



# INNOVATION TRANSFER NETWORK QUARTERLY NETWORK JOURNAL #1

Pietro L. Verga, URBACT Lead Expert



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# CITISENSE

INNOVATION TRANSFER NETWORK

## QUARTERLY NETWORK JOURNAL #1

Q3: MARCH-MAY 2025

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➤ **Author:** Pietro L. Verga, Lead Expert



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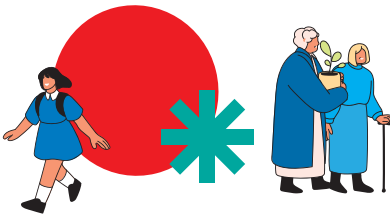


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CITISENSE Innovation Transfer Network

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Marking the transition from the Understand to the Adapt Phase, the third quarter (March to May 2025) of the CITISENSE Innovation Transfer Network's journey was characterised by intense activities at local level for the establishment of the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs), complemented by insightful Exchange and Learning sessions delivered by Ad-hoc Experts. These efforts culminated in the Second Transnational Meeting, held in Liepaja at the end of May. During this period, however, the CITISENSE Network underwent a slight change, losing one of its members with the withdrawal of the Hungarian city of Fót. As of the third quarter, the CITISENSE ITN is therefore composed of five partners: Piraeus (Lead Partner), Manresa, Naples, Geel, and Liepaja.

## 1. Setting-Up the URBACT Local Groups

The core activity for all partners during this quarter was the activation and expansion or consolidation of their ULGs, with a view to identifying their transfer priorities. In this phase, most of the work took place in parallel across the five partner cities, supported by the Lead Expert through bilateral online training sessions. As the five partners differ not only in their urban characteristics but also in their experience and familiarity with participatory and integrated methods, this initial stage of the Adapt Phase unfolded somewhat differently for each of them.



Figure 1: ULG Meeting in Piraeus. Source: Municipality of Piraeus

### 1.1 PIRAEUS

In Piraeus, the set-up of the URBACT Local Group (ULG) built directly on the strong foundations of the BeSecure-FeelSecure (BSFS) project, where extensive stakeholder mapping had already taken place. This meant that, rather than constructing a new network from scratch, the city could draw on an existing pool of partners – including the municipal police, the Victim Support Unit, the Municipal Equality Committee, NGOs, the Juvenile Probation Service and, more recently, the Municipal Youth Council – and then refine their roles to align with the objectives of CITISENSE.



Early discussions focused on identifying the challenges to be addressed. While small-scale crime, burglaries and antisocial behaviour linked to nightlife were recurrent concerns, participants stressed that the perception of insecurity was equally important, shaped by factors such as urban degradation, poor lighting, income disparities, poverty and the visibility of marginalised groups, including migrants, refugees and Roma communities. The group placed emphasis on framing these issues carefully, avoiding stigmatising narratives – particularly in relation to young people – and instead recognising them as stakeholders whose engagement is essential.

As the ULG evolved, stakeholders were categorised into three layers of involvement: a **core team** of committed actors who meet regularly, a **second circle**

to be consulted on specific issues, and an **outer circle** to be kept informed and mobilised when continuity or scaling up is required. This layered approach allowed the group to remain manageable while ensuring openness to new inputs. At the same time, participants recognised the importance of reaching beyond the “usual suspects”. Certain powerful actors – such as the Holy Metropolis, the Taxi Drivers Association, Olympiakos sports club, investors, development companies and cultural heritage authorities – may not take part directly in the ULG, but were identified as essential stakeholders to be engaged bilaterally or kept informed to avoid resistance and to harness their potential for transformative impact.

## 1.2 MANRESA

In Manresa, the activation of the URBACT Local Group (ULG) began in March with an open and inclusive meeting at the Fàbrica de l'Aranya, bringing together around 25 participants from across the quadruple helix. Local representatives from municipal services, security forces, business and social organisations, academia and regional administrations gathered to explore how the CITISENSE approach could be adapted to their city. Taking inspiration from the experience of Piraeus, the discussions mapped out a range of challenges: real crime and antisocial behaviour, urban degradation, cultural tensions and gender inequalities, as well as gaps in institutional cooperation. Participants agreed that security is a cross-cutting issue that cannot be solved by policing alone but requires the involvement of everyone – administrations, associations, and citizens alike.



Figure 2: ULG Meeting in Manresa. Source: Municipality of Manresa

As the group reconvened in April, attention shifted from identifying problems to imagining what kind of city Manresa aspired to be. The idea of a "shared vision" began to take shape: a safe, inclusive and co-responsible city, where public spaces are vibrant, accessible and well cared for, and where security is approached comprehensively through prevention, innovation and collaboration. During a subsequent bilateral training session, the Lead Expert, encouraged the local team to translate this broad vision into concrete, actionable steps and to ensure that their work remained connected to CITISENSE's wider priorities – especially the focus on the perception of insecurity and the co-production of solutions with diverse stakeholders. The Lead Expert also highlighted the importance of explicitly incorporating feminist and intersectional perspectives into the work, given the recurring concerns around gender inequality raised during the discussions.

By May, the ULG's dialogue had become more concrete and thematic. Participants reflected on how to address feelings of insecurity without stigma-

tising vulnerable groups, and how to use communication more effectively to counter misinformation and strengthen trust. Innovative ideas were also explored, such as linking community service to the renewal of degraded spaces, creating "custodianship" schemes where schools and youth groups co-manage parts of the urban realm, and using digital tools for reporting incidents. At the same time, members stressed the need for inclusive social policies, intercultural education and approaches attentive to gender and equality in order to ensure that no community feels left behind.

Through this sequence of meetings, Manresa's ULG has evolved into a vibrant forum bridging municipal staff, police, social services, business representatives, youth organisations and local associations. What emerged was not just a list of concerns but a collective roadmap, grounded in active citizenship, better use of public space, community-based policies, innovation, effective communication, and stronger alliances across local actors.



## 1.3 NAPLES

In Naples, the URBACT Local Group was launched in March as both a coordination space and a forum for co-responsibility, bringing together actors active in the San Lorenzo district and along the Garibaldi-Carlo III axis. The first meeting gathered a diverse set of stakeholders – from municipal departments (urban planning, police and legality, social services) to social cooperatives, cultural foundations, neighbourhood associations and sport clubs – to begin exploring how the CITISENSE approach could be adapted locally. Using participatory tools such as the "identity card" and "hot-air balloon," participants reflected on their contributions and challenges. This highlighted both the "ballasts" that weigh on safety – including micro-criminality, stigmatisation of homeless people, and poorly maintained public spaces – and the "superpowers" already present in the district, such as cultural initiatives, social enterprises and community-based regeneration efforts.

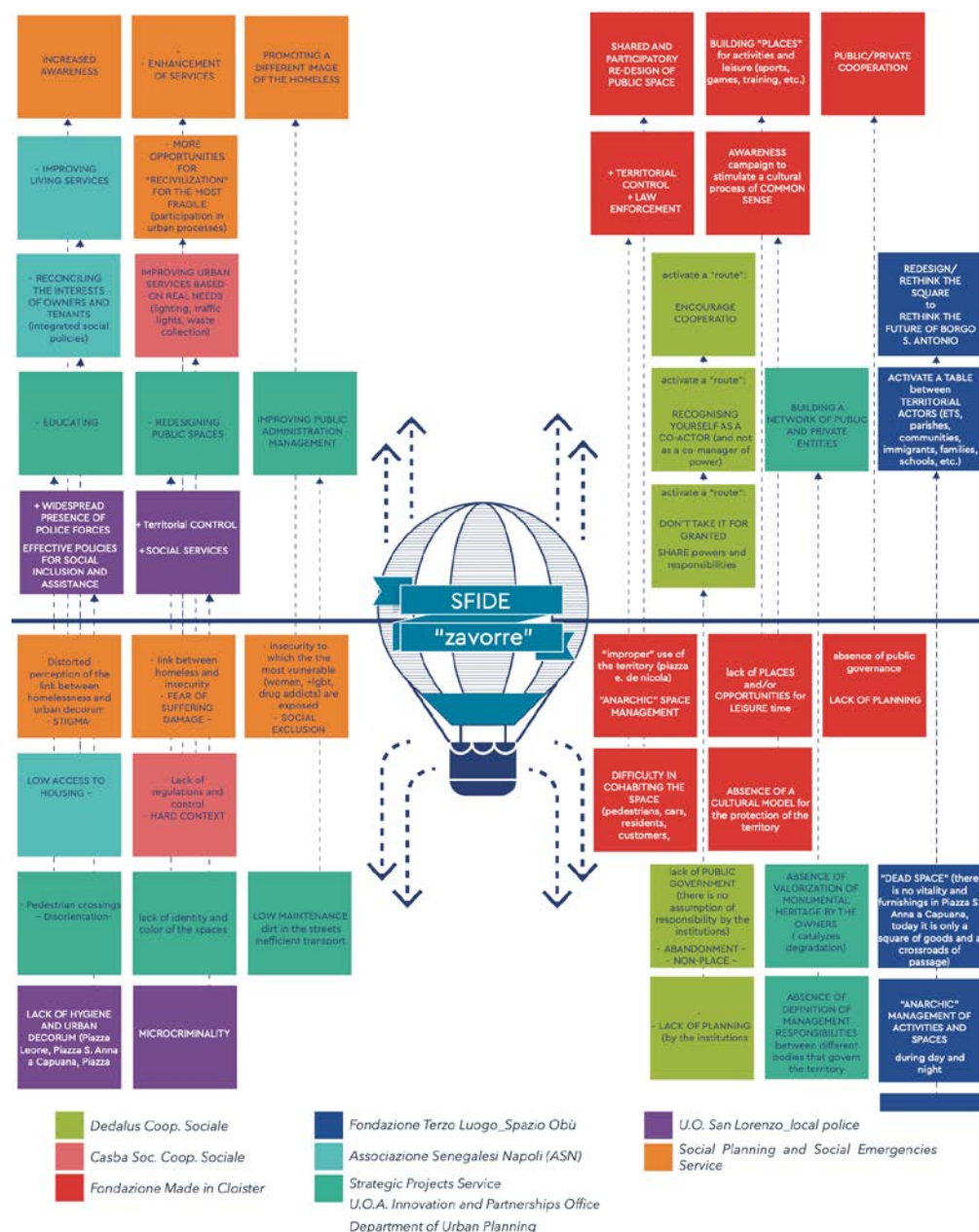


Figure 3: Hot Air Balloon Exercise. Source: Municipality of Naples

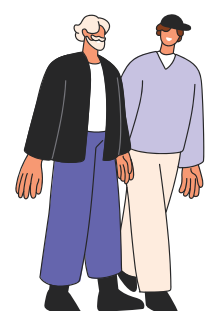


A key theme that emerged was the ambivalence of Naples' central public spaces. Squares like Piazza Garibaldi or Piazza Carlo III are at once gathering places for youth and migrants, but also perceived hotspots of insecurity. This tension underlined the importance of rethinking governance and uses of space, shifting them from traffic nodes or degraded areas into inclusive places of encounter. The ULG agreed to build on this observation in its next steps, planning an **urban walk** to collectively assess these spaces at different times of day.

The second meeting, held in April, was dedicated to this urban exploration. Walking through the Garibaldi-Carlo III axis, participants observed first-hand the dynamics of use, maintenance and conflict in the public realm. The exercise helped to ground the earlier discussions in concrete places and reinforced the idea that security must be addressed not only through enforcement but also through design, care and social activation of public spaces.



Figure 4: Urban Walk with the ULG in Naples. Source: Municipality of Naples





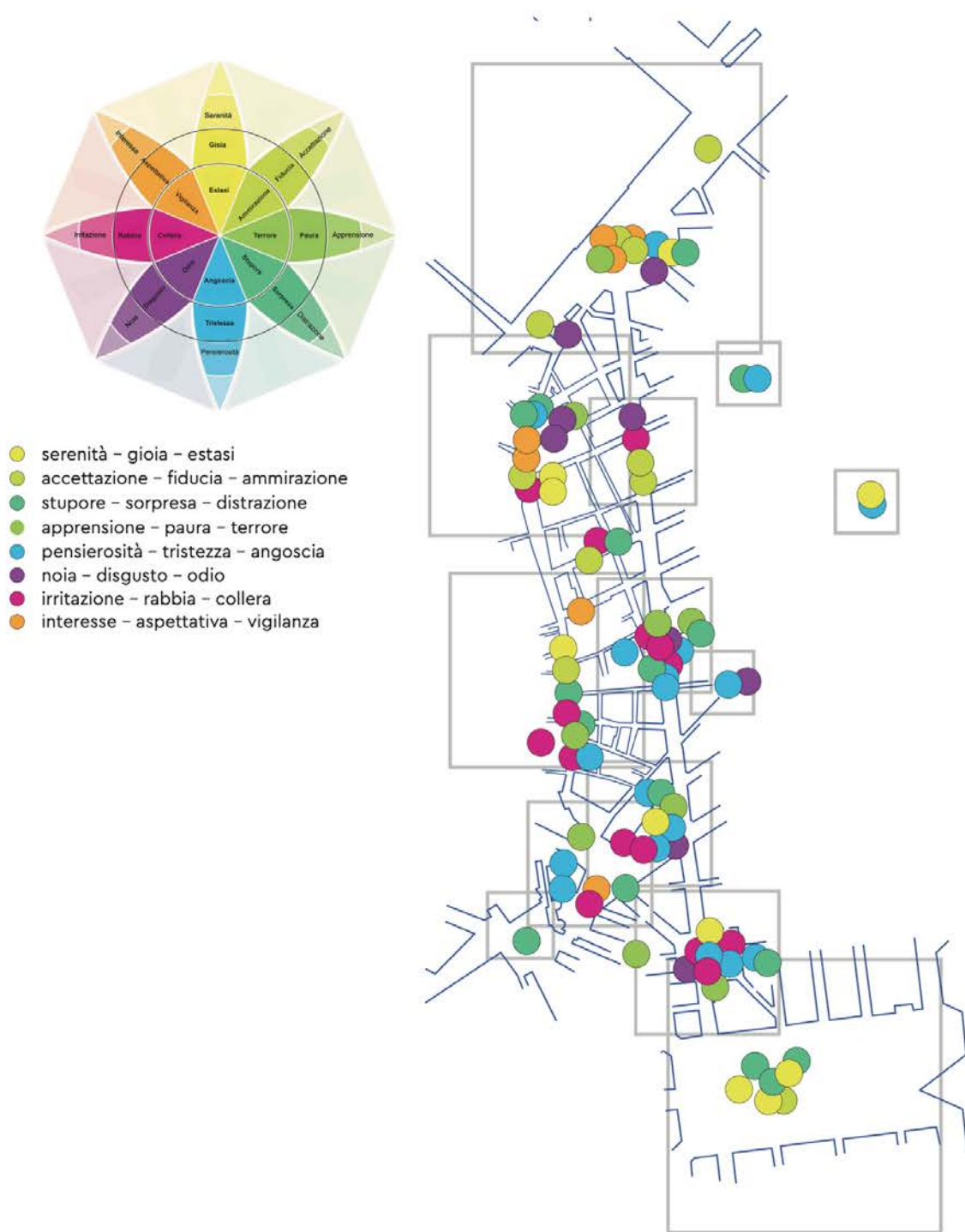


Figure 5: Map of Emotions. Source: Municipality of Naples

While the ULG remains at an early stage, these sessions have already established a working method: combining collective reflection, open mapping of problems and resources, and direct observation of urban reality. In this way, Naples has begun to shape its ULG as a learning community where institutions, civil society and cultural actors share responsibility. The process reflects the city's ambition to transform its dense and often contested central districts into safer, more inclusive and more liveable urban environments.

## 1.4 GEEL

In Geel, the URBACT Local Group is taking shape around the existing GLM safety partners, who already prepare and follow the city's local security council. This provides a ready-made nucleus of committed actors, although the process of identifying and activating a broader working group of stakeholders has been slower than in other partner cities. For now, most of those engaged come from municipal services and different city departments, with external actors still to be fully brought in.



Figure 6: Preliminary ULG Meeting in Geel. Source: Municipality of Geel

The city remains open-minded in shaping its ULG, but progress has been slightly delayed. During the Lead Expert and Lead Partner's visit, local challenges were already identified – from youth-related problems and alcohol abuse among older people to polarisation, cultural diversity and degradation of public space – yet the consolidation of the group is ongoing. One key obstacle has been the long list of potential stakeholders, which raises questions about who should participate, how to manage different degrees of involvement, and how to anticipate potential internal conflicts. The forthcoming brainstorming session on the Local Security Council (LVR), with the mayor and the chief of police, is expected to clarify the council's purpose, composition and priority themes, and will also serve as a stepping stone towards structuring the ULG.

At the same time, Geel has chosen to complement stakeholder discussions with a strong evidence base.

The municipality has designed an ambitious survey targeting 5,000 residents to investigate perceptions of security and, crucially, the underlying causes of insecurity. Launching in mid-June, the survey is intended to move beyond raw crime figures to capture the lived experience of safety and insecurity across different neighbourhoods. As Mayor Marlon Pareijn explained: "Safety is and remains a top priority. We take signals from residents seriously. We are aware of the concerns in certain neighborhoods, such as nuisance in the city park or the station area. Together with the police, we take targeted actions here. But it is also important to continue to see the whole picture. Geel remains a warm, liveable city with a great sense of solidarity. With this survey, we want to look beyond figures and incidents, and really listen to what people experience. In this way, we can tailor our policy to the needs of our residents."

This evidence-led approach is expected to help Geel

clarify its priorities, narrow down the core group of stakeholders, and guide the drafting of its Investment Plan. Alongside this, the city is already building on initiatives such as its Child Friendly City label, which frames security as part of a wider commitment to inclusiveness and well-being. By connecting formal structures of local security governance with participatory processes and citizen input, Geel is laying the groundwork for a ULG that is both operational and inclusive – able to respond to concerns in specific hotspots while also nurturing the city's reputation as a cohesive and liveable place.

## 1.5 LIEPAJA

Liepaja has begun activating its ULG with a focus on reducing the perception of insecurity. At the outset, two main groups were identified as sources of concern: **tourists** and **youth**. Initial meetings, including one with the Tourist Information Office and the City PR Department, generated a set of concrete proposals on how to address tourist-related nuisances, such as unauthorised parking in the dunes. However, after reflection, the city decided not to pursue the tourist dimension and to concentrate its efforts solely on youth. The composition of the ULG has therefore been shaped around stakeholders working with and for young people.

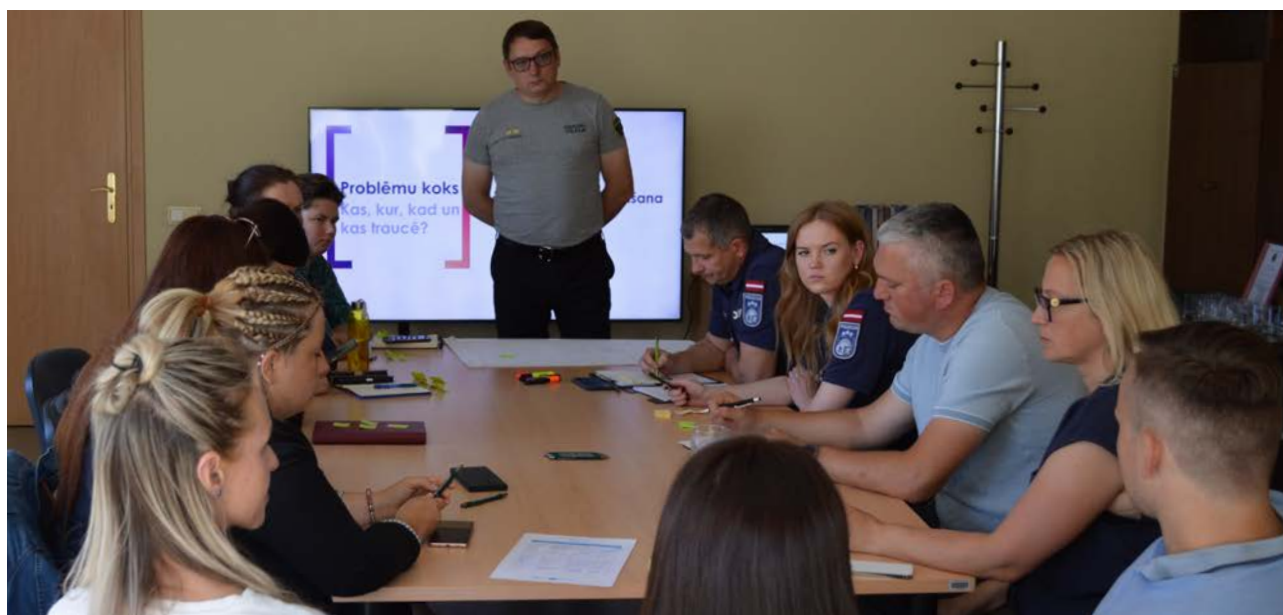


Figure 7: ULG Meeting in Liepaja. Source: Liepaja Municipal Police

Stakeholder mapping has been developed in depth, involving schools, youth NGOs, vocational institutions, social workers, the city's education department, emergency services, and youth representatives themselves. Cross-cutting stakeholders such as the city administration, PR department, media, and the state police are also engaged, while the **participatory board** is expected to provide a channel for citizen voices.

The discussions emphasised that perceptions of insecurity are not only linked to youth behaviour, but also to broader urban and spatial conditions, such as abandoned buildings, vacant spaces, and a lack of appropriate leisure or cultural facilities.

Addressing these requires engagement from planning departments, investors, cultural operators, and local merchants alongside youth organisations.

Looking ahead, Liepaja plans to structure its ULG work around youth-focused social, economic, and recreational issues, with the aim of creating alternatives to undesirable behaviours in public spaces. The partner remains committed to developing a participatory and long-term strategy that combines prevention, education, urban planning, and cultural development in order to reduce insecurity and strengthen social cohesion.





## 2. Thematic Inputs from Exchange & Learning Activities

### 2.1 COMBINING QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE DATA ON PERCEPTIONS OF INSECURITY

Online Workshop, 19 May 2025

This workshop, facilitated by ad-hoc expert [Pablo Muñoz Unceta](#), explored how cities can combine quantitative indicators with qualitative insights to better understand perceptions of insecurity. The aim was to reflect on the complexity of safety-related challenges, test approaches for developing data-based narratives, and discuss how these can inform urban policy.

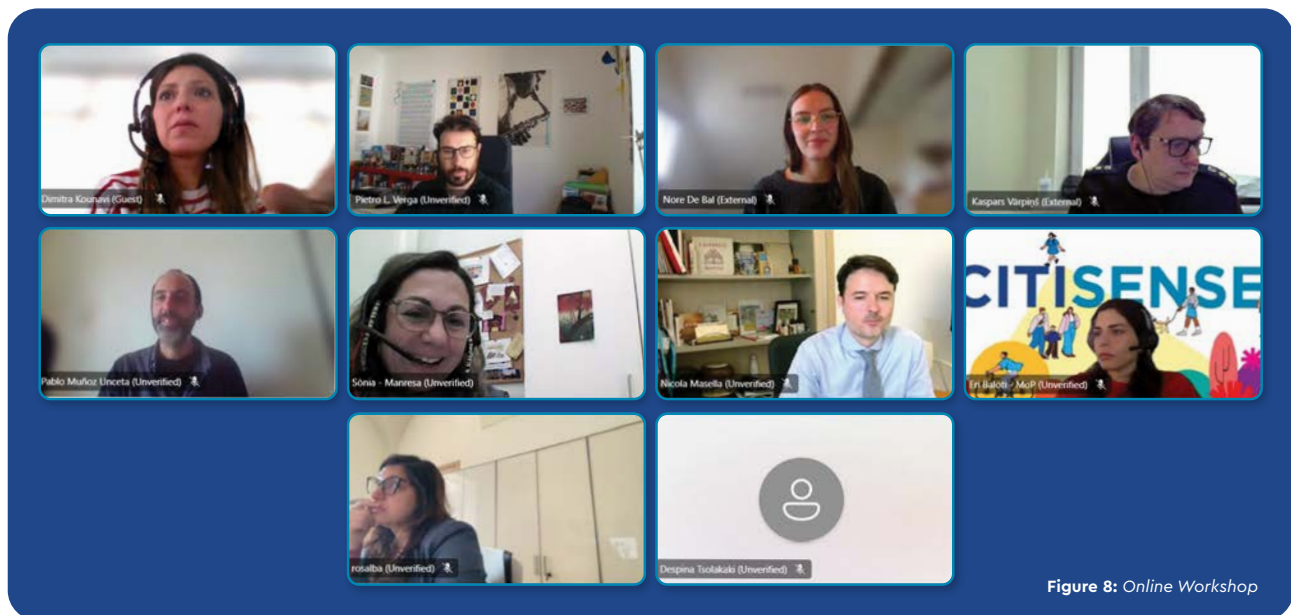


Figure 8: Online Workshop

The session began with an overview of how different partner cities are already working with perception data: from Piraeus, where over 66% of residents perceive crime as increasing, to Naples, where 70% feel unsafe at night; from Liepāja, where insecurity perceptions have risen sharply since 2020, to Geel, where 13% of residents report feeling unsafe despite declining crime rates; and Manresa, where insecurity is now seen as one of the city's most pressing issues. These figures illustrated the mismatch that often exists between objective crime data and subjective feelings of safety.

Participants then worked in breakout groups with a practical case study: the historic centre of Lloret de Mar, where demographic change, housing pressures and tourism-driven transformations intersect with residents' perceptions of insecurity. Using both **statistical evidence** (migration flows, empty housing, seasonal labour dynamics) and **qualitative voices** (personal testimonies of fear, stigmatisation, or loss

of community), the exercise showed how different narratives can be constructed from the same reality. The challenge was to move from a stigmatising narrative ("coexistence problem due to new residents") to an alternative, structural one that situates insecurity in broader socio-economic transformations.

The concluding discussion underlined several key messages:

- Perceptions of safety are shaped by a **complex web of factors**, from lived experience to media narratives.
- A **multidisciplinary approach** is essential, linking social, spatial and economic dimensions.
- Perceptions change slowly; however, constructing **alternative narratives** based on evidence can help counter fear-driven discourses.
- Discussing data openly with diverse stakeholders allows for richer understanding and more inclusive solutions.



As next steps, cities were invited to develop one alternative narrative for their local safety challenge, identify gaps in it, and test it within their ULGs. This will allow the process to move from isolated numbers or anecdotes towards integrated, evidence-based stories that can inform action plans and investment priorities.



## Alternative narrative



Figure 9: Developing Alternative Narratives. Miro Board. Source: Pablo Muñoz Unceta



## 2.2 SHIP WORKSHOP: TOWARDS SAFE, HUMANE AND INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES

*In-person workshop at the 2nd Transnational Meeting, Liepāja – 27 May 2025*

The SHIP Workshop, led by ad-hoc expert [Edna Peza](#), introduced partners to the Safe, [Humane, Inclusive Public Spaces \(SHIP\)](#) initiative – a research-based approach designed to help city-makers diagnose, understand and improve public spaces by placing the needs of **vulnerable and marginalised groups** at the centre.



Figure 10: SHIP Workshop in Liepāja

The session began with an interactive “treasure hunt” exercise, asking participants what would make them feel unsafe in specific urban spaces if they were, for example, a five-year-old child, a woman walking alone, or a person with reduced mobility. This exercise illustrated the importance of **intersectionality** in shaping perceptions of insecurity, and highlighted how dominant discourses often prioritise “making spaces less criminogenic” rather than less violent.

Dr. Peza outlined the conceptual pillars of SHIP:

- **Feelings of insecurity** as a broader, more robust concept than “fear of crime,” linked to personal, social and environmental variables.
- **Intersectionality**, recognising how multiple forms of discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism, etc.) compound vulnerability.
- **Citizen participation**, not only as consultation but as co-diagnosis, co-creation and evaluation of solutions.



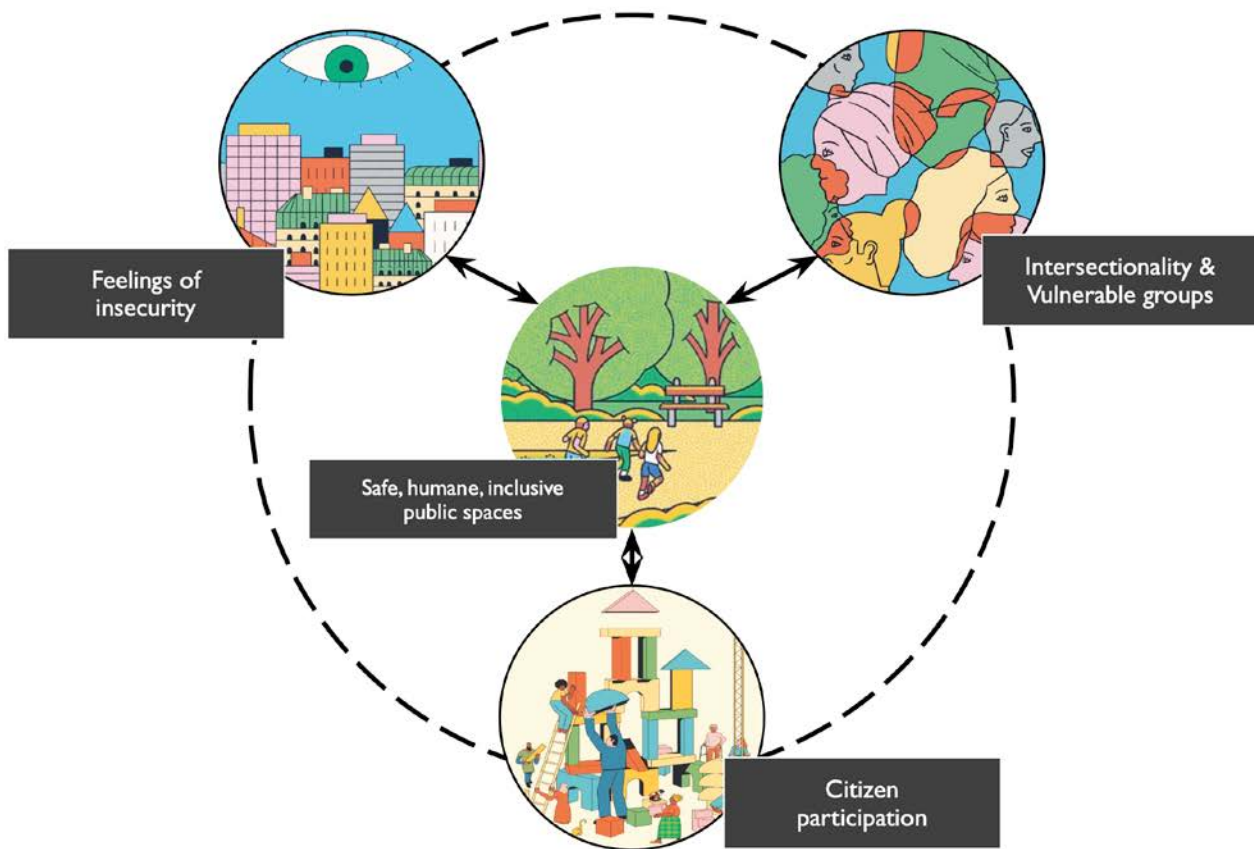


Figure 11: SHIP Pillars. Source: Edna Peza

The methodology was presented as a five-step process: (1) define the problem; (2) analyse the context; (3) foster collaboration with diverse groups; (4) design and test a plan; and (5) share results critically, including failures as well as successes. Case studies from different international contexts (including Saint Denis, Los Angeles' Skid Row, and a Latin American "Townsville" example) demonstrated both the challenges of community participation and the risks of failing to address systemic inequalities.

Key recommendations emerging from the workshop included:

- Combine quantitative and qualitative methods to capture both statistics and lived experiences.
- Work with vulnerable or marginalised communities directly, not only as "objects of observation."

- Ensure durability and trust by maintaining a constant presence in the territory.

Tailor interventions to local realities – rejecting "one size fits all" solutions.

- Address underlying drivers such as gender-based violence, poverty, and unequal access to public services, while also ensuring basic conditions like clean, well-lit and accessible streets.

The overarching message of the workshop was clear: **if public spaces are safe and welcoming for the most vulnerable, they will be safe and welcoming for everyone.**





## 3. Transnational Meeting in Liepāja

The second CITISENSE Transnational Meeting took place in Liepāja on 27–28 May 2025, hosted by the Municipal Police. The event combined field visits and public engagement with a central focus on the **Integrated Transfer Modules** – the four pillars of the BeSecure-FeelSecure (BSFS) project from Piraeus now being adapted to the CITISENSE partner cities.



Figure 12: CITISENSE Partners in Liepāja

Day one offered a hands-on introduction to Liepāja's context, with participants cycling through insecurity hotspots identified across the city and discussing ongoing responses with local officials.



Figure 12: CITISENSE Partners on a cycling tour of Liepāja. Source: Municipality of Piraeus

The afternoon then continued with a workshop on the SHIp methodology delivered by ad-hoc expert Edna Peza (see above) and a public event introducing CITISENSE to the wider community.





Figure 14: Public Event. Source: Municipality of Piraeus

The second day revolved around the **core transfer exercise**. The morning "deep dive" clarified the content of the four BSFS modules – **Governance, Digital, Social and Physical** – and the challenges associated with each. These ranged from ensuring broad participation and political support (Governance), to sustaining citizen use of digital platforms (Digital), building lasting stakeholder engagement in social initiatives (Social), and addressing upkeep and ownership in physical interventions (Physical).

Building on this, the **Transfer Modules Workshop** guided cities through a structured three-step road-map:

- **Priorities** – partners identified which module(s) best addressed their local needs.
  - **Piraeus** reaffirmed its focus on governance and digital tools, stressing the importance of sustaining the Observatory and Communication Campaigns while adapting them to new challenges.
  - **Manresa** prioritised governance and social approaches, seeking to create mechanisms of co-responsibility and a shared vision that includes vulnerable groups.
  - **Geel** stressed governance, working to consolidate its Local Security Council while preparing an ambitious citizen survey on perceptions of safety.
  - **Liepāja**, as host city, saw value in exploring physical interventions but also underlined the need for governance structures that link municipal action with citizens' concerns.

- **Naples** could not attend the meeting and therefore did not take part in the exercise.

- **Key Elements** – each city mapped out existing and missing resources, obstacles, allies, and audiences. For some, the challenge lay in mobilising diverse stakeholders (Geel, Manresa), while others highlighted the need to prevent stigmatisation and ensure inclusiveness in interventions (Piraeus, Liepāja).
- **Timeline** – partners looked ahead to short-, medium- and long-term horizons. Cities recognised that while some actions could be piloted quickly (such as collaborative mapping exercises or community events), other shifts – such as embedding citizen participation in governance or redesigning key public spaces – would require persistence and a multi-year outlook.





Figure 15: Partners at work during the Transfer Modules Workshop

The subsequent **peer review session** offered an opportunity for open reflection and constructive feedback. While most cities set "reducing the perception of insecurity" as an overarching ambition, discussions highlighted the need to translate this into more **precise and context-specific goals** – identifying which groups, spaces, or issues are most affected, and how actions across governance, digital, social and physical dimensions could connect. Partners also debated the role of digital tools and physical interventions: there was enthusiasm to apply them, but it became clear that their success would depend on being grounded in a well-defined problem rather than simply following trends.

The exchanges revealed a certain diversity in approaches:

- **Manresa** identified priorities across all four modules, showing ambition but also underlining the need to connect actions into a more coherent narrative.
- **Piraeus** presented three key actions within the social module, illustrating how different interventions could reinforce participation – and raising the question of whether to concentrate or integrate these strands.

- **Geel** recognised the value of its extensive data collection but also the challenge of managing a wide and complex stakeholder landscape.
- **Liepāja** outlined a youth-centred strategy, linking the development of youth houses to wider city structures and cultural initiatives.

This exchange helped participants to sharpen their thinking: to move from broad aspirations towards **clearer definitions, better integration across modules, and realistic roadmaps**. The exercise also underscored the importance of continuity across workshops – making sure that earlier reflections on perceptions and narratives remain embedded in the design of transfer strategies.







**Figure 16:** CITISENSE Partners and URBACT Experts at the end of the Transnational Meeting



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