)
- Communication material board-games theatre play

#### Creating and preserving memory

- 350 items in local archive's repository from 7 history archives
- 174 items displayed on digital archive www. archalandri.gr
- 23 resident testimonies and 6 expert interviews
- 4 historical walks
- 1 Local History Archive Group

#### Recognition of the innovation

- 6 awards and distinctions
- 7 study visits by research institutions & policy makers from 6 countries
- 15 participants in academic & policy making conferences

#### 4 regenerated areas

- 7,000 sq.m. additional public space
- 25,100 sq.m. sum of regenerated spaces
- 1,500 sq.m. with participatory design
- 180 new trees
- 14,800 new bushes

#### Co-organisation of HIDRANT festival

- 3 festivals and 11 days of events (total)
- 28 decentralised actions in 8 Chalandri areas (+1 route outside)
- 4 local collectives
- 13 school communities
- 4 artistic and musical groups
- Over 1100 participants

## Looking at Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. through the lens of Sustainable Urban Development<sup>1</sup>

Looking from a broader policy perspective, the project well embeds the six dimensions of strategic Sustainable Urban Development as set out by the Joint Research Centre of the European Union in their handbook. The visual below summarises such alignment, showcasing how Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. integrates these interconnected dimensions: a clear strategic vision rooted in hydro-heritage as a resource for sustainability and community identity; a defined territorial focus that leverages the aqueduct as a backbone for local and regional innovation; governance structures that foster participatory and collaborative approaches; robust cross-sectoral integration bridging cultural, environmental, and social goals; funding mix and finance mechanisms ensuring resource mobilisation and adaptability; and a dynamic monitoring and evaluation system to ensure accountability, transparency, and the capacity to adapt strategies. These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for other cities aiming to adapt and transfer the project's innovative practices.

#### Measuring outcomes

Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the adaptive M&E framework revealed significant positive impacts on community cohesion, well-being, and resilience, underscoring the project's success.

#### As a territorial dimension As a territorial asset, th aqueduct connects eig

As a territorial asset, the aqueduct connects eight municipalities, fostering metropolitan cooperation and a replicable heritage management model.

The strategic dimension

Enhancing urban resilience

through sustainable water

management and heritage

preservation, aligning with

SDGs for sustainable cities and

climate resilience.





#### Funding mix

Chalandri used mixed funding sources, including EU, national, and local funds, to support green spaces, water infrastructure, and community engagement.

#### Sectoral integration

The project unites heritage preservation and environmental sustainability, integrating municipal departments and academic institutions for improved urban resilience.



<sup>1</sup>This section has been inspired by and adapted from the Joint Research Centre (JRC) publication Fioretti, C., Pertoldi, M., Busti, M. and Van Heerden, S. (eds), Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, EUR 29990 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-13673-6, doi:10.2760/32842, JRC118841.

### What next? Continuous improvement in Chalandri

The Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project has successfully integrated hydro-heritage into urban life, but opportunities remain for enhancement and longterm impact. Leadership in the URBACT Hydro Heritage Cities ITN offers a platform to extend the project's legacy, with partner cities inspiring further development. Expanding the ULG to include additional stakeholders could strengthen sustainability and broaden engagement.

Fostering **regional partnerships** could amplify the aqueduct's significance as a shared resource. Although Chalandri lacks jurisdiction beyond its borders, it could encourage the Regional Government of Attica to establish a framework for collaborative management and funding, securing resources and enhancing cultural and environmental value.

Beyond schools, engaging informal groups, businesses, and underrepresented populations could deepen awareness and participation. Initiatives like **adult education** programs, workshops, and campaigns for marginalised communities could complement existing efforts. Creating a **physical hub** for community-led initiatives, such as a regenerated public space, could serve as a focal point for education and cultural events. Inclusivity remains key, with features like wheelchair-friendly paths, improved lighting, and multilingual signage making public spaces more welcoming also in **gender-responsive perspective**. Expanding digital tools such as AR/VR technologies and upgraded monitoring systems could foster community interaction and enhance sustainability. Improving **data collection and analysis** is also critical for sustaining and scaling the project's impact. Developing advanced tools for tracking engagement, environmental changes, and community feedback could provide valuable insights.

**Capacity-building programs** for municipal staff and community leaders could address gaps in expertise, solidifying Chalandri's role as a regional knowledge hub. While not aiming to boost tourism, the project could drive cultural entrepreneurship, promoting local artists and craftspeople to support Chalandri's leadership in creative and sustainable urban development. Leadership in the URBACT Hydro Heritage Cities ITN offers a platform to extend the project's legacy, with partner cities inspiring further development. Expanding the URBACT Local Group to include additional stakeholders could strengthen sustainability and broaden engagement. Below, an initial overview of the URBACT Local Group, the strengths to leverage and potential obstacles to overcome in Chalandri on the way to the Continuity Plan.

### The URBACT Local Group in Chalandri

Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. (CH) has been Chalandri's first effort to implement a project in an integrative, place based and participatory way. Understanding the value of this attempt the city wants to increase its capacity through the URBACT method and its core component: the URBACT Local Group (ULG). Chalandri's ULG aims to draft a strategic plan for setting the infrastructure and the conditions that allow the development of a cross-sectoral approach, collaborative governance tools and a participatory culture in the city's policydesign. Chalandri aims to capitalise on its CH approach by drawing a roadmap that adapts and 'prototypes' the latter, so it can be applied across topics and fields of urban administration.

Therefore, it aims to draft and mature a strategic (continuity) plan for the development of the suitable infrastructure and working method that:

- a. collects and utilises large datasets of urban (natural, built, operational) assets
- b. allows, thus, for integrated and informed decision making and management through digitisation
- c. simplifies and saves time for policy makers and city administration
- d. enables active citizenship and new formats of contact with city administration, bottom-up policy-design, transparency and accountability and
- e. promotes a sense of belonging, community/ shared ownership of cultural, natural & urban heritage.

Such broad vision combined with previous experience in integrative and collaborative work during Cultural HIDRANT and potential fields for pilot trials inform the composition, aims and action of Chalandri's ULG. The core members of the ULG include deputy mayors and staff from the Departments of Culture, of Environment and of EU program development, the head of the city's Development Agency and city council members, one of which acts as ULG Coordinator. The wider ULG members draw from a pool of experts and state institutions (e.g. EU funding, participatory planning, data monitoring and management, digital development) and local stakeholders (school and student communities, citizens' groups, local cooperatives) according to plan development needs and testing actions to be co-decided. This malleable ULG form responds to the need to optimise focus and delivery of participation while avoiding fatigue and loose results.

Through this variable process, the ULG aims to design the roadmap for developing a city-wide institution and a 'digital dashboard' with available data and analysis that enables cross-department collaboration and facilitates informed deliberation, policy design and decision making among local communities, stakeholders and city authorities.

### Assets

The previous experience of implementing Cultural HIDRANT and its success would be a valuable asset, along with the pool of the project's partners from where expertise can be drawn.

The established relations and ongoing cooperation of the Municipality of Chalandri with local communities, civil society and schools is also a big and tested advantage.

The international recognition of Cultural HIDRANT left the Municipality of Chalandri with a wide network of contacts and relations with urban (or other) policy experts, academia, city authorities, national and EU institutions that would be valuable -e.g. as source of know-how, of examples and institutional frameworks- for developing the Continuity plan and exploring multiple funding opportunities.

Lastly, the participation of Chalandri's newly established Development Agency in the ULG is a first-class advantage, as it can be utilised to simplify bureaucratic hurdles and to broaden funding potential and flexibility.

### Barriers

The established 'working in silos routine' among the city's departments and staff might be a significant barrier and challenge, as it reflects but it also feeds bureaucracy, lack of initiative and creative administration. The diminished funds and understaffing with which local authorities' function is also a main concern regardless of the optimisation of work performance and time-saving a more integrated, data-based and collaborative method might generate.

Lastly, continuity of strong political will towards mainstreaming such working routine is always at stake albeit the prominence of green transition, social cohesion and sustainable development in the city's strategic plans.

## **OVERALL TRANSFER POTENTIAL**

### Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T.'s legacy and transferable lessons

Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. showcases how hydro-heritage can drive urban transformation by integrating blue-green infrastructure, participatory governance, and community-focused approaches. By creating a narrative around hydro-heritage, the project redefined residents' relationship with history and heritage, offering valuable lessons for transfer to other cities. In terms of transfer to other cities and contexts, we summarise here the main components, which are translated into the three main modules (see the methodology section).

One key component is **making invisible heritage visible and functional**. The Hadrian Aqueduct was revitalised as a sustainable and visible community asset through public spaces, signage, and cultural events like the HIDRANT Festival, fostering identity and connection. Cities adopting this model should craft narratives linking heritage with water, sustainability, and urban life, tailored to local contexts.

Chalandri's governance model transitioned **from municipal leadership to shared community ownership**, exemplified by the Hadrian Community of Chalandri. While replicable, this paradigm requires political will, trust, and capacity-building.

**Infrastructure investments**, such as green space regeneration and water systems, must align with local strategies and resources. Cities without UIA grants will need alternative funding sources, such as EU Cohesion funds,

public-private partnerships, or Green Bonds. However, softer investments—like educational programs and co-design workshops—proved highly impactful. Schools engaged younger generations, fostering pride and intergenerational dialogue, while creative workshops connected communities to their heritage. These adaptable strategies and methods can be applied to other heritage assets to deepen local connections. In the case of the Hydro-Heritage Cities IT Network, these activities could become **testing actions** during the adaptation phase.

This transferability feature could also be applied to **digital tools** like virtual archives and interactive platforms enhanced accessibility and aligned Chalandri with Smart City trends. These scalable, cost-effective solutions are adaptable to diverse urban systems like water management, tourism, or education.

Finally, a robust **monitoring framework** tracked outcomes such as water reuse, green space expansion, and community engagement, demonstrating transparency and fostering credibility with stakeholders. Properly adapted, this approach can provide other cities with the tools to assess and refine their own initiatives, ensuring sustainable impact.

# SECTION 2 Partner Profiles

## INTRODUCTION

Five cities participate in the innovation transfer process of Chalandri's UIA project: Elche (Spain), Roeselare (Belgium), Rome (Italy), Serpa (Portugal), and Sombor (Serbia).

Partner	Population	Country	Region classification	Hydro-Heritage
Chalandri	77.102	Greece	EU Transition regions	Hadrian Aqueduct
Elche	238.293	Spain	EU Transition regions	Palmaral- UNESCO
Roeselare	66.262	Belgium	EU More developed regions	Mandel river and canals
Rome	2.748.641	Italy	EU More developed regions	Orangery and garden San Sisto
Serpa	13.731	Portugal	EU Less developed regions	Aqueduct and Nora well– National Monument
Sombor	41.814	Serbia	Instrument for Pre- accession Assistance countries	Backa Canal and system

The five cities participating in the transfer process of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project represent diverse urban and regional contexts, each distinctively suited to adapt and implement the project's innovative hydro-heritage approach. Despite their differences in size, cultural landscape, and socio-economic dynamics, these cities share a common commitment to sustainable urban development, cultural preservation, and community engagement, making them ideal candidates for the transfer. Together, these cities provide a diverse testing ground for adapting and refining the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. model. Their shared ambitions to address water management, cultural revitalisation, and participatory urban governance ensure that the transfer process will generate meaningful and scalable insights.

In the following pages, we present an overview of each of the five cities participating in the transfer of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project. These snapshots are the outcome of the initial activities, including in-depth questionnaires, city visits, interviews, and an analysis of available materials, official statistics, and publicly accessible information. First, we provide insights into the social and economic contexts of these cities, highlighting key dynamics and potential challenges, such as risks of social exclusion, inequalities, or cohesion issues. This includes data on employment, education, poverty, and the state of the local economy. All data, unless indicated otherwise, have been provided by the cities. Each profile then explores how cultural policy and heritage management have been integrated into urban strategies for sustainable growth, with particular attention to the role of hydro-heritage and its potential as a tool for community well-being and resilience.

Finally, we examine the emerging URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) in each city, detailing their composition, expectations, and early efforts to shape the transfer process. An initial assessment of assets and barriers concludes the profiles, offering a foundational understanding of the factors that may influence the successful adaptation and implementation of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. model.





## CITY OF ELCHE (SPAIN)

## A resilience oasis of palm groves in an expanding city

Elche, known as **Elx** in Valencian, is a mediumsized city in the Valencian Community of southeastern Spain. Located about 20 km from the Mediterranean coast, and bordering with the city of Alicante, it is part of the **Baix Vinalopó region**. It has a population of approximately 238,000 inhabitants(2023), making it the **third most populous city** in the Valencia region.

The city's history stretches back to ancient times. Originally established by the Iberians, it evolved into the Roman settlement of Ilici and flourished under Moorish rule before its Christian reconquest in the 13th century. This layered history is reflected in Elche's urban composition, where its rich cultural and agricultural heritage continues to thrive.

Elche's economy has been historically secured in the **footwear industry**, producing nearly 42% of Spain's shoes and ranking among Europe's leading manufacturers. While footwear remains a key sector, the city's economy is diversifying. The **service sector** now accounts for over 40% of businesses, including commerce, transport, and



hospitality. Agriculture, particularly the **cultivation** of date palms, remains a hallmark of Elche's identity, complemented by growing tourism driven by its **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**: the Palmeral of Elche and the Misteri d'Elx. After a period marked by remarkably high unemployment rates, in the past two years employment in Elche has grown and – although it remains high when compared to EU average – the unemployment rate has dropped to about 17% in 2023-24.

Socially, the city faces challenges in fostering cohesion among its diverse population, including a 12.4% foreign resident demographic. However, its cultural assets—such as the liturgical drama of Misteri d'Elx and a strong identity—offer opportunities to unite communities through shared heritage.

Environmentally, Elche is known for its innovative irrigation systems (acequias) created by Moorish engineering during the El-Andalus period. The traditional acequias and the Acequia Mayor played a critical role in sustaining the vast Palmeral, Europe's largest palm grove. These systems embody ancient knowledge of sustainable water management, increasingly vital as climate change exerts pressure on regional resources and water scarcity.

Data	Figures
Population (2023) <sup>1</sup>	238.293
Population trend (over the past 20 years)	Increasing
Area	326.1 km2
% of foreign-born population	12,4%
Unemployment rate	17,2%
Age dependency ratio (2019) <sup>2</sup>	30,69
Average income per year <sup>3</sup>	€19,705
Poverty Headcount Ratio (national level- 2022) <sup>4</sup>	20,2%
Main economic sectors (2023) <sup>5</sup>	
Services including commerce, transport and hospitality	40%
Construction	10%
Industry	8 %
Agriculture	3%
Notes: 1: Provincial portal of Alicante https://argos.gva.es/va/ 2: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CITIES 3: https://ineca-alicante.es/ 4: Data from database: World Development Indicators 5: Provincial portal of Alicante https://argos.gva.es/va/	

### Hydro-Heritage in Elche

### Ambition and motivation

Elche's hydro-heritage is deeply connected with its agricultural and cultural identity, notably embodied in the **Palmeral of Elche**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This ancient network of palm groves, which extends beyond the part protected by UNESCO (with many groves growing on private land), was sustained by the intricate irrigation systems introduced during Moorish rule and represents a living testament to sustainable water management and economic practices. The Acequia Mayor and other traditional small irrigation channels (acequias) that distribute water not only used to irrigate the date palms but also symbolise the **city's historical relationship with water** as a resource for sustenance and resilience. Because the majority of the groves are no longer irrigated by this system, but with potable water coming from as far as 400Km away, the irrigation system will also be the focus of the ITN in Elche as it has been in Chalandri.

In recent years, Elche has faced pressing challenges in maintaining and adapting its hydro-heritage in the face of **urban expansion**, climate change, and competing demands for water. The city has seen a strain on its traditional irrigation networks as agricultural spaces give way to urban development, covering most of the irrigation canals and relying on potable water to irrigate the groves. Additionally, the need to reconcile historical practices with modern water management technologies has become increasingly urgent. The municipality has launched restoration projects to maintain and upgrade its historic irrigation systems.

Elche's commitment to sustainable water management is further reflected in its participation as a member of the newly established **"Water Sensitive Cities" thematic partnership** of the Urban Agenda for the EU (also with Chalandri). Through this partnership, Elche is engaging in knowledge exchange and collaborative efforts to integrate water-sensitive urban design into its planning strategies. Looking ahead, Elche, also as part of the UNESCO mission, seeks to further its hydro-heritage as a cornerstone of urban sustainability and cultural identity, like Chalandri. The city envisions leveraging its historical irrigation systems and green-blue infrastructure to address contemporary challenges and water scarcity. Additionally, Elche seeks to deepen its educational and community engagement programs, fostering a shared sense of responsibility and aims to ensure a resilient and inclusive future for its residents and visitors alike.

## The URBACT Local Group in Elche

Elche's ULG includes several stakeholders to guide the adaptation and integration of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project. The ULG will be divided into two groups: a core group and an extended group. The **core group** will meet more frequently and take an active role in the detailed design of the Investment Plan, while the **extended group** will be regularly informed and consulted.

The core group will include key municipal departments such as the Department of Culture and Heritage, the Department of Environment, and some of the members of the Managing Consortium of the Palmeral, ensuring alignment with Elche's and UNESCO's strategic goals. Other key members will include the Aigues d'Elx (Waters of Elche) organisation and representatives of the Fundació Pusol. The extended group will involve cultural organisations, local environmental NGOs, and neighbourhood associations to broaden community participation and ensure inclusivity.

The city aims to involve core group members in transnational activities to strengthen their understanding and collaboration at the network level, although the language barrier may pose a challenge.



Elche's unique hydro-heritage, particularly the **Palmeral of Elche**, offers a strong foundation for adapting the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project. The city's alignment with the Elche Strategic Plan 2030 (Elx2030) and participation in the **"Water Sensitive" thematic partnership** of the Urban Agenda for EU reflect a strong commitment to sustainable water management, heritage preservation, and green-blue urban regeneration. Support from municipal departments and institutional expertise can enhance the city's capacity to implement innovative projects. Active civic organisations will likely provide additional resources for education, research, and community engagement.

### Barriers /

Some identified barriers complicate Elche's ambitions for green-blue urban regeneration. **Stakeholder engagement** poses challenges, with diverse interests among residents, authorities, businesses, and conservationists potentially leading to conflicting priorities. Limited public awareness of participatory regeneration benefits further complicates collaboration. Climate change and urban sprawl threaten the Palmeral's ecosystem and put strain on green-blue spaces. Securing adequate funding and balancing tourism with preservation, add financial pressures.

**Cultural and governance barriers** arise from tensions between traditional agricultural uses and modern urban needs, complex heritage protection regulations, and difficulties in coordinating across multiple stakeholders. Finally, **technical challenges** related to modernising ageing infrastructure and introducing innovative solutions require expertise and significant investment, which are not cheap. Despite these hurdles, Elche's strategic alignment, engaged stakeholders, and hydro-heritage resources position it well for successful adaptation and meaningful contributions to the network.



#### PALMERALES DE ELCHE

Peinando nubes y mordiendo altura, con sueños de aventuras espaciales, se elevan hacia Dios los palmerales en explosión de atómica verdura. Ondulan, cadenciosos, su estructura de dóricas columnas vegetales, dibujando en el viento arcos triunfales de mística y suave arquitectura. Rompen de su raíz el cautiverio y en vuelo vertical, vuelo de alma, señalan rutas de celeste imperio. Bíblica estampa, armonía y calma, en cada palmeral llora un Misterio y una Dama sonríe en cada palma.

From Aires de libertad y otros poemas by Ramón Alarcón Crespo (1912-1991)

El Palmeral de Elche (1918) by painter Joaquin Sorolla y Bastida

#### ELCHE'S PALM GROVES

Combing clouds and biting altitude, with dreams of space adventures, the palm groves rise towards God in an explosion of atomic greenery. They undulate, rhythmical, their structure of Doric vegetal columns, drawing triumphal arches in the wind of mystical and soft architecture. They break their captivity from their roots and in vertical flight, flight of soul, they point out routes of celestial empire. Biblical stamp, harmony and calm, in each palm grove weeps a Mystery and a Lady smiles in each palm.



## CITY OF ROESELARE (BELGIUM)

## There once the beautiful Mandel, in her winding walk (Guido Gezelle)

Roeselare, a dynamic city in the Flemish province of West Flanders, Belgium, has approximately **66,000** (2024) inhabitants, with a continuous increase of population over the past 20 years, and an increasing portion of citizens with a migrant background. Located at the heart of the West-Flanders Province, the city has developed around the **Mandel River**, which played a key role in its historical development. Today, Roeselare is recognised for its strategic position in a densely populated and industrialised area, with strong transport connections to other cities in Belgium and Europe.

Roeselare's economy is robust, a balance of traditional industries, modern manufacturing, and a thriving services sector, driven by its specialisation in **food processing, manufacturing**, and **trade services**. The city is home to key employers such as Paulig, VDL Bus, and Soubry Pasta, which contribute to a lively labour market. AZ Delta is one of the largest hospitals in Flanders and the largest employer in the region with more than 3.000



employees (with different campuses in Menen, Torhout and Roeselare)

With an unemployment rate of just **4%**, (compared to Belgium's 6%) Roeselare's workforce is one of the most active in Belgium.

The city combines its industrial strength with a commitment to cultural heritage. Roeselare features several **UNESCO-protected heritage sites**, including the city hall, market hall, and belfry. The city's literary heritage is enriched by figures such as Guido Gezelle, a renowned Flemish poet and priest born in Bruges, who spent part of his life in Roeselare. Gezelle's works often reflect his deep connection to nature and the Flemish landscape, with water being a recurring theme. His time in Roeselare influenced his poetry, contributing to the city's cultural heritage.

However, while the city boasts strong demographic and socio-economic indicators, some challenges persist in integrating its heritage assets into modern urban development and ensuring that all citizens benefit equitably from its prosperity.

Roeselare's historical water system, which includes some of the tributaries of the Mandel such as the Sint-Amands watercourse, and the Roeselare-Leie canal, is integral to its identity but also underscores the city's need to address climate adaptation and environmental pressures, such as flooding and drought.

Data	Figures
Population (2024) <sup>1</sup>	66.262
Population trend (over the past 20 years)	Increasing
Area	60,4 km²
% of foreign-born population	12%
Age dependency ratio (2019) <sup>2</sup>	32.2
Unemployment rate	4%
Average net taxable income per year	27.908 €
Poverty Headcount Ratio (national level- 2021) <sup>3</sup>	18,8%
Main economic sectors	
· Wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities	27.62%
· Professional, scientific and technical services, administration and support service	25.48%
· Construction	13.7%
% of municipal budget dedicated to culture and heritage (average last three years)	7%
% of municipal budget dedicated to environment, resilience and water management (average last three years)	10%
Notes: 1: <u>https://statbel.fgov.be/en</u> 2: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CITIES 3: World Development Indicators	

### Hydro-Heritage in Roeselare

### Ambitions and Motivation

Roeselare's historical relationship with water is deeply intertwined with its identity and development. The Mandel River (which, over the years, has been culverted for urban development and runs beneath streets and buildings in the city centre) and associated water systems were once pivotal to the city's economy, infrastructure, and community life. Roeselare has faced challenges in maintaining the relevance of its hydro-heritage, a "ghost river," within its modern urban context. Today, the city encounters the dual pressures of **climate adaptation** and the need to reconnect its water systems with societal and cultural values. Current projects, such as the restoration of the Sint-Amands watercourse and the creation of new green spaces, demonstrate the city's commitment to sustainable urban regeneration. However, the need for stronger public engagement in this process remains a challenge.

The city has strong frameworks in place for water and environmental policies, such as the **Flemish Climate Adaptation Plan** and the **Blue Deal**, these initiatives often operate separately from cultural heritage strategies (which the city has also developed). To address these challenges, Roeselare has launched several initiatives aimed at urban regeneration and environmental sustainability. For example, the transformation of areas like Moermanparking into Moermanpark demonstrates the city's commitment to urban greening and climate adaptation in some neighbourhoods.

Although these projects have made advances in enhancing environmental sustainability, the integration of cultural heritage as a functional and symbolic asset remains underdeveloped. This fragmented approach has limited the potential for water systems and hydro-heritage to serve as drivers for community engagement and urban revitalisation. Finally, some financial constraints and unknown public support for large-scale water infrastructure investments may pose significant barriers.

Roeselare is looking into ways for integrating its water-related cultural heritage into urban regeneration and sustainability efforts. For example, there are projects that are planned in which this approach could be materialised, e.g. restoration of the Sint-Amands watercourse, which runs under the city, the redevelopment of the area around Ronde Kom/Kleine Bassin and the restoration of the Roeselare-Leie canal, the redevelopment of a 19th century car/bus factory site along the Krommebeek, one of the tributaries of the Mandel

Roeselare is therefore motivated to transform its hydro-heritage into a living resource that connects its waters to societal needs, sustainability goals, and cultural identity. The city sees the Hydro-Heritage Cities network as an **opportunity to operationalise** this ambition, embedding hydroheritage into urban development processes and creating a shared narrative around water as both a historical and contemporary resource.

### The city URBACT Local Group

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) in Roeselare brings together key stakeholders to foster collaboration and support the transfer and adaptation of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project. Key members, in addition to municipal and provincial staff from different departments relating to water management and culture and heritage, include the Regional Land Management Association 't Westvlaamse Hart, which will provide expertise in water management and green-blue infrastructure; the Radar Intermunicipal Heritage Service, focusing on the preservation and integration of cultural assets; and Provincial Authorities Managing Waterways, responsible for coordinating water policies and projects. District Committees and community associations will represent the interests of local residents, while local historical and cultural groups will contribute to storytelling and community-based hydro-heritage activation. Representatives of educational institutions and schools will likely be involved.

The ULG will be instrumental in the development of the **Investment Plan** by aligning stakeholder inputs with Roeselare's urban development goals. Their roles include identifying priority areas, co-designing initiatives that integrate hydro-heritage and sustainability, and ensuring that proposed investments align with both local needs and broader policy frameworks (and resources) such as the city and the regional Flemish Climate Adaptation Plan. The ULG will also ensure that the investment plan incorporates existing and potential financing sources and strategies to address possible financial constraints and builds public support for the proposed projects.

## Assets 🖉

Roeselare has a solid foundation of local and regional policies that align with the project's goals, (the Climate Adaptation Plan, the Water management plan and Cultural Plan), which respectively focus on sustainable water management, climate resilience and Cultural Heritage and that can provide viable sources of investment. The city's robust industrial economy and increasing population provide financial stability and opportunities for innovative investments, while its cultural heritage, including UNESCO-protected sites and historical waterways, offers significant potential for revitalisation. Roeselare can also bring additional inputs through its participation in the UAEU Greening Cities thematic partnership. Additionally, the city demonstrates good stakeholder engagement potential, with likely participation from community groups, heritage associations, and educational institutions. Political support is evident through existing urban regeneration initiatives. The newly instated local government is likely to give continuity to the Blue and Green priorities and, hopefully, appreciate the integration with culture and heritage-related policies.

### Barriers

Despite these strengths, Roeselare faces some challenges. Financial constraints may limit the scope of potential investments, and public support for large-scale water and heritage projects remains unknown. The city's fragmented approach to integrating cultural heritage with sustainability policies hinders, at the moment, holistic planning. Furthermore, the complexity of Belgium's layered governance and planning systems may delay project implementation and reduce flexibility.
[...] daar weleer de schoone Mandel, in heur kronkelenden wandel, van waar heure bronne spruit tot waar zij heur water spuit in de temme Leiebaren, vrij van kommer en gevaren, door de schoone groene streek vloog...! de snelle Mandelbeek, vloog door menig groene weide, die ze kuste en lekte en vleide;

> [...] There once the beautiful Mandel, in her winding walk, from where her spring sprouts To where she gushes her water in the tempestuous Leiebaren, free from distress and danger, through the beautiful green region the swift Mandelbeek, flew through many a green meadow, which she kissed and leaked and flattered;

from "De mandelbeke" poem of Guido Gezelle 1848





# CITY OF ROME (ITALY)

## Still Caput mundi?

Rome is a city that does not need a lot of presentations. The capital city of Italy and one of the most culturally significant cities in the world, spans an area of **1,285 km<sup>2</sup>** and is home to approximately **2.75 million residents** (2023). Located in the **Lazio Region**, Rome serves as a major political, economic, and cultural hub not only for Italy but for the global community. The historic centre, a designated UNESCO World Heritage site, embodies millennia of architectural and cultural achievements that continue to define the city's identity.

Rome's economy is predominantly service based, with key sectors including public administration, tourism, education, and cultural industries. Tourism plays a crucial role, accounting for **11.7% of the private workforce** and contributing significantly to the city's GDP. As a major destination for international travellers, Rome combines heritage tourism with a growing focus on sustainable and innovative urban practices. Additionally, the city has a robust cultural economy supported by scores of museums, theatres, and creative industries.



As Italy's most populous city, Rome hosts a diverse population and offers rich opportunities for cultural exchange. Socially, the city faces challenges such as urban inequality and the need for greater inclusion in its densely populated neighbourhoods. Programs targeting education, public engagement, and social cohesion aim to address these disparities.

Rome is characterised by a wealth of green-blue infrastructure, including the **Tiber and Aniene rivers**, numerous parks, and agricultural lands. Rome's cultural heritage is unparalleled, with landmarks ranging from the Colosseum to hidden gems like the **Orangery in San Sisto Park**, currently the focus of a restoration project blending historical preservation with modern ecological principles. The city's engagement with heritage through inclusive and participatory processes reflects its commitment to sustainable urban regeneration, aligning with national and EU policy frameworks.



Data	Figures
Population (2024) <sup>1</sup>	2 748 641
Population trend (over the past 20 years)	Increasing
Area	1,285 km²
% of foreign-born population	12,6%
Unemployment rate <sup>2</sup>	6,5%
Age dependency ratio (2019) <sup>3</sup>	32,79
Average income per year (pro capite)	€ 21.353,50
Poverty Headcount Ratio (national level- 2021) <sup>4</sup>	20.1%
Main economic sectors (2021) <sup>5</sup>	
Services (including public sector)	47%
Trade and commerce	29%
Construction	15,2 %
Industry	5,5%
Agriculture	3,3%
Notes: 1: ISTAT 2: Infocamere for the whole metropolitan area of Rome 3: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CITIES 4: Source World Development Indicators 5: Roma Capitale - Annuario statistico 2023 CAP.13 BENESSERE ECONOMICO	

## Hydro-Heritage in Rome

Rome's rich history is intrinsically linked to water, from the ancient aqueducts that sustained the Roman Empire to the fountains that adorn the piazzas. This profound connection presents both an opportunity and a policy challenge: how to preserve and revitalise the city's hydro-heritage in a way that integrates sustainable practices and fosters community engagement, especially in lesserknown areas and heritage sites of the city.

The **Orangery in San Sisto Park** represents such a hidden heritage. Established in 1810 by Napoleonic prefect De Tournon, the park was originally a nursery for cultivating plants to adorn Rome's new avenues and public spaces. The park, located in the former garden of a convent, was crossed by the Rivo dell'Acqua Mariana, a historic watercourse. This stream entered Rome through Porta Metronia and powered water mills like the **Mola di San Sisto Vecchio** and **Molella**, which still stand in the park nowadays, and flowed towards the Circus Maximus before joining the Tiber River. The presence of this hidden waterway underscores the park's connection to Rome's hydro-heritage, highlighting the city's reliance on water as a primary resource.

The **Orangery**, designed by architect Raffaele De Vico between 1925 and 1927, served as a semi-cold greenhouse for sheltering decorative plants during winter. The city of Rome has embarked on an ambitious restoration project that aligns with both national and municipal sustainability strategies. The project integrates **LEED certification** processes to ensure compliance with stringent environmental standards. Innovative features include the implementation of **rainwater harvesting systems** using gutters and tanks, echoing the site's historical water management practices and promoting efficient water use. By incorporating energy-efficient systems and promoting biodiversity through green spaces, the Orangery aims to become a model of eco-friendly urban development.

Rome's blue-green interest aligns well with a robust policy framework at all levels. Nationally, with the investments of the NextGenerationEU funds, the **National Urban Green Strategy** and **Strategic Plan for Major Cultural Heritage Projects** emphasise urban resilience and significant heritage initiatives, supporting the Orangery's restoration. The **National Strategic Plan** and **Digitisation Plan for Cultural Heritage** align with the park's green architecture and accessibility goals. Regionally, the *Contratto di Fiume Tevere* complements the hydro-heritage focus by promoting sustainable water management. Locally, the **Strategic Plan of the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital** and the **Climate Adaptation Strategy 2050** emphasise innovation, sustainability, and resilience, ensuring alignment with broader urban and environmental goals.

## Ambition and motivation

The **ambition** is not only to preserve a piece of Rome's hydro-heritage but also to transform the Orangery into a lively community hub. Learning from Halandri's experience, plans include hosting cultural events, educational programs, and workshops on sustainability and heritage conservation. By involving future managers, maintenance staff, citisens, associations, and schools in every phase of the project, the city fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the space meets the community's needs.

## The city URBACT Local Group

The initial composition of the ULG represents the cornerstone of Rome's participatory approach, reflecting the city's primary interest in the cooperative governance of Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. Coordinated by **La Sapienza University**, the ULG will bring together a diverse mix of stakeholders, starting with key **Departments of Roma Capitale**, including the Department of Social Policies and the Department of Urban Planning and Implementation, ensuring institutional support for the project's goals. The two local sub-municipal districts involved, representing the historic centre and surrounding neighbourhoods, will be engaged as they play a crucial role in engaging local communities.

The ULG will also include a strong representation from **cultural nonprofit associations**, such as Italia Nostra and FAI - Fondo Ambiente Italiano, as well as **neighbourhood associations**. **Secondary schools and school districts** (Districts 9, 17, and 18) will also be engaged to connect younger generations to the city's hydro-heritage through educational programs and activities. Additionally, associations promoting **social inclusion** will be involved to ensure that the project contributes to equity and access for all members of the community.



#### Rome's unparalleled green-blue heritage

includes degraded and forgotten areas in need of revitalisation and holds potential for linking natural systems and creating innovative models for optimising resources. Such efforts align with Rome's **urban policies** prioritising sustainability, resource preservation, and climate change adaptation, targeting issues like rainwater absorption, urban heat islands, and extreme weather events.

Rome's historical culture of water provides an inspiring narrative for integrating hydro-heritage into contemporary urban development and community access for the local population. Opportunities like the **2025 Jubilee** bring access to targeted funding for the recovery of green-blue and cultural assets, enhancing their attractiveness for tourism and public enjoyment.

## Barriers /

Challenges include **limited economic and human resources** for the management, monitoring, and maintenance of regeneration projects. While urban policies support innovation, there is resistance to technological advancements in heritage conservation, with a preference for preservation over adaptive reuse. Furthermore, ensuring **consistent citizen participation** and maintaining stakeholder engagement can be difficult, potentially affecting the long-term continuity of interventions.



#### DE DEO TIBERINO (8.31-85)

huic deus ipse loci fluvio Tiberinus amoeno populeas inter senior se attollere frondes visus eum tenuis glauco velabat amictu carbasus, et crinis umbrosa tegebat harundo,

#### THE GOD TIBER (8.31-85)

To him the god of the place himself, the Tiber of the beautiful course, seemed to rise among the branches of poplar And veiled him with azure mantle the thin linen and the shadowy reed covered his hair,

Virgil, Aeneid Book 8



# **CITY OF SERPA (PORTUGAL)**

## A rich agricultural past and present

Located in the **Baixo Alentejo** region of southern Portugal, Serpa is a historic municipality (called Serpis by the Romans and Sirba by the Muslim) that combines rich cultural heritage with agricultural tradition. Spanning **1,106 km<sup>2</sup>**, Serpa includes five parishes and a population of approximately **13,731** (2023), a significant decline from 35,007 in 1950. This rural town is strategically situated near Beja, Évora, Faro, and not far from Lisbon and Seville, maintaining a quiet, traditional character. Despite its declining population, Serpa has always been one of the municipalities in the district of Baixo Alentejo with the highest number of company start-ups, and in recent years it has been second only to Beja, the district capital.

Serpa's economy is rooted in agriculture, with a recent focus on **super-intensive olive farming**, enabled by the **Alqueva dam**'s irrigation system. This shift has modernised local agriculture but also presented challenges in balancing sustainability with economic growth. The primary sector remains a key economic hub, complemented by the growing services sector, which accounts for **68.5%** of employment.



Despite these strengths, the average earnings in Serpa are low compared to national standards, and the unemployment rate stands at **10,83%**, higher than Portugal's average. Cultural tourism is an emerging area, leveraging Serpa's historical sites and events such as the **Cante Alentejano**, a UNESCO-recognised traditional singing style. Hospitality and gastronomy, featuring local olive oils, cheeses, and wines, are also growing contributors to the economy.

Serpa faces ongoing demographic challenges, including population decline and aging. However, initiatives such as the **Academy of Senior Citizens** aim to address social inclusion and active aging. Environmentally, the city must balance its reliance on water-intensive agriculture with the need for climate resilience, particularly under the national **Portugal 2030** and regional **Alentejo 2030** strategies, which emphasise green transitions and carbon neutrality.



Data	Figures
Population (2023) <sup>1</sup>	13.731
Population trend (over the past 20 years)	Decreasing
Area	1,106 km²
% of foreign-born population (2021)	3,42%
Unemployment rate	10,83%
Dependency Ratio for the elderly (2019) <sup>2</sup>	40,25
Average income per year (2022)	7507 €
Poverty Headcount Ratio (national level- 2021) <sup>3</sup>	16,4%
Main economic sectors <sup>4</sup>	
Primary sector	54,6%
Industry	28,3%
Tertiary sector	17,2%
% of municipal budget dedicated to culture and heritage (average last three years)	8%
% of municipal budget dedicated to environment, resilience and water management (average last three years)	22.72%
Notes: 1: https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpgid=ine_tema&xpid=INE&tema_cod=1115 2: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CITIES 3: World Development Indicators 4: https://www.gee.gov.pt/	·

## Hydro-Heritage in Serpa

Cultural heritage is central to Serpa's identity and economy, with **17.8% of municipal expenditure** allocated to culture and sports in 2022. Landmarks like the **Nora and Aqueduct Complex**, the **Serpa Castle**, and the **Cante Museum** highlight the city's historical importance.

Serpa's **Nora and Aqueduct Complex** (a national monument) represents both a historical treasure and a modern challenge. Built in the 17th century to supply water to the **Ficalho Counts Palace**, this National Monument includes a well (Nora), an aqueduct, and a turret for water storage. Despite its cultural significance, the complex has suffered from neglect, resulting in structural degradation and limited public engagement with the site. Adding to the complexity, the property has been privately owned by the Counts' family, and only recently has documentation been discovered (also thanks to the participation in the HHC network) proving that the family has donated the property to the State in 1948. Nevertheless, collaboration between the municipality and the owners will be further required.

The central challenge lies in balancing **heritage preservation**, **functional restoration**, and **public engagement**, including managing the dynamics of private ownership. The historical infrastructure now exists primarily as a sleeping cultural landmark. Revitalising the complex to serve both modern and historical purposes requires coordinated efforts, legal agreements, and shared vision and resources between the family and municipal authorities.

Initial discussions between the municipality and the property aimed to create a framework for restoring the complex, integrating cultural and water-related functional goals. Plans include water quality testing, structural assessments, and rehabilitating the turret's historical mechanisms. Adjacent to the complex, the **Espaço Nora**, a municipally managed cultural space provides a model for integrating the aqueduct into the city's cultural life through outdoor events, educational programs, and community engagement. Municipal strategies such as the Master Plan and the Safeguarding Plan for the Historic Centre emphasise the importance of preserving the Nora and Aqueduct as a core element of Serpa's identity. Regional and national frameworks, including Alentejo 2030 and Portugal 2030, offer funding pathways and policy alignment for sustainable and heritage-focused initiatives.

## Ambition and Motivation

Serpa envisions the Nora and Aqueduct Complex as a **shared resource**, bridging its private ownership with public benefits. By collaborating with the Counts' family, the city aims to restore the site's functional use for irrigation while transforming it into a hub for education, cultural events, and tourism. This partnership seeks to create a sustainable model for integrating private heritage assets into the public sphere, ensuring the preservation and continued relevance of Serpa's hydro-heritage.

## The city URBACT Local Group

The ULG composition reflects the need to balance heritage preservation, sustainability, and community engagement. It includes different departments of the Municipality of Serpa (Culture, Environment and Urban Planning), the **owners** of the monuments (the descendants of the Counts of Ficalho), local and regional educational institutions such as the **Polytechnic Institute of Beja** and **University of Évora**. The involvement of **Alentejo Regional Development Coordination Commission** will facilitate funding opportunities and ensure alignment with the **Alentejo 2030 strategy**. Organisations like **Baal17**, a local cultural group, and the **Academy of Senior Citizens** will drive public engagement, ensuring inclusivity and intergenerational participation.

#### **Expectations**

The ULG will play a critical role in fostering collaboration among stakeholders, co-designing solutions, and ensuring the project's alignment with local needs and priorities. A critical objective of the ULG is to enhance the awareness and commitment of managing authorities for EU cohesion funds. By engaging these bodies early in the process, the ULG aims to ensure their **financial support** for the project and active participation in the creation of the Investment Plan.

The ULG will act as a bridge between local and transnational work, leveraging the URBACT network to share best practices and learn from other cities involved in the transfer. By integrating diverse perspectives, the ULG will cocreate actionable strategies for both the physical restoration of the Nora and Aqueduct Complex and its integration into community life. Furthermore, through technical expertise, community engagement, and policy support, the group will facilitate the successful adaptation and implementation of the project in Serpa.

## Assets 🖉

The project aligns closely with Serpa's local policies, including the **Municipal Master Plan** and the **Safeguarding Plan for the Historic Centre**, as well as regional and national frameworks like **Alentejo 2030** and **Portugal 2030**. These strategies emphasise sustainable development, heritage preservation, and green transitions, creating a supportive policy environment. The municipality has demonstrated high levels of political support, with engaged leadership from the Mayor and different local departments. Community groups, such as **Baal17** and the **Academy of Senior Citizens**, are actively involved in cultural initiatives, ensuring grassroots engagement and contributions.

The **Nora and Aqueduct Complex**, a National Monument, provides a strong focal point for hydro-heritage restoration and community-driven cultural activities and the willingness of the Counts' family to collaborate on restoration offers a unique opportunity for public-private partnership.

## Barriers

In Serpa, **limited municipal budgets** and reliance on **external funding** pose challenges for large-scale restoration and infrastructure investments. This adds to limited in-house **technical expertise** to address complex restoration and sustainable water management needs that may delay implementation. Additionally, the **physical condition** of the Nora and Aqueduct requires significant investment to prevent further deterioration and ensure safety.

#### SERPA DE GUADALUPE

Ó Serpa de Guadalupe, Das muralhas, casas brancas, Dos poetas e pastores, Dos cantes até às tantas, Não se cansam as gargantas Dos teus filhos a cantar, São preces à Santa Mãe E ao seu encanto sem par.

#### SERPA DE GUADALUPE

Oh, Serpa of Guadalupe! From the walls, white houses, Of poets and shepherds, Of singing until the wee hours, The throats of your children Never grow tired of singing; They are prayers to the Holy Mother And her incomparable grace

Traditional Alentejo Chant – Author unknown





# **CITY OF SOMBOR (SERBIA)**

## At the crossroads of *Mitteleuropa*

Sombor is a city located in the **Vojvodina Autonomous Province** of Serbia, placed in the **Pannonian Plain** and strategically positioned near Pan-European Corridors 7 and 10. It comprises the urban core and 15 surrounding villages. Sombor has seen a significant population decline over recent decades.

The history of Sombor is rich in cultural and political influences, shaped by its location at the crossroads of Central Europe and the Balkans. First mentioned in historical records in 1360, the city flourished under the Habsburg Monarchy, becoming a **free royal city** in 1749. During this period, Sombor emerged as a regional administrative, cultural, and educational hub, hosting the seat of the **Bačka-Bodrog County** and fostering lively intellectual and artistic life. The city's multicultural identity reflects centuries of coexistence among **Serbs, Hungarians, Croats, Germans**, and **Jews**, who each left an indelible mark on its cultural makeup.

Today, the city's economy is rooted in **agriculture** and **industry**, supported by over **100,000 hectares of arable land**, making Sombor a key centre for crop cultivation and food processing. Recent trends



include the rise of **viticulture** and **fruit production**, along with renewed interest in the **metal and automotive industries**, which had faced setbacks during Serbia's post-socialist transition.

Tourism is an emerging economic sector, driven by a rich cultural heritage, the proximity of the city to the **Danube River**, the **Great Bačka Canal**, and natural reserves like the **Upper Danube Marshlands**. Investments in cycling infrastructure, hospitality, and heritage-related tourism have further strengthened the local economy. Despite these developments, challenges such as a **9% unemployment rate** and urban shrinkage remain persistent concerns.

Sombor boasts a rich cultural heritage, reflected in its **well-preserved historic core**, recognised as one of the finest medium-sized urban environments Serbia. The city was a cultural centre during its Habsburg period, serving as a free royal city and the epicentre for Serbian culture in the empire. Notable heritage sites include the **Great Bačka Canal**, the **Bezdan Gate Lock** (constructed in 1856, using the world's first underwater concrete method), and the **Bezdan Damask Silk Factory**.

Waterways in the territory of Sombor, including the Danube and the canal system, are integral to its identity. Originally designed for irrigation and industrial transport, these waterways have lost much of their economic importance but retain significant cultural and environmental potential. Recent efforts, such as the refurbishment of the **Bezdan Lock**, aim to restore their value. However, the city faces challenges with climate resilience, including hot summers, reduced precipitation, and poor air quality.

Data	Figures
Population city (2022) <sup>1</sup>	41,814
Administrative area	
Population trend (over the past 20 years)	Decreasing
Area	1,178 km2
% of foreign-born population (2022) <sup>2</sup>	0.3%
Age dependency ratio <sup>1</sup>	43.2%
Unemployment rate	9.0%
Average income per year <sup>1</sup>	955.956,00 RSD (8136 EUR)
Poverty Headcount Ratio (national level- 2021) <sup>3</sup>	20
Main economic sectors <sup>4</sup>	
Manufacturing	45,5
Wholesale and retail trade	18,2
Construction	6,4
Agriculture	N/A
% of municipal budget dedicated to culture and heritage 2022	8.2%
% of municipal budget dedicated to environment, resilience and water management (average last three years)	0.6%
Notes: 1: 2022 Census of National Statistics of Serbia www.stat.gov.rs/en-us 2: This group mostly consists of the children of local emigrants who returned to Sombor. 3: World Development Indicators 4: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (Yearbook 2023- Province of Vojvodine)	

## Hydro-Heritage in Sombor

The identity of Sombor and its surroundings is deeply intertwined with its hydro-heritage, primarily represented by the **Great Bačka Canal**, an essential part of the Danube-Tisa-Danube Canal System. Constructed in the late 18th century, the canal was initially designed for agricultural irrigation and cargo transport. In the second half of 19th century, the canal was modernised to play a pivotal role in the first wave of industrialisation, critical for regional economic development. However, shifts in industrial patterns and urban priorities after the fall of socialism have left these waterways underutilised, with many sections falling into neglect.

The initiatives in Sombor targeting hydro-heritage align closely with national, regional, and local development strategies, emphasising sustainable water management, cultural preservation, and environmental resilience. At the national level, **the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2021-2035** prioritises the sustainable use of water resources, integrating heritage and environmental policies to address climate change and economic revitalisation. Regionally, Sombor benefits from the **Development Strategy for the Vojvodina Province**, which highlights the preservation of cultural and natural assets, including canals, as drivers for eco-tourism and green infrastructure development. Locally, the **General Urban Plan of Sombor** reflects these objectives by identifying the **Great Bačka Canal** as a critical area for regeneration, combining heritage restoration with economic and recreational opportunities.

The primary challenge for Sombor is to regain the cultural, economic, and environmental potential of its hydro-heritage, while addressing issues of deterioration and limited public awareness. The canal system suffers from environmental degradation, fragmented management, and insufficient integration into local urban and tourism strategies. These factors have hampered its ability to contribute meaningfully to local sustainable development and cultural identity. Nevertheless, some actions have been carried out in this respect. Recent investments in refurbishing the historic **Bezdan Gate Lock** in 2020 marked a significant step toward preserving the engineering legacy of the Great Bačka Canal. The city has also started the creation of the detailed urban plan for the area around the Bezdan Gate Lock, aiming to boost local prospects in water transportation, tourism and the sustainable use of waterfronts. However, further efforts are needed to activate its potential as a tourist and educational asset. Also, initiatives such as cycling routes along the canal and small-scale tourism development are early efforts to link hydro-heritage with modern recreational uses.

## Ambitions and Motivation

Sombor envisions the **Great Bačka Canal** as a **living resource** that connects its historical significance with contemporary relevance. Plans include transforming the canal into a centrepiece for cultural tourism, environmental education, and community engagement. The city seeks to position the canal as a symbol of innovation and resilience, linking its engineering legacy with modern sustainability goals.

## The city URBACT Local Group

Together, the ULG of Sombor combines technical authority, cultural wisdom, and grassroots enthusiasm to create a participatory and inclusive approach to revitalising the Great Bačka Canal. The ULG's collaborative structure ensures that the regeneration of the canal addresses environmental, cultural, and community priorities. Coordinated by the city government, the main stakeholder is "Vode Vojvodine/ Vojvodina Waters," the public water management company responsible for overseeing the jurisdiction of canals and ensuring sustainable water management practices at provincial level. The Secretariat for Urbanism in the Provincial Government provides regulatory and strategic oversight, aligning the project with regional urban development plans. Cultural and educational institutions include the Sombor City Museum and the Faculty of Education and Sombor Grammar School. Community organisations and NGOs ensure grassroots participation and diversity. Groups like "Staparska Ruža/Stapar Rose" Women association, focused on reviving traditional rug handcrafts, and the Damask Silk Cooperative "Novitet - Dunav" Bezdan, a small enterprise rooted in the canal's industrial heritage, showcase the cultural and economic importance of the canal. Organisations like "Podunav" NGO, dedicated to tourism and hospitality, recreational and sports groups, such as the Cycling Club "Sombor," Lotus Cycling Team, and CikloCOOLtura, and water sports clubs like "Danube" Kayak Club Bezdan and "Sombor" Kayak Club promote the canal as a hub for outdoor activities.

## Assets 🖉

The restoration of Great Bačka Canal's aligns with **Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia 2021-2035** and the **Development Strategy for the Vojvodina Province**, which emphasise a strategic alignment with sustainable water management, heritage preservation, and ecotourism. Local priorities focus on integrating the canal into urban regeneration and recreational plans, creating a natural fit with the project.

There is a public political backing from "**Vode Vojvodine/Vojvodina Waters**" and the local municipality ensures institutional commitment to the project goals, while active involvement of NGOs, sports clubs, and cultural groups demonstrates robust community engagement and enthusiasm.

The Great Bačka Canal and the Bezdan Gate Lock, along with the historic architecture of Sombor and natural reserves, offer rich assets for cultural tourism and environmental education. A well-structured ULG is connecting public authorities, cultural institutions, and NGOs, fostering a participatory approach to project implementation.

## Barriers /

Financial constraints remain a significant challenge, with limited municipal budgets and a reliance on external funding sources, such as EU cohesion funds and national grants, to support large-scale heritage and water infrastructure investments. Another critical barrier is the **lack** of specialised local technical expertise required for complex restoration projects. In addition, fragmented management responsibilities across multiple authorities, such as "Vode Vojvodine/Vojvodina Water" and regional urban planning bodies, make decision-making and coordination more complicated. Lastly, limited public awareness about the historical and cultural significance of the canal system reduces community support for its revitalisation.

#### У том Сомбору

У том Сомбору, свега на вољу, Свега има, баш истина, Па и жене пију вина, У том Сомбору, Свега има, баш истина, Флашом жене пију вина, <u>У том Сомбору.</u>

Женићу се ја, жена ми треба, Која знаде свашта радит', А ја ћу се господарит', У том Сомбору. Која знаде свашта радит', А ја ћу се господарит', У тем Сомбору.

Откако је тај, артерски бунар, Од та доба грах се кува, А шунка се боље чува, У том Сомбору. Од та доба грах се кува, А шунка се боље чува, У том Сомбору.

Traditional song

In that Sombor In that Sombor, at will, There's everything, it's true, Even women drink wine In that Sombor, There's everything, it's true, Even women, with a bottle, drink wine In that Sombor

> I'll get married, I need a wife, A lot to do, who knows? And I will rule, In that Sombor. A lot to do, who knows? and I will rule In that Sombor

Ever since that artesian well, since then, beans have been cooked and ham is preserved better, In that Sombor. Since that time, beans have been cooked and ham is preserved better, In that Sombor



# **TRANSFER POTENTIAL**

To conduct a comprehensive assessment that includes independently verifiable elements by the URBACT Lead Expert and confirmation from partner cities, an assessment grid has been developed. This grid is based on various criteria and indicators and, along with information contained in the profiles, contributes to the summary table below.

**RELEVANCE AND SYSTEMIC READINESS:** Ensures the project's objectives align with the city's strategies, emphasising cultural heritage and water management.

**EFFICIENCY - LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT:** Evaluates the commitment of senior leaders and the skills of the project coordinator.

**INVESTMENT PLAN FEASIBILITY - LOCAL NETWORK ROBUSTNESS:** Assesses the city's engagement with stakeholders, fund identification, and integration into a broader strategy.

**EFFECTIVENESS - DELIVERY CAPABILITY:** Examines partner involvement, expertise, and resource commitment for successful project delivery.

In accordance with this methodology, initial assets and barriers were identified during visits and profile analyses. The assessment of transfer potential was conducted by the URBACT Lead Expert, discussed with each Transfer Network city, and used as a basis to define the realistic outcome of the transfer.

Overall, most transfer cities are likely to position themselves in the medium transfer potential. The table below contains a short overview of this assessment process, considering the assets and barriers already described in the city profiles.

### CITIES' TRANSFER POTENTIAL AT A GLANCE



A clear Investment Plan will be produced, identifying aspects to be transferred and resources to support the process within a clear future time frame. Some elements of transfer may take place already during the network journey. There is a high prospect of securing financial support. A clear Investment Plan will be produced, identifying aspects to be transferred and resources to support the process within a clear future time frame. There is reasonable prospect of securing financial support. A clear Investment Plan will be produced, identifying aspects to be transferred and resources to support the process within a clear future time frame. However, there is limited prospect of securing financial support.

ELCHE	Assets	Barriers
<image/>	<ul> <li>Strong hydro-heritage foundation (Palmeral of Elche)</li> <li>Aligned with strategic plans and EU initiatives</li> <li>Commitment to sustainability and urban regeneration</li> <li>Municipal and institutional support</li> <li>Active civic organisations</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Stakeholder engager challenges</li> <li>Limited public aware</li> <li>Threats from climate urban sprawl</li> <li>Financial pressures a needs</li> <li>Cultural, governance technical challenges</li> </ul>

#### Hydro-Cultural site:

Palmaral- UNESCO

## Focus of Transfer

**Comments and Explanation** 

- Leveraging the historical irrigation systems and green-blue infrastructure to address contemporary challenges and water scarcity.
- Deepen its educational and ٠ community engagement programs

Elche's UNESCO Palmeral has the potential to adapt the Halandri practice for natural watercourse irrigation of the groves. The network's initial phase enhanced the understanding of hydro-heritage among local stakeholders, focusing on its cultural significance. Efforts are being made to identify public and private partners within the URBACT Local Group (ULG) to use regenerated water. UNESCO activities could assist in community engagement for sense-making. While green transition issues are increasingly understood, political involvement remains to be demonstrated. The experienced ULG coordinator is crucial for Integrated development, but cross-sectoral integration, particularly with water management and private stakeholders, requires further strengthening. Local policy agenda alignment will also be utilised in the transfer.

## ngagement

- awareness
- climate change and
- sures and funding
- rnance, and llenges

Level

### ROESELARE

#### Assets

#### **Barriers**



- Aligned policies (Climate Adaptation, Water Management, Cultural Plan)
- Financial stability from industrial economy and growing population
- Cultural heritage and UNESCO sites offer revitalisation potential
- Strong stakeholder engagement and political support

- Financial constraints and uncertain public support
- Fragmented policy integration
- Complex governance may delay implementation

#### Hydro-Cultural site:

Mandel river and canals

## Focus of Transfer

### **Comments and Explanation**

 Innovative ways for integrating the waterrelated cultural heritage into urban regeneration and sustainability efforts.

 Transform hydro-heritage into a living resource that connects its waters to societal needs, sustainability goals, and cultural identity. Roeselare has made significant steps in understanding the project, with a clear connection between water management and cultural heritage. Several strategies integrating water management with cultural expression and historical context have been developed, with attention to digital, green initiatives, and diversity. Although local elections delayed political involvement, the current government is now committed, and a senior water management official will lead the ULG. The city has engaged various stakeholders, aligning with local, regional, and EU policies. Key individuals with relevant expertise have been identified, with political and technical commitment to the plan. Some soft investments are likely to be implemented during the project's lifespan.



Level

## ROME

#### Assets

#### **Barriers**



Hydro-Cultural site:

Orangery and garden San Sisto

- Rome's green-blue heritage has potential for revitalisation and innovative resource optimisation
- Aligns with urban policies prioritising sustainability, resource preservation, and climate change adaptation
- Addresses rainwater absorption, urban heat islands, and extreme weather events
- Historical culture of water inspires integration of hydro-heritage into urban development

- Limited economic and human resources for project management and maintenance
- Resistance to technological advancements in heritage conservation
- Difficulty in maintaining citizen participation and stakeholder engagement for long-term continuity

## Focus of Transfer

### **Comments and Explanation**

Level

- Develop a participatory approach to transform the Orangery into a lively community hub
- A replicable collaborative governance model to foster sense of ownership and ensures that the space meets the community's needs

Rome aims to regenerate hidden cultural heritage in less-known areas using a participatory approach. A special focus will be on concrete actions that put together a compelling narrative. The main interest is making this site accessible to the local communities and raise awareness on its role in resilience, through participation. Political commitment aims to standardise this practice, with a team from various departments involved and ULG coordination by Università la Sapienza. The ULG has good representation but will likely become more diversified in the adaptation phase. Funding is available from EU and national sources, potentially creating jobs. Relevant institutions are identified, and commitment to delivering the Investment Plan (IP) comprehensively is a clear priority for the ULG.

# B

## SERPA

#### Assets

#### **Barriers**



#### Hydro-Cultural site:

Aqueduct and Nora well– National Monument

- Aligned with local, regional, and national policies (e g , Municipal Master Plan, Alentejo 2030)
- Strong municipal political support
- Community groups are actively involved
- Nora and Aqueduct Complex is a key hydro-heritage site
- Public-private partnership opportunity with the Counts' family

- Limited budgets and reliance on external funding
- Lack of technical expertise
- Significant investment needed to prevent deterioration

### Comments and Explanation

Level

 Make the Nora and Aqueduct Complex a shared resource, bridging its private ownership with public benefits

Focus of Transfer

 Restore the site's functional use for irrigation while transforming it into a hub for education, cultural events, and tourism Serpa has a strong connection to water and heritage, with an above-ground aqueduct. While the network's purpose is understood, clearer communication is needed among ULG members to manage expectations. Both political and technical levels are engaged, with experienced enough ULG coordination. The city involves a wide range of stakeholders, including the family that built the aqueduct, aligning with its UNESCO heritage status. Efforts to make the Nora well functional will require significant investment, which could come from the regional level (EU funds), also in line with sustainable tourism and resilience. Most stakeholders and institutions are identified, with local and regional support, some funds and resources have already been identified, starting from soft investments and synergy with current practice. The network will likely assist in finding some solutions for planned activities, especially in the field of technological solutions that can be applied to the regeneration of the site.



## SOMBOR

#### Assets

#### **Barriers**



Hydro-Cultural site:

Great Backa Canal and system

- Aligns with regional plans for sustainable water management, heritage preservation, and eco-tourism
- The integrative aspects of both industrial and hydro-cultural heritage
- Supported by community groups and many stakeholders
- Cultural tourism and environmental education potential

- Financial constraints and reliance on external funding
- Passive political commitment for investments in socio-cultural sector
- Fragmented management and limited public awareness

### **Comments and Explanation**

Level

 Making the Great Bačka Canal a living resource that connects its historical significance with contemporary relevance

Focus of Transfer

• Transform the canal into a centrepiece for cultural tourism, environmental education, and community engagement. Sombor aims to integrate the social and economic aspects of residents' lives with the hydro heritage and canal system, focusing particularly on the neglected Great Bačka canal. Both water management and cultural life are key to the city's development plan, impacting well-being and tourism. The city engages numerous stakeholders and plans to foster a participatory culture, despite early-stage engagement and reliance on grants. Technical expertise to manage both technical aspects and participatory design is appointed. Attention on governance is required, especially for what concerns political commitment. Cross-cutting issues such as resilience and green transition are partially addressed, and the coordinators' enthusiasm is expected to drive significant changes.

SECTION 3 Synthesis, overall transferability and methodology outline

# INTRODUCTION

# HACK AND CHOP -BREAKING DOWN THE EXPERIENCE INTO POTABLE ELEMENTS

The breadth and depth of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project and the manifold dimensions that have been summarised in the previous chapters call for a pragmatic breakdown of its complexity for better adaptation and reuse in the so-called Investment Plans that partner cities will produce as part of their Innovation Transfer journey.

Over the past several months, the analysis and discussions with partners have converged into a modular approach. Due to the diversity of the structural elements that exist (or do not exist) in the Transfer cities, the methodology draws upon the six innovative building blocks (see Section 1) and further refines them into three transfer pillars that we define as "Modules" and, within them, nine Units. These Units denote specific components that can be transferred as separate but interconnected elements. Regardless of the higher or lower interest in or relevance that transfer cities have demonstrated for specific elements or units, the transfer - hence the Investment Plans - will contain elements adapted from all three Modules.



## HOW THE MODULES FIT INTO THE ITN JOURNEY

The identification of the three Modules – all deemed essential for innovation transfer – enables the prioritisation of adapting and reusing individual components (specific interests identified during the initial review of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project and the city visits). This approach facilitates a tailored transfer of relevant aspects to each city based on its baseline situation, assessed needs, and transfer interest. Furthermore, each of the three pillars requires a different timescale and approach for successful adaptation and implementation.

The **strategic dimension**, which focuses on integrating hydro-heritage as a living resource, depends heavily on the existing policy frameworks, political stability, and the availability of resources and assets within each city. This component may require significant groundwork to align local strategies with the broader vision of the Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project.

The **collaborative governance** module, while essential for long-term sustainability, involves building alliances, mobilising stakeholders, and fostering a shared sense of responsibility. While feasible to initiate within the 18-month period of this URBACT Network, its sustainability hinges on a clearly delineated strategic vision to manage the competing interests of diverse stakeholders. Without this, the risk of fragmented efforts increases.

The **participatory regeneration and education** module, which includes operational elements like participatory design workshops, community engagement initiatives, and educational activities, may be easier to transfer in terms of practitioner skills and community involvement. However, its success depends on the local capacity to adapt these activities to the socio-cultural context and maintain long-term community engagement.



# METHODOLOGY

## HYDRO-HERITAGE CITIES METHODOLOGY AND ITS ELEMENTS EXPLAINED

1. Reframing Hydro-Heritage as a Living Resource (Block 1, 3)

2. Integrating hydro-heritage with sustainability and water management goals (Block 1, 2)

3. Innovation in infrastructure and technology (Block 1, 6)4. Monitoring and

Evaluation framework (Block 3) MODULE 1: THE STRATEGIC DIMENSION

5. Innovativegovernance andinstitutional models(Block 3)6. Redesigning

procurement processes for social and environmental impact (Block 1, 2)

7. Integrated funding schemes (Block 1, 2) MODULE 2: GOVERNANCE

8. Participatory sense-making for urban regeneration (Block 4)

9. Education and awareness-raising strategies (Block 5) MODULE 3 : COMMUNIT DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT AND REGENERATION

### MODULE 1: THE STRATEGIC DIMENSION

The strategic dimension is fundamental for the transferability of the UIA project, as it lays the groundwork for integrating hydro-heritage into sustainable urban development. By framing hydro-heritage as a **living resource**, this module ensures that cities can unlock its potential to address contemporary challenges such as climate adaptation, water management, and community resilience. The module emphasises **cross-sectoral approaches**, **innovation**, **and robust evaluation methods**, which are essential for adapting the project to diverse urban contexts.

This module provides transfer cities with strategic tools and frameworks to:

- a. Reposition hydro-heritage as a driver of sustainability and community well-being
- b. Align cultural preservation with broader urban goals, such as water reuse, green transition, and digital transformation
- c. Ensure accountability and adaptability through effective monitoring and evaluation

#### **Units of Transfer**

- 1. Reframing Hydro-Heritage as a Living Resource
- 2. Integrating hydro-heritage with sustainability and water management goals
- 3. Innovation in infrastructure and technology
- 4. Monitoring and Evaluation framework



### **MODULE 2: GOVERNANCE**

### MODULE 3: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT AND REGENERATION

The Governance module focuses on **institutional frameworks**, **decision-making processes**, **and funding mechanisms** that ensure the success and sustainability of heritage-led urban regeneration projects. By emphasising the collaborative governance model, innovative, albeit time-consuming, procurement processes, and integrated funding schemes, this module intends to equip transfer cities with tools to manage complex, multi-stakeholder projects.

This module provides exchange opportunities to:

- a. Establish collaborative, inclusive, and adaptable governance frameworks and institutional models and processes to align heritage activation with sustainability goals
- b. Rethink procurement processes that go beyond cost-effectiveness to prioritise social equity and environmental responsibility
- c. Securing integrated funding schemes critical for scaling and sustaining projects, even without access to single, large-scale grants

#### **Units of Transfer**

- 5. Innovative governance and institutional models
- 6. Redesigning procurement processes for social and environmental impact
- 7. Integrated funding schemes

This module emphasises the **participatory methods and approaches** used in the project to create a collective sense-making process around hydro-heritage. The focus is on the participatory mechanisms that allow communities to reinterpret and integrate heritage into their everyday lives, fostering a shared vision for urban regeneration and sustainability. The exchange is on co-design, storytelling, and education ensures that urban regeneration efforts are inclusive, relevant, and sustainable. Cities can adopt these practices to foster meaningful engagement, strengthen social cohesion, and build a shared vision for the future.

The module concentrates on the participatory approach to:

- a. Enable individuals and groups to reinterpret the meaning and relevance of heritage within a contemporary urban context and everyday life
- b. Create a sense of ownership over urban regeneration projects, aligning public spaces and initiatives with local needs and values to promote longterm sustainability and collective responsibility
- c. Build community capacity but also strengthen the social fabric by fostering dialogue and collaboration among diverse groups

#### **Units of Transfer**

- 8. Participatory sense-making for urban regeneration
- 9. Education and awareness-raising strategies

## A METHODOLOGY BASED ON WATER CYCLE METAPHORS

In order to describe the transfer methodology for the **Hydro-Heritage Cities** we use the metaphors of uncovering hidden streams and the **water cycle**. This choice reflects both the rediscovery of hydro-heritage assets during the initial months of cooperation and the dynamic, iterative process of adapting them to the distinct contexts of each partner city over the course of the two-year joint work. The metaphors go hand in hand with the three modules into which we have deconstructed Halandri's project. Together, the three modules and their sub-units flow through the metaphors to create a dynamic framework for the transfer process.

#### 1. Evaporation stage (ideation phase): the strategic approach of hydroheritage as a living resource

The strategic approach reflects the source of the hidden stream, where hydroheritage is recognised not just as a static vestige but as a living resource. This is the **evaporation stage**, where the vision and potential of hydro-heritage rise into shared strategies and frameworks, inspiring cities to adapt and reimagine their distinctive water-related assets.

## 2. Condensation stage (transfer action planning): collaborative governance and participatory regeneration

Collaborative governance and participatory regeneration reflect the tributaries that join the main stream, symbolising the input and role of diverse stakeholders—government, communities, and experts—into the broader system. This phase is the **condensation stage**, where diverse ideas and inputs converge into actionable plans. The collaborative process gathers scattered efforts and stakeholders into cohesive plans, just as water droplets come together to form clouds.

## 3. Precipitation stage (testing phase): education, awareness and capacity building

Education represents the streambed, where the flow of knowledge and awareness deepens the connection between citizens and hydro-heritage. Education, awareness and capacity align with the **precipitation stage**, where accumulated knowledge and capacity-building efforts transform into tangible actions—pilot actions, new initiatives, empowered citizens, and plans for integrated and sustainable urban development

## 4. Run-off and recharge (refining phase) to ensure the sustainability of the Network

A fourth stage of this cycle represents the outcomes of the network's activities after the end of the URBACT project. It can be referred to as **Run-off and Recharge**, where lessons learned and local innovations flow back into the individual cities' systems, enriching the collective knowledge and inspiring further cycles and implementation of the Plans through integration into policies and available funding and resourcing streams.





Even though it is centred on the Chalandri experience, the Hydro-Heritage Cities approach to transfer process emphasises the mutual learning journey, where all participating cities add value to the innovation and whose design can grow as more stakeholders join or contribute to hydro-heritage regeneration efforts. The "water cycle" metaphor also reflects the dynamic, iterative, and interconnected nature of the transfer process. It captures the fluidity, adaptability, and sustainability of the network's transfer process. By adopting this methodology, the Hydro-Heritage Cities network will address transfer objectives at three interconnected levels:

- 1. Local level: At the city level, each partner will adapt specific elements of Chalandri to its context, meeting the needs of its stakeholders while creating opportunities for Chalandri to further improve its own practice through feedback and collaboration
- 2. Network level: Among the partnering cities, , transfer will occur through common themes and subtopics that have been deemed necessary for the process. Each city will prioritise specific areas of focus in its Investment Plan, reflecting the flexible and iterative nature of the water cycle as it adapts to diverse urban challenges
- 3. **Programme and territorial level:** At the wider territorial level (national or European), the network will define thematic outputs at both local and transnational levels, creating knowledge and tools that can be disseminated and capitalised on by other stakeholders beyond the six cities boundaries.

In this methodology the URBACT Local Groups remain crucial enablers of:

- **Dual-level engagement** which ensures a balance between shared learning across the network and localised application/mainstreaming (through the structured relay of transnational knowledge to local stakeholders and participation in online sessions), fostering innovation and adaptability
- **Iterative learning** through a structured sequence of transnational and local meetings and feedback loops allows cities to continuously refine their strategies. The sequence foresees preparation and follow-up activities for the ULG and coordinators in line with transnational and local progress.

The starting point of the adaptation and definition of each city's unique Investment Plan is always one (or multiple) transfer units, which are then enriched through peer learning and collaborative exploration. All Network -level activities (in-person meetings, online meetings, journals, ad-hoc support) are structured to contain both thematic exchange and action-oriented inputs/methods from experts, testimonials and peers.

- a. **Peer sharing** among cities and experts with similar experiences, practices, or solutions contribute their insights, building upon the innovation practice to inspire and enhance collective learning
- b. **Thematic expertise** through URBACT Experts that facilitate the learning process, codifying outputs that emerge from joint work and thematic support provided during the process (journals, articles, other resources)
- c. **Practical action** with pilot/test actions provides hands-on experience, bridging the gap between planning and practice and providing insights into the development of the Investment plan.
- d. **Virtual engagement** with hybrid modalities of virtual E&L sessions (7 online events are planned) broadens accessibility, enabling greater participation from ULGs and city practitioners in knowledge exchange
- e. A structured relay approach ensures that key learnings from in-person transnational meetings are effectively followed up and implemented at the local level
- f. **Bilateral support**: when needed, tailored and ad-hoc expert-led one-on-one "clinics" offer flexibility and targeted support, addressing specific needs of cities that require additional guidance or assistance
- g. Promoting and disseminating the results within and across urban communities

# THE HYDRO-HERITAGE CITIES NAVIGATION CHART

## EMBEDDING THE METHODOLOGY IN THE OVERALL ITN FRAMEWORK : THE HYDRO-HERITAGE CITIES NAVIGATION CHART

The Water-cycle modular methodology provides a framework that enables the delivery of outputs during the various stages of "the network's cycle. This approach facilitates the tailored adaptation and planning for reuse of Chalandri's innovative practice while cities develop their Investment/Continuity Plan, as well as the production of network actions, the final Network report, Investment plans, and communication and dissemination products at local, network and Programme levels. Based on collaborative and agile approach, the Lead Expert and ad-hoc Experts will accompany and support all cities throughout the process, according to the emerging needs and requirements.

The transfer at the local level will involve **testing actions**, which are defined and assessed and whose results are shared in journals and the final phase in international and local events. Testing actions are brief demonstrations that include the fundamental aspects of the transfer activity, aiming to prototype an adapted solution that can be refined or reused later as part of the Investment plan.

This process will be shared **during the whole time** through **local and transnational communication** activities (articles, journals, media and social networks, final products) and **reviewed** during the mid-term reflection meeting for the assessment of first semester of adapt phase and a review meeting of the Investment / Continuity and outputs right before the start of the final Phase.

The flow of activities is logically interconnected to align with the different activities foreseen in the transfer journey, and will use a combination of physical and virtual cooperation methods. This approach aims to maximise the potential of virtual collaborative tools such as Zoom meetings, thematic webinars, visual applications, online repositories, and communities like Basecamp. These methods will be employed to deliver both compulsory and thematic outputs effectively.


## In-person transnational meetings

Sept 24- February 25	March – May 2025		June 2025 – Fe	ebruary 26	March – August 26				
UNDERSTAND	ADAPT							PREPARE REUSE	
DEEP DIVE HALANDRI	Evaporation (ideation)		Condensation planning)	(transfer action	Precipitation	(testing)	Runoff (refin	ement plan)	
Where	URBACT PARIS APRIL 25 ROESELARE 8-9 MAY 25	SERPA 10-11 JULY 25		SOMBOR 23-24 OCTOBER 25		URBACT PARIS JANUARY 26 ELCHE 3-4 FEBRUARY 26		ROME FINAL EVENT JUNE 26	
Module	MODULE 3: COMMUNITY- DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT	MODULE 1: STRATEGIC DIMENSION		MODULE 1: STR. DIMENSION	ATEGIC	MODULE 2: GOVERNANCE		ALL MODULES	
Unit	Unit 8: Participatory sense-making for urban regeneration 9: Education and awareness-raising strategies	Unit 3: Innovation in infrastructure and technology		Unit 4: Monitorir Evaluation fram	ng and ework	Unit 5: Innovative governance and institutional models Unit 7: Integrated funding schemes		All Units	
Link to Investment / Continuity Plan	Overall structure and requirements for IP/CP	Define actions + testing actions		Measuring prog success of the pl	ress and an	Identifying funding mix and roles for plan		Presenting the final results sharing the journey	

## Online meetings

Sept 24- February 25	March – May 2025		June 2025 – February 26						March – August 26	
UNDERSTAND	ADAPT							PREPARE REUSE		
	Evaporation (ideat	ıtion (ideation) Cor pla		ndensation (transfer action nning)		Precipita	ion (testing)		Runoff (refinement plan)	
Where	ONLINE 1 APRIL 25	ONLINE 2 JUNE 25		ONLINE 3 SEPT 25	ONLINE 4 NOV. 25		ONLINE 5 DEC. 25	ONL FEBR	INE 6 RUARY 26	ONLINE 7 APRIL 26
Module	MODULE 1	MODULE 1		ALL	MODULE	1	MODULE 2	МОГ	DULE 2	ALL
Unit	2: Integrating hydro-heritage with sustainability and water management goal	3: Innovation in infrastructure and technology CROSS-CUTTIN	, / IG	Gender and diversity CROSS-CUTTING All modules	1: Refram Heritage o Resource	ing Hydro- as a Living	5: Innovative governance and institutional models	6: Re proc proc and impo	edesigning urement esses for social environmental act	CROSS-CUTTING Communication
Link to Investment / Continuity Plan	Technical Solutions to adapt for IP/CP	Integrate CC topic of digita transformatio	l n	Review CC theme in I P/CP	Identify sp aspects of heritage f economy	becific f hydro for jobs /	Finetune the governance model of the IP/CP	Iden proc PPP the p	tify strategic urement and mechanisms for blan	Finetune the communication strategy of the plan for adoption and buy-in

## Communication, management and outputs

Sept 24- February 25	March – May 20	025	June 2025 – February 26				March – August 26		
UNDERSTAND	ADAPT							PREPARE REUSE	
SET UP COMMUNICATION	Evaporation (id	eation)	Condensation (transfer action planning)		Precipitation (testing)		Runoff (refinement plan)		
Partners comms outputs	Partners posts of meetings online	Ind news – ad hoc and LE posts for all duration- promotion of meetings results of in- person, ULG meetings and local activities							
Local level	ULG meeting	ULG meeting	ULG meeting	ULG meeting	ULG meeting	ULG meeting Midterm reflection	ULG meeting Draft Investment Plan	Final Investment / Continuity plans	
URBACT experts' main reports	Transferability study	Activities report Fir re						Final network report	
URBACT experts main divulgative products	Article 1 MARCH '25	Journal 1 JUNE '25	Journal NOVEMBEI	2 A R'25 JAN	rticle 2 IUARY '26	Journal 3 MARCH '26	Article 3 MAY '25	Journal 4 JULY '26	
Coordination	Monthly online	catch up meetin	gs						

## **CONCLUSIONS & OVERALL TRANSFER ASSESSMENT**

The Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T. project has demonstrated the transformative potential of hydro-heritage as a driver for sustainable urban development, participatory governance, and environmental resilience. By integrating blue-green infrastructure with cultural and social dimensions, it has successfully reactivated an ancient water system, turning it into a meaningful and functional asset for the community. The project's holistic approach—combining physical interventions, governance innovation, and educational outreach—offers a strong foundation for transfer to diverse urban contexts.

The five transfer cities—Elche, Roeselare, Rome, Serpa, and Sombor—each bring unique opportunities and challenges, reflecting different stages of engagement with hydro-heritage and urban regeneration. The transfer process will not be a one-size-fitsall replication but an adaptive journey in which each city tailors Cultural H.ID.R.A.N.T.'s approach to its strategic priorities, governance structures, and socio-environmental realities. Key transferable aspects include the participatory governance framework, digital and educational tools for awareness-raising, and cross-sectoral collaboration linking heritage with sustainability goals.

76



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