

In4Green Action planning network

URBACI



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CONTENT IN4GREEN V QUARTERLY NETWORK REPORT

IN4GREEN PARTNERS	3
INTERVIEW OF THE QUARTER	4
QUARTER BALANCE	
THE LEAD EXPERT'S POINT OF VIEW	5
• WHERE ARE WE NOW IN THE ACTION PLANNING NETWORK JOURNEY?	6
STAIRWAY TO THE IAP	10
IV TRANSNATIONAL MEETING IN LARISSA (GREECE)	11
ONLINE EXCHANGE AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES	17
COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES	23

In4Green aims to foster green transition in small and medium-size European industrial cities. It is an URBACT project, running from 2023 to 2025, co-finaced by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In4Green is a network of 10 European cities who will develop integrated action plans to promote their local green transition. This Quarterly Network Report reflects the performance of partners at transnational and local level in the development of exchange and learning activities.

June 2025.

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Pictures by: Jose Costero, Larissa City Council, Sara Malicka and Thanos Gkourompinos.

V QUARTERLY NETWORK REPORT IN4GREEN PARTNERS ARE:

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AVILÉS (SPAIN) BIJELO POLJE (MONTENEGRO) DĄBROWA GÓRNICZA (POLAND) LARISSA (GREECE) NAVAN (IRELAND) SABADELL (SPAIN) SALERNO (ITALY) SOLINGEN (GERMANY) VILA NOVA DE FAMALICÃO (PORTUGAL) ŽDÁR NAD SÁZAVOU (CZECH REPUBLIC)

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INTERVIEW OF THE QUARTER TOMÁŠ PLEVA. Project Coordinator. Žďár nad Sázavou (Czech Republic)

After the first quarter of 2025, how would you describe your city's overall feeling and momentum in the In4Green project?

Significant progress had been made; implementation is proceeding as planned. We feel well aligned with the network timeline, and **the feedback we received during the Peer Review process in Larissa has confirmed that we are on the right track**. This has boosted our confidence and motivation for the next steps.

What have been the main challenges your team faced during this period?

This past quarter, **our main struggle has been balancing synergies with other local initiatives while managing financial control procedures** – always a "fun" task! Time constraints remain a constant, especially when trying to coordinate IAP drafting, testing activities, and stakeholder involvement all at once. Nevertheless, we have been able to maintain our momentum.

Can you tell us about your city's key achievements in the first quarter of 2025?

We have drafted solid sections 1 and 2 of the IAP and are now advancing steadily into section 3. In parallel, we have prepared a testing activity involving an informal IT education hub. **This pilot is designed to foster digital skills among the local population and support our green transition objectives by enhancing innovation capacity in the territory**.

And finally, what is one important lesson you have learned so far from your testing activities or the peer learning process?

A key learning has been the value of evaluating testing activities after their implementation. It's not only about planning and execution — what comes after is equally crucial. **We are learning how to analyse outcomes, adapt our approach, and incorporate feedback to make our Integrated Action Plan more effective and grounded in real experiences**.

OUARTER BALANCE THE LEAD EXPERT'S POINT OF VIEW.



Mandalas, Peer Reviews and the Art of Integrated Planning

The first quarter of 2025 has been a moment of consolidation for In4Green. With only three quarters to go, our cities are now deeply engaged in drafting their Integrated Action Plans. The Fourth Transnational Meeting in Larissa was a key milestone, offering space for reflection, feedback and renewed motivation.

The Peer Review session was especially valuable. In small working groups, cities exchanged honest and constructive feedback on their draft IAPs. This helped many partners improve their plans—particularly in clarifying problems and refining actions—while reinforcing the value of peer learning at this stage of the process.

"Mandala of Integrated Planning: a visual tool inspired by Indian tradition to assess how well each IAP incorporates the URBACT dimensions of integration." Jose Costero, In4Green Lead Expert.

To go one step further, we introduced the Mandala of Integrated Planning: a visual tool inspired by Indian tradition to assess how well each IAP incorporates the URBACT dimensions of integration. It helped partners detect gaps in their planning and gave a clearer understanding of the "360^o" nature of the integrated approach.

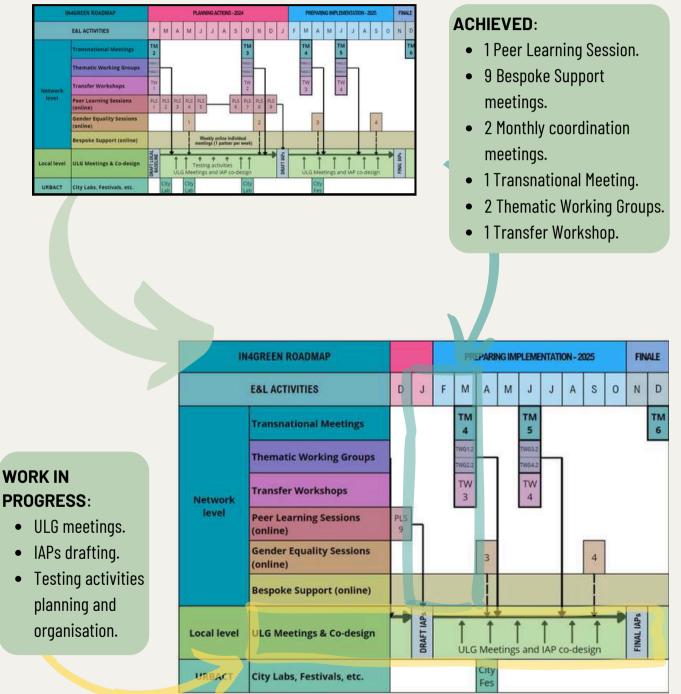
Local progress is also evident. Most cities have completed the first two sections of their IAPs, several are now working on Section 3, and testing activities continue to inform their work. Adjustments made after the peer review show that the learning process is alive and well.

The road ahead will focus on completing the plans and preparing for implementation—but Larissa showed us that the network is more united, motivated and aligned than ever.

By Jose Costero, In4Green Lead Expert.

OUARTER BALANCE WHERE ARE WE NOW IN THE APN JOURNEY?

In4Green Roadmap



QUARTER BALANCE HOW ARE PARTERS FEELING AFTER THIS QUARTER?

"Significant progress has been made; implementation is on track." "We feel comfortable with our IAP and very happy with the peer review."

"We're confident we're moving in the right direction."

"The testing activity brought good energy to the team."

"The peer learning opportunities are helping shape our ideas."

"There's still work ahead, but we're in a strong

position."

—despite time pressure, things are advancing."

"Good momentum

"We feel aligned with the project timeline and objectives."

"Very good and motivated especially now that we've drafted our IAP."

"Happy to have had the peer review it gave us useful feedback."

QUARTER BALANCE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF PARTNERS



Avilés (Spain).

"We managed to align the IAP with local carbon footprint actions and stakeholder dialogue."

Bijelo Polje (Montenegro).

"We held our second ULG meeting and advanced our local baseline and testing activity."



Dąbrowa Górnicza (Poland).

"We successfully completed a second testing activity focused on public space revitalisation."

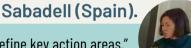
Larissa (Greece).

"We finalised Section 3 of the IAP and continued deep engagement with local stakeholders."



Navan (Ireland).

"We delivered a successful testing action — Retrofit Meath Expo — with strong public participation."



"We consolidated our IAP structure and used the peer review to refine key action areas."



Salerno (Italy).

"We moved forward with our main testing activity and strengthened ULG participation."

Solingen (Germany)

Žďár nad Sázavou (Czech Republic).

"We completed the first full draft of our IAP and held a workshop on sustainable industry."



Vila Nova de Famalicão (Portugal). "We organised a student hackathon to co-design our future green and smart industrial park."

"We produced solid drafts of Sections 1 and 2 and launched an informal IT education

hub."



QUARTER BALANCE WHAT WERE THE MAIN CHALLENGES OF THE LAST QUARTER?

"Aligning our testing activity with local priorities required extra effort."

"Administrative tempos really constrain our planning process."

> "Keeping the ULG engagement consistent has been a challenge."

"Managing parallel initiatives has stretched our team's capacity."

Balancing the IAP development with other city projects is tough."

"Some stakeholders are still hesitant to get involved."

"We had to redefine our action priorities after internal discussion." "Maintaining motivation after the testing phase is not easy."

"Translating technical ideas into clear actions was more complex than expected."

"Time—there's just not enough of it to do everything properly."

STAIRWAY TO THE IAP PARTNERS PROGRESS WITH INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS

Number of partners who have reached the milestones (out of 10):

Step 12	We have finis	n drafting Sec	tion 3 of the IA	P.		
Step 11	We have start	ed to work on	Section 3 of t	ne IAP.		
Step 10	We have planr	ned several m	eetings of the	ULG for 2025.		
Step 9	We have parti	cipated in the	IAP Peer Revi	ew.		
Step 8	We have discu drafted the Se	uss within the ection 2 of the	ULG about diff	ferent ideas of	actions a	and
Step 7	We have orga	nised at least	one testing ac	tivity.		
Step 6	We have draft	ed the first ve	ersion of IAP S	ection 1 (Local	Baseline).
Step 5	We have discute the IAP.	issed with ou	r stakeholders	about the visio	on of	
Step 4	We have discu problem we w		r stakeholders	about the mair	1	
Step 3	We have orga	nised several	meetings durii	ng 2024.		
Step 2	We have orga	nised the first	ULG meeting.			
Step 1	We have defin them invitatio		st of stakehold	ers for the ULC	and sen	t
() 2	2	4	6	8	10

Peer feedback, mandalas and innovation: a vibrant gathering in Thessaly

On 11-12 March 2025, the city of Larissa hosted the fourth transnational meeting of the In4Green network, bringing together 40 around participants from the ten partner cities. The event combined immersive visits, thematic workshops, and moments of collective reflection. A highlight of the meeting was the Peer Review session, where each city received targeted feedback on their draft Integrated Action Plan (IAP) in small working groups. The exercise was highly valued by participants, who reported improved clarity, new ideas and stronger confidence in the direction of their local plans.





The meeting also introduced an innovative tool: the Mandala of Integrated Planning. Inspired by Indian culture and developed by the Lead Expert, this visual framework helped cities assess how well their IAPs address the core dimensions of the URBACT integrated approach. Hosted in the inspiring setting of Joist Innovation Park and the historic Mill of Pappas, the meeting confirmed Larissa's commitment to sustainability and green entrepreneurship—and gave the network renewed energy for the crucial months ahead.

A time full of activities...

IAP Development		Thematic Working G		
IAP PEER REVEW INTEGRATED APPROACH MANDALA		GREEN AND SMART INDUSTRIAL ZONES		
TESTING ACTIVITIES LEARNINGS		CIRCULAR ECONOMY		
Good Practices		Transfer Workshop		
Good Practices		Transfer Workshop		
Good Practices JOIST INNOVATION PARK	SMART WATER METERING IN DEYAL	Transfer Workshop SMES AND ENTREPREN. PROMOTION		
JOIST INNOVATION	WATER METERING IN	SMES AND ENTREPREN.		
JOIST INNOVATION	WATER METERING IN DEYAL	SMES AND ENTREPREN. PROMOTION		

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A time for hard work and exchange activities...



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FROM MANDALAS TO STRATEGY: A STORY FROM LARISSA

It's a bright March morning in Thessaly. As the bus arrives at Joist Innovation Park, the In4Green delegation steps into a space where industry meets innovation. Over the course of two days, this gathering of 40 participants from ten European cities would combine hands-on learning, peer exchange and strategy design-all under one colourful roof.

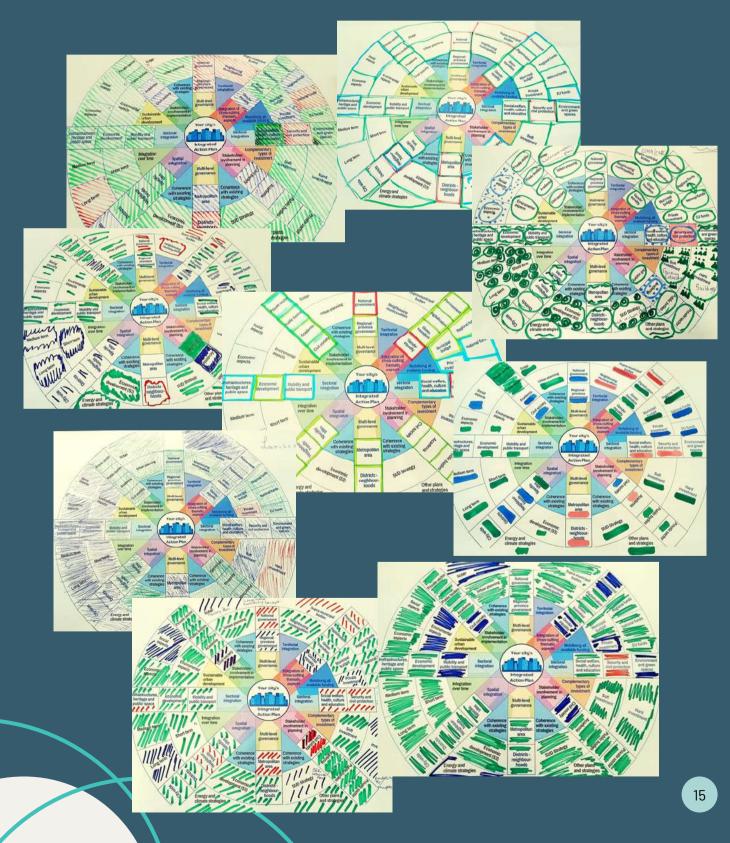
The first day was hosted entirely at Joist, a striking example of industrial heritage transformed into an innovation hub. The morning began with parallel sessions of **Thematic Working Groups** on green industrial zones and circular economy. This was followed by a **Transfer Workshop**, where Sabadell and Famalicão showcased how local economies can be boosted through SME support and entrepreneurship. After lunch, attention turned to Section 3 of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) and how to design it using URBACT tools. In the afternoon, participants joined a hands-on session on integration-where the newly introduced **Mandala of Integrated Planning** helped cities assess the strengths and gaps in their draft IAPs. The day closed with a guided **study visit of the Joist facilities**, offering real-world inspiration on sustainability, design and innovation.

The second day took place at the **Mill of Pappas**, a former flour mill turned cultural centre. Here, the long-awaited **Peer Review of the IAPs** allowed cities to present their drafts (Sections 1 and 2) and receive targeted feedback in small groups. The tone was open and constructive-cities appreciated the insights and left with clear ideas for improvement. This was followed by a short reflection on **lessons learned from testing activities**, and a presentation of **Larissa's good practice** on water management. After a coordination session and lunch, the group visited the Grain and Flour Museum and explored the city centre of Larissa, closing the meeting with a renewed sense of community and shared purpose.

In just two days, In4Green partners not only advanced technically, but also built stronger bonds across the network. As one participant put it: "This meeting helped us reconnect-to the project, to each other, and to what we're really trying to change."

A MOSAIC OF MANDALAS FROM IN4GREEN PARTNERS...

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KEY LEARNINGS FOR PARTNERS

DAY 1

- **Improving the IAP** Participants gained insights on making their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) more specific, structured, and aligned with SMART principles. They also recognized the need to refine their strategies and prioritize actions effectively.
- **Integration and cooperation** The importance of an integrated approach was highlighted, emphasizing spatial integration, stakeholder collaboration, and the interconnected nature of urban challenges and solutions.
- **Practical tools and methods** Participants learned new methodologies, such as the impact/effort matrix and the "Integrated Approach Mandala" tool, to support action planning and decision-making.
- **The road ahead** There is a shared awareness of the substantial work required to complete the IAPs, with a busy period ahead to refine strategies and implement actions.

DAY 2

- **Clarity and structure in the IAP** A well-structured IAP should follow a clear logical framework, be concise, and effectively communicate its purpose. Identifying the target audience from the start helps shape the wording and structure for better clarity.
- **The value of Peer Review** Consulting with peers and receiving an external perspective is highly beneficial. Different viewpoints, constructive feedback, and good practices from partners help refine and improve the IAP.
- **Implementation and monitoring** Developing a strong monitoring strategy is essential for ensuring the successful implementation of the IAP. Aligning the IAP with local plans and defining clear, SMART indicators are key factors for effectiveness.
- **Continuous improvement** While progress has been made, there is still work ahead. The review process highlights areas for refinement, including prioritizing actions, integrating useful visuals, and enhancing communication strategies.



ONLINE E&L ACTIVITIES EXCHANGE & LEARNING BEYOND TRANSNATIONAL MEETINGS

ONLINE PEER LEARNING SESSIONS (PLS) ORGANISED:

Peer Learning Sessions are an opportunity to know more, explore and learn from good practices and experiences of other partners in the network. The good practices (GP) and topics have been selected based on your interest and preferences discussed during the Activation Stage.

PLS8 - BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS AND INDUSTRIAL SYMBIOSIS IN SABADELL

Sabadell's GP4: Promotion of the creation of business associations in industrial areas.

Sabadell's GP3: Data collection and monitoring related to the Industrial Symbiosis project and in identifying companies with photovoltaic panels.

KEY LEARNINGS

- **Start with data.** Collecting data on energy use, waste, and circular opportunities is a vital first step—though challenging, it creates the foundation for future action.
- **Business associations add value.** Promoting business associations in industrial zones can strengthen collaboration, increase dialogue with local authorities, and unlock shared initiatives—if companies see clear benefits.
- **Replicability Is feasible, but context matters.** The good practices from Sabadell can be transferred to other cities, but success depends on trust, engagement, and local capacity to manage collaboration and data.
- **Main barriers are structural and cultural.** Common challenges include lack of time, low motivation from businesses, legal restrictions (especially on waste), and limited access to reliable data.
- **Small steps build momentum.** Starting with pilots or small-scale initiatives helps demonstrate value, which can gradually increase buy-in and resource commitment from the private sector.



SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES BETWEEN PARTNERS:

What Peer Learning Session did you enjoy the most?

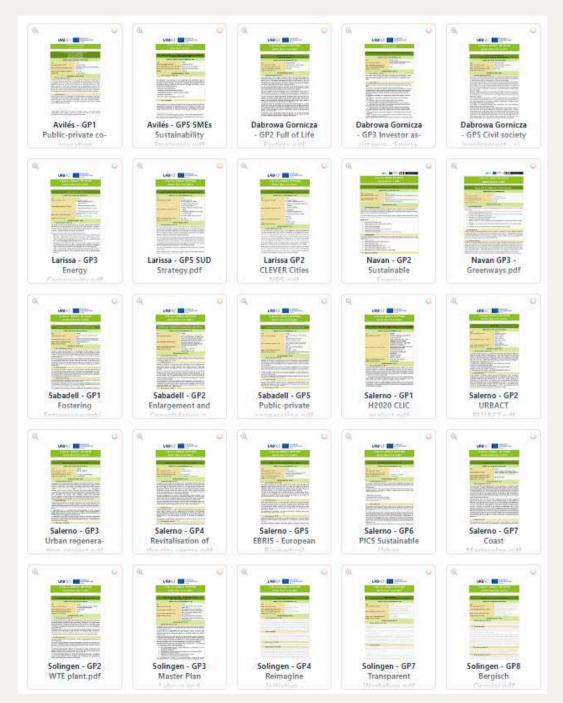




ONLINE E&L ACTIVITIES EXCHANGE & LEARNING BEYOND TRANSNATIONAL MEETINGS

GOOD PRACTICES REPOSITORY:

Up to 49 Good Practices Sheets have been already produced by partners and stored in the repository. Available for consultation.





BESPOKE SUPPORT MEETINGS

Individual follow up meetings between partners and Lead Expert. 9 meetings were organised during the first quarter of 2025, finishing the second round of meetings with partners and starting the third one.

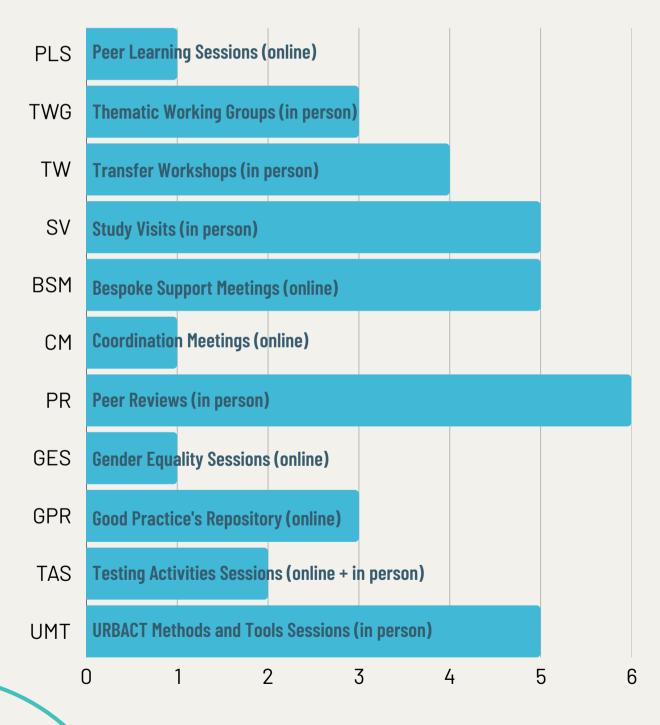
Participants feedback:

- "The Lead Expert has put a lot of work into the bespoke meetings with us and helped us with our ideas (particularly around for testing actions)".
- "The meetings have been very useful since we tackled specific difficulties and challenges from each partner".
- "The Bespoke Support has been very useful, especially for testing activities".
- "We are interested in having more of these meetings as the process of IAP development becomes intensive".
- "Meetings are helpful for the constant exchange on the current status and questions about the methodology".
- "They provide an exchange of ideas and allow us to evaluate the current status of our local project".
- "I find the Bespoke Support Meetings with the Lead Expert to be extremely valuable. These individual sessions provide tailored guidance that addresses our specific challenges and needs, making the advice highly relevant and actionable".
- "They help to focus attention and get useful advice".
- "Meetings allow us to summarize previous activities and outline the path for further activities as part of the implementation of the assumptions of the network".
- "The Bespoke Support Meetings are an excellent opportunity to tackle the challenges we face in our In4Green journey at local level, with the support and guidance of our Lead Expert".



SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES BETWEEN PARTNERS:

What kind of activity did you find the most inspiring since the beggining of the project?



ONLINE E&L ACTIVITIES EXCHANGE & LEARNING BEYOND TRANSNATIONAL MEETINGS

SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICES BETWEEN PARTNERS:

What kind of activity did you find the most inspiring since the beggining of the project?

What inspired cities the most?

When asked about the most inspiring activities since the beginning of the In4Green project, partners showed a clear preference for **in-person formats** over online sessions. While both Transfer Workshops and Peer Learning Sessions aim to foster knowledge exchange, it is the **face-to-face Transfer Workshops** that are more frequently highlighted as impactful. This suggests that physical presence fosters deeper engagement, informal conversations, and a stronger sense of connection among peers.

Beyond workshops, several cities pointed to the **Peer Review sessions** as particularly valuable. These moments of focused, constructive feedback allowed cities to reflect critically on their Integrated Action Plans and gain insights from others. Similarly, the **Study Visits** and the **URBACT Methods and Tools sessions**—delivered by the Lead Expert during transnational meetings—were praised for their clarity, practical relevance, and ability to spark new ideas.

Lastly, the **Bespoke Support Meetings** stood out as a key source of guidance. These one-on-one sessions with the Lead Expert were described by partners as useful, supportive and tailored to their specific challenges—making them one of the most appreciated components of the network's support structure.



COMMUNICATION HIGHLIGHTS DURING QUARTER I OF 2025

Published articles:



Empowering Cities Towards Circular Economy - Highlights from the URBACT In4Green Circular Economy Workshop in Larissa

On 11 March, 2024, the city of Larissa hosted an action packed session of the URBACT In4Green transnational meeting, bringing together urban practitioners, policymakers and city stakeholders to discuss the co-development of actions relating to the circular

Eileen Crowley

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FROM LARISSA TO INDIA: HOW GREEN INNOVATION AND MANDALAS CONNECT EUROPE

It's a sunny March morning in Larissa, Greece. A bus pulls up in front of a modern, striking building. As the doors open, around forty people step out, some still shaking off their early morning sluggishness, others pausing to take in their surroundings. The scene before them—a vibrant courtyard with colourful chairs and tables—could belong to a trendy

josecostero



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In4Green Action planning network



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STAY TUNED, THE BEST IS YET TO COME!