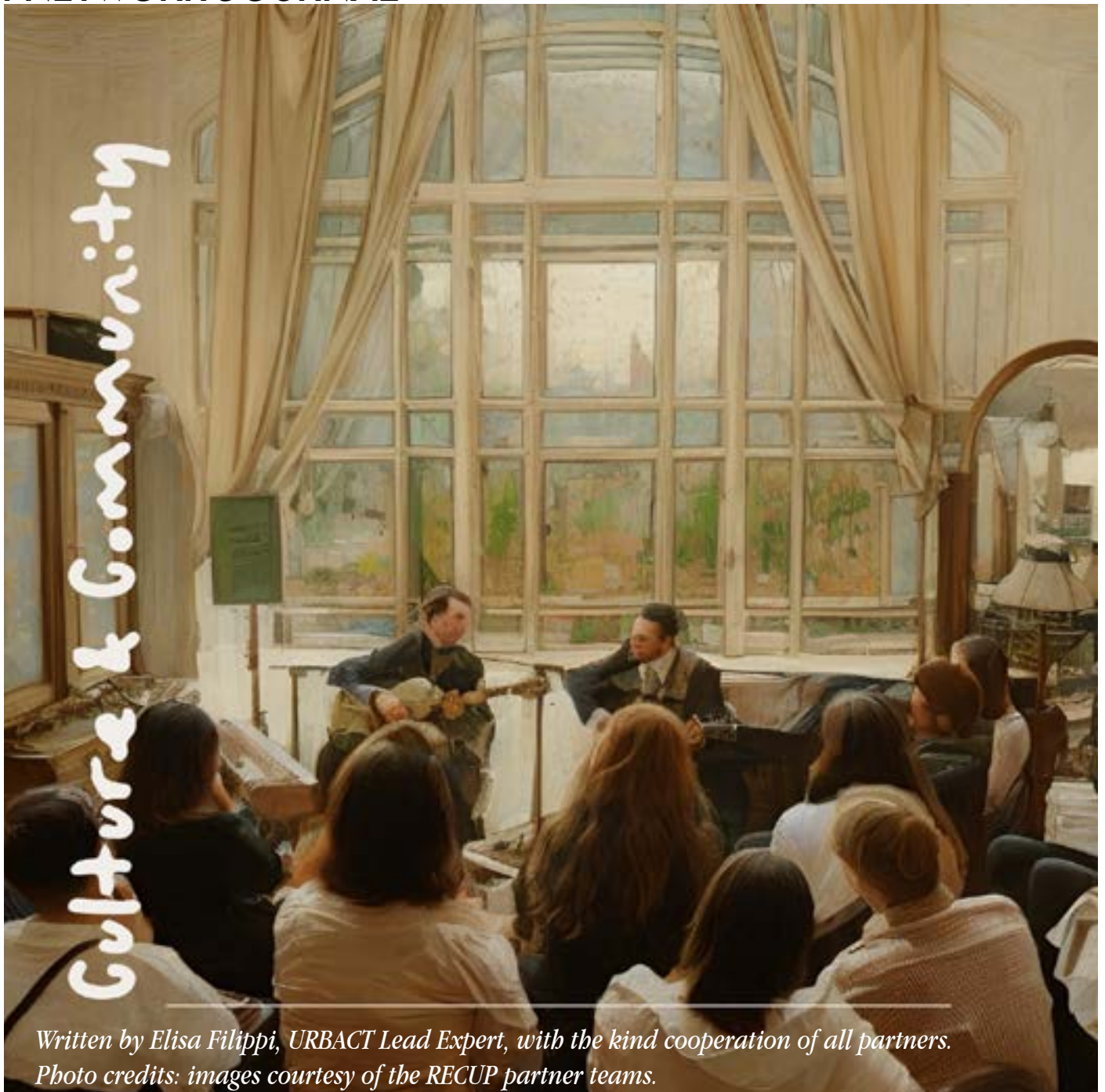


# REINVENTING CULTURE IN URBAN PLACES ITN URBACT NETWORK

*I NETWORK JOURNAL*



Culture & Community

*Written by Elisa Filippi, URBACT Lead Expert, with the kind cooperation of all partners.  
Photo credits: images courtesy of the RECUP partner teams.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Loneliness, social isolation and cultural passivity are becoming increasingly urgent challenges across Europe. One way in which cities can respond is by incorporating culture and creativity into their urban policies and planning. Indeed, culture reconnects people, transforms neighbourhoods, and reduces loneliness when it is designed with communities, not merely for them.*

*Reinventing Culture in Urban Places (RECUP) is an URBACT Innovation Transfer Network that builds on Újbuda's former UIA project CUP4Creativity (Újbuda – XI Budapest District, Lead Partner) and adapts its most effective elements across five diverse contexts: Amersfoort (NL), Bielsko-Biala (PL), Dubrovnik (HR), Mancomunidad de l'Horta Nord (ES), and Sandyford Business District (IE). The shared ambition is simple and bold: make cultural policy an effective instrument for civic belonging, wellbeing, and everyday life.*

*This first Network Journal covers the initial phase of the RECUP URBACT network, tracing the UNDERSTAND phase and the pivot into ADAPT. We return to the first Core Network Meeting and deep dive in Újbuda, follow the city study visits that informed the Transferability Study, and document the mobilisation of URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) in each place. In the second Core Network Meeting in Mancomunidad de l'Horta Nord, partners crossed from UNDERSTAND to ADAPT, using hands-on tools, such as Testing Action and Investment Plan canvases, governance clinics, anchored by lived examples, from multilingual reading clubs to music schools and climate-adaptive heritage projects.*

*Because culture is made by people and local stories, you'll also find "Voices from the Stage", a podcast that gives the microphone to actors shaping change on the ground. In the first episode, architect and urbanist Bálint Köves guides us through Újbuda's transformation.*

*We close with a concise overview of the methodology and tools that supported this early stage of the RECUP journey.*

*Enjoy your reading!*





REINVENTING CULTURE IN URBAN PLACES NETWORK'S PARTNERS IN ÚJBUDA

## THE FIRST CORE NETWORK MEETING AND THE DEEP DIVE INTO THE ORIGINAL GOOD PRACTICE IN ÚJBUDA

The “REinventing Culture in Urban Places” (RECUP) URBACT Network’s partners met in person for the first time in October 2024 during a valuable capacity-building meeting in Paris organised by the URBACT Secretariat. The meeting helped partners get to know each other and connect with other URBACT ITN networks. After Paris, the network journey truly began, first stop: Újbuda.

In November 2024, Újbuda, Budapest’s vibrant 11th District, hosted the first RECUP’ URBACT Innovation Transfer Network Core Network Meeting and deep-dive study visit. Over two intensive days, partners immersed themselves in the UIA CUP4Creativity project, the practice they will transfer and adapt to tackle their own urban challenges over the next two years.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE FIRST CORE NETWORK MEETING

The first Core Network Meeting in Újbuda was for RECUP’s partners an excellent opportunity to:

- Deep dive into the original good practice of Újbuda’s UIA CUP4Creativity project;
- Learn about the URBACT participative and integrated methodology applied to the Innovation Transfer Network journey;
- Better understand the local context and challenges of the RECUP’ partners through workshops and presentations;
- Prepare and validate the transfer concept by modularising the process and exploring adaptation potential through brainstorming.

### WHY ÚJBUDA IS SO SPECIAL?

Újbuda has spent the last decade transforming the Béla Bartók Quarter into a thriving cultural

hub. CUP4Creativity (funded under Urban Innovative Actions, now European Urban Initiative programme) addressed cultural passivity and social isolation by shifting from a consumption-based model to one rooted in co-creation. Alongside the regeneration of physical spaces like Adaptér (a creative technology hub renovated within the project which hosted the 2-days meeting), the project also established INSERT, a micro-grant programme for grassroots initiatives, cooperation with business in creative workshops and the Béla Bartók Roundtable, a participatory governance forum for cultural actors.

Two days of learning, walking, and co-creating

Day 1 combined scene-setting with methodology and exploration. Partners were introduced to the URBACT methodology, shared their cities’ strengths, challenges, and ambitions through poster presentations, and took part in an interactive stakeholder-mapping workshop. In the afternoon, presentations and a guided walk through the Béla Bartók Quarter illustrated how cultural spaces and citizen-led projects have regenerated and fostered the creativity of the area. Local actors showcased CUP4Creativity’s core components:

- **KözPont Nonprofit Ltd.** on cultural management including **INSERT programme** on micro-grants for grassroots initiatives and **Béla Bartók Roundtable** on collaborative governance
- **Adaptér** on merging technology with creativity into space regeneration.

Day 2 made partners starting to work on scenario using future-oriented tools: design-thinking exercises on local challenges and impact-assessment workshops were conducted in the morning and have been followed in the afternoon by thematic contributions from the Contemporary Architecture Centre (KÉK), and BT ROC, each illustrating different facets of cultural-ecosystem building, participatory theatre, and corporate involvement. Also, a deep-dive study visit took place in the afternoon, by visiting galleries and small renovated studios into the Bela Bartok District.

### Linking good practice to local realities – Towards a shared roadmap

In the final workshop, the five **transfer pillars**, into which the original good practice (CUP4Creativity) has been modularised, were presented:



1. **Community engagement and cultural-ecosystem mapping**
2. **Creative spaces and infrastructure renovation**
3. **Digital platforms and accessibility**
4. **Corporate engagement and funding partnerships**
5. **Community governance and policy frameworks**

These pillars will guide transfer in the five partner contexts: **Dubrovnik (HR)**, **Amersfoort (NL)**, **Mancomunidad de l’Horta Nord (ES)**, **Bielsko-Biała (PL)**, and **Sandyford Business District (IE)**.





During the workshop led by Lead Expert **Elisa Filippi** with the support of former UIA Expert **Levente Polyák** partners have been invited to assess their interest and capacity to transfer each CUP4Creativity module, identifying enablers, barriers, and local adaptations.



**CITIES ‘VISITS TO PREPARE THE TRANSFERABILITY STUDY**

Following the Újbuda meeting, Lead Expert **Elisa Filippi** and the Lead Partner’s Project Coordinator **Maté Abraham** embarked on five on-site visits to gain a deeper understanding of each local context. The tour concluded with the “**Understand for Adapt**” online meeting in **February 2025**, where both the **Transferability Study** and the **RECUP Roadmap** were presented.

**ULGS IN MOTION: SMALL SEEDS OF PARTICIPATION HAVE BEEN SOWN ACROSS THE NETWORK**

From the outset of the project, all the partners identified key local stakeholders to establish a URBACT Local Group (ULG). The ULGs will accompany the implementation of the project at the local level by co-planning the Integrated Investment Plan, which focuses on adapting and transferring the original ‘Újbuda’ good practice to tackle loneliness and social isolation through cultural policies. However, as experience with URBACT projects has shown, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution, so although the objective is the same, the size, composition and governance model of the different ULGs differ from city to city.

**Amersfoort’s ULG: How to understand Loneliness through “unconventional” methods**  
In the case of the Dutch city of Amersfoort, the Municipality decide to mobilise a large, mixed URBACT Local Group (ULG) to turn a complex social challenge—loneliness—into a shared programme of cultural, community-driven action.

**Composition.** The ULG is co-led by Impact033, **Sandra Barth** and local artist Jeroen Fikkers, bringing creative practice directly into governance and service design. Thirty active members (17 residents and 13 professionals) meet regularly, while around 130 additional contributors expressed an interest to be involved evidence of strong citywide interest. Inside the municipality, key departments, Culture, but also Economy, Administrative Innovation and Society—coordinate as a core group to align projects and policies.

**Key Challenge: loneliness that cuts across silos.** Approximately half of resident’s experience loneliness at times, and 15% face it persistently. Yet responses still sit in sectoral “boxes.” The ULG aims to bridge these silos by co-creating solutions with residents, culture actors, care organisations and city services, while acknowledging that



municipal and social-domain structures are not yet fully adapted to co-creative approaches.

**How they work together.** Amersfoort uses creative co-creation sessions led by the artist co-lead to open new perspectives on loneliness, paired with a facilitation model that treats residents and professionals as equals (World Café, open space). Informal touchpoints like “Coffee Connect” help civil servants discover and support the project from within. So, far they already worked on:

- A dynamic, diverse ULG that deliberately mixes lived experience and institutional capacity.
- Loneliness profiles co-developed with residents and organisations to tailor responses.
- Active municipal support across departments, helping to mainstream ideas citywide.
- Cross-sector bridges between social care and cultural development.
- A clear process toolkit: the Double Diamond (discover–define–develop–deliver) to structure the work, plus the URBACT Local Impact Framework to steer learning and evaluation.

**What’s Next.** While approximately half of resident’s experience loneliness at some point, responses are often stuck in sectoral “boxes.” The ULG aims to bridge these silos by co-creating solutions with residents, cultural actors, and city services. The main hurdle is embedding new working models into rigid institutional systems. The ULG is learning to balance different expectations between residents and professionals, from language and ownership to timing. The next task is to convert the willingness of municipal departments to align projects and policies into structural change.

**Sandyford Business District: Building a Core, Widening the Circle**



Sandyford Business District is a peculiar partner of the Reinventing Culture in Urban Places URBACT Network. Indeed, they are the only “non-city partner”, being a Business Improvement District based in Sandyford in the Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown’s County of Dublin. The main aim of SBID is to contribute to the improvement of the area through the contribution of businesses established there. A total of 4.854 people living in the district and they are concentrated in two of the four business parks that make up the Sandyford Business District.

**Composition.** SBD’s ULG was launched with a lean, seven-member core team that includes three county councillors. This group is designed to be highly decisive and can expand tactically for specific actions. The facilitation process, led by Fernanda Pinto Godoy, the SBD EU Project Manager, is aimed at collective decision-making and creating a sustainable plan for the future.

**Key Challenge.** Inclusion is central to the ULG’s mission. While the district’s population is highly educated and diverse (51% from non-European backgrounds), there’s a lack of direct knowledge about the specific needs and expectations of these communities. A major hurdle is that almost all residents are renters, which makes fostering a long-term sense of belonging difficult. The ULG is committed to being gender-equal and reaching out to diverse communities to address these issues.

**How They Worked Together.** The ULG has shifted from mobilization to a clear method, using a Testing Action Canvas to shape small experiments and an Investment Plan Canvas to structure their long-term strategy. This approach enables them to translate international learnings from the URBACT network into practical, local actions.

**What’s Next.** To tackle social fragmentation and the risk of “parallel societies,” the ULG has decided to pilot storytelling sessions. These testing actions will use lived experiences to guide investment and strategy toward creating a stronger sense of belonging and community cohesion among the district’s diverse and transient population.

**Bielsko-Biala’s ULG: Weaving the city’s relations through dialogue ambassadors**

Bielsko-Biala established a strong, diverse URBACT Local Group (ULG) to addressing the para-



dox of modern isolation. They are co-creating tools and design a clear path from dialogue to test pilot actions to strengthen community ties.

**Composition.** The ULG counts over 20 participants across major cultural institutions (Urban Culture Institute – City of Weaves, Banialuka Puppet Theatre, Beskid Library), municipal departments, NGOs and community centres, community activists and artists. Crucially, economic and development partners like the Agency for Regional Development and the Bielsko Business Incubator (BBI) are also at the table, bringing a valuable business perspective. The group works through thematic workshops and participatory meetings that welcome new members.

**Key Challenge.** Bielsko-Biala faces a central paradox: in a connected age, digital overstimulation weakens social bonds, public spaces lack inclusive purpose, and residents—especially youth—feel little ownership. The ULG also notes that some actors hold preconceptions of the municipality as “too formal,” so it’s proposing dialogue ambassadors as mediators. Needs highlighted: youth and intergenerational dialogue, neighbour-

hood-based events, and better cross-institution coordination.

As one member of the ULG said: “*The city needs not just places, but purposes—spaces that bring people back to each other.*”

**How they worked together.** The group’s method is **co-design**, where members collaboratively create tools, reflect on challenges, and brainstorm solutions. A notable workshop used **root-cause analysis** to build a symbolic “**Tree of Loneliness**,” which incorporated youth feedback on digital overstimulation and sparked rich intergenerational dialogue, deepening the group’s understanding of isolation.

**What’s next?** The city aims to pilot actions with real local impact, deepen community ownership of public and cultural spaces, and learn from other cities. With Micro-grants discussed as an emerging lever, the ULG is positioning financing to match small, fast experiments that can scale.





**Dubrovnik's ULG: Bridging residents, culture and business in a tourism city.** Dubrovnik's Urban Development Agency (DURA) has created a diverse URBACT Local Group (ULG) to tackle the structural challenges of a tourism-heavy city. The ULG's formation leverages previous experience and existing local networks to bring together a wide range of stakeholders.

**Composition.** Dubrovnik's Urban Development Agency (DURA) has convened a diverse URBACT Local Group (ULG) of around 20 stakeholders, including representatives from city governance, cultural institutions, education and University, NGOs, private enterprises (including museums) and creative organisations. The group's formation is, in part, a natural extension of established local networks, ensuring a strong foundation of participants from the outset.

**Key Challenge.** The central theme is how to manage the structural pressure of tourism especially on the social and cultural tissue. This includes the overwhelming influence of tourism on culture, gentrification, a lack of affordable housing, and a growing divide between residents and visitors. The ULG sees its participation in the URBACT "RECUP" network as a strategic way to foster cross-sector collaboration and build long-term urban resilience against these challenges.

**How They Work Together.** DURA relies on past experience to keep stakeholders engaged but acknowledges that maintaining participation over a long project without visible "short-term wins" is a risk. This is why small testing actions can be very important to keep high stakeholders' motivation. While public bodies are actively involved, private-sector participation remains limited. To create shared ownership, the group is experimenting with practical methods ways: for example, articulating benefits in CSR terms for companies, engaging university students to co-develop ideas (and learn to approach businesses), and programming neighbourhood-based events that invite residents into design and delivery.



**What's next?** The DURA team is focused on keeping the ULG active, even during the summer months when in-person meetings are difficult, through online communication and micro-tasks. A key initiative planned is student-powered co-creation, where students will be paired with cultural venues or neighbourhood groups to prototype small, visible actions. The goal is to measure and share these "quick wins" early on to maintain momentum and provide concrete evidence for the city's long-term investment plan.

#### Mancomunidad de l'Horta Nord's ULG: From introduction to activation

Mancomunidad de l'Horta Nord (MHN) is building its URBACT Local Group (ULG) to move from a basic introduction to a phase of active, hands-on involvement. The group's primary goal is to translate institutional goodwill into concrete, culture-driven community benefits.

**Composition.** MHN's ULG is structured with a **core team of six** and a wider circle of 24 participants, bringing together politicians, municipal staff, and local artists. The multi-level engagement strategy is designed to accommodate different time commitments and capacities.

**Key Challenge.** The ULG faces several challenges, including an **over-representation of public stakeholders** and a lack of private companies and artists. There is also a tendency toward **passive cultural consumption** and an "institution-first" mindset that makes genuine collaboration and bottom-up ownership difficult. The local agenda is to build effective **public-private cooperation** to address issues like a lack of affordable housing.

**How They Worked Together.** MHN plans to use **facilitation methods** like workshops and co-creation sessions to move stakeholders from simply receiving information to actively participating. The strategy also includes targeted outreach to businesses (making a CSR case) and artists to rebalance the group's composition. Additionally, they will activate residents through neighbourhood-based micro-events that promote **co-production** rather than just attendance.





**What's Next.** The immediate next steps include a second ULG meeting to set roles and define a clear timeline. The team has a **summer continuity plan** with online touchpoints and micro-tasks to keep the group engaged. MHN's ULG is moving from **introduction to activation**: a compact core steering a 24-member coalition toward public-private balance, artist inclusion, and resident co-ownership. With facilitation at the centre and a clear calendar ahead, the group is positioned to turn institutional goodwill into **practical tests**—and to learn fast from what works.

#### Újbuda's ULG: Adapting a Best Practice for a New Neighbourhood

Újbuda, the Budapest district that originated the CUP4Creativity good practice, is launching a 20-member ULG to adapt its successful **Bartók roundtable model** to the new neighbourhood of **Gazdagrét**. A new community centre under construction will serve as a hub for this expansion, providing a fresh platform for co-creation.

**Composition.** The ULG is being built with a balanced mix of around **20 members**. This includes civilians with lived experience and neighbourhood ties, local businesses, and various civil organisations and foundations. By including citizens as a central component (about one-third of the list), the municipality ensures that programmes are **designed "with" residents**, not just for them.

**Key Challenge.** The main challenge is **replication with adaptation**. While the Bartók model is proven, the ULG must build an equivalent culture of collaboration from the ground up in Gazdagrét. The team will need to navigate complex personalities and the initial lack of cooperation between actors to establish a new "neighbourhood engine for belonging."

**How they work together.** The group will start with a roundtable format to establish common ground and build trust among actors who may not have cooperated before. The new community centre in Gazdagrét will be used as a neutral, welcoming space for co-creation sessions and low-barrier pilot projects. This approach ensures that the new programs are rooted in the specific needs of the neighbourhood.



**What's Next.** The ultimate goal is for the ULG to move from introduction to action, launching **co-created pilots** from the new community centre. Success will be measured by fostering a strong culture of collaboration where civilians, businesses, and civil organisations work as peers, turning a list of invitees into a dynamic force for community building.

#### "REINVENTING CULTURE IN URBAN PLACES" IN L'HORTA NORD: FROM "UNDERSTAND" TO "ADAPT"

During two energetic days in Mancomunidad de l'Horta Nord, the RECUP network partners moved into the Adapt phase, the most creative and strategic part of our journey. From now on, partners will turn 'shared learning' into testing actions and begin shaping their Investment Plans together with the ULG.

Day 1: warm welcome and shared roadmap.

The Mayor of El Puig and the President of the Mancomunidad opened the meeting by emphasising the local cultural identity and inter-municipal nature. The project manager for the Lead Partner, Anita Horvat, introduced the agenda, setting a collaborative tone for the next two days.



Coffee pitch with the MHN ULG. An interactive icebreaker involving the local URBACT group members from the Mancomunidad de l'Horta Nord helped the partners to meet local stakeholders, including politicians,



municipal staff, cultural practitioners and community members.

### Where are we now? The Network Roadmap & Adapt phase

Lead Expert Elisa Filippi provided a recap of what has been achieved so far, including city visits, the ULG set-up and the Transferability Study, and outlined what is to come:

The Adapt phase runs until February 2026, and its main output will be a strong, evidence-based, participatory Investment/Continuity Plan (IP) that can unlock funding.

The IP structure emphasises the following: a clear work plan and governance; SMART objectives tied to indicators; an integrated/participatory method linking ULG activity to municipal strategy; a realistic budget and funding mix; and monitoring and evaluation (baseline, outputs, results and feedback loops).

### Form matters less than clarity and persuasion.

Establishing a credible and shared monitoring and evaluation framework from the outset is crucial: the definition of indicators is not just a “technical” issue, but a strategic step in defining the change you want to produce and the ways to measure its impact.

*“A compelling, credible case for investment – rooted in the CUP4Creativity good practice – will give your plan legitimacy and traction”,* Elisa Filippi, URBACT Lead Expert.

### Participatory governance. Good practices and examples.

Ad hoc expert Sandra Rainero explained participatory governance as shared responsibility that extends beyond the town hall, encompassing civil society, cultural institutions, residents and businesses.

*“Governance encompasses decision-making and shared responsibility beyond public administration. In cultural and urban development, it involves collaboration among municipalities, civil society, cultural institutions, and communities.”* Sandra Rainero, URBACT Ad Hoc Expert

Drawing on European cases, she illustrated this with the following examples:

- Co-creation and co-design (e.g. young people managing temporary spaces).
- Hybrid governance with open data and citizen science



### Let's reflect on the governance gaps



- Deliberative assemblies for policy design
- Participatory budgeting with youth leadership
- Commons and stewardship for the long-term care of places
- Transparency and accountability through civic hubs (The NGO House in Riga (Latvia) functions as a civic hub, offering free space, capacity building, and a coordination point for over 140 NGOs. The model is shaped by regular citizen consultations and includes outreach to peripheral neighbourhoods.

**Key takeaway:** structures matter (e.g. ULGs and inter-municipal bodies such as the Mancomunidad), but so do lightweight practices that maintain engagement between meetings.

### Reflecting on Governance gap

#### Collective exercise: ULG' animation

Partners assessed their ULGs using an interactive tool and shared their thoughts on the process of moving from information to consultation to engagement. Simple habits emerged as game-changers: These include WhatsApp updates, rotating venues, informal coffee dates, clear roles and targeted outreach to under-represented groups.

The mantra is that the *“ULG is an ecosystem, not just a meeting.”*

#### A window on the cultural heritage and vibrancy of Mancomunidad de l'Horta Nord

The network explored El Puig's heritage, including the monastery, the printing museum and cultural initiatives such as 'Semana de las Letras', to see how culture and nature can be woven into neighbourhood life.

In Rafelbunyol, the “La Primitiva” music society showcased a learning pathway for all ages and a living tradition that binds generations. It hosts more than 350 students and 40 teachers.

The network had the chance to visit the auditorium as well as a music class. A multilingual reading club at the local library embodies cultural inclusion in practice, with residents of different ages and backgrounds taking to the stage. Locals gather and recite literature in their own languages. Three of the RECUP network partners also took to the stage to recite literature in their own languages.

This visit provided a foundation for later discussions on how the Mancomunidad can facilitate connections across municipalities, transforming institutional structures into everyday cultural participation.





## Day 2 –

Moderated by Lead Expert Elisa Filippi, the Day-2 panel brought together voices from Man-comunidad de l'Horta Nord's knowledge and cultural ecosystem to explore climate-adaptive approaches in urban regeneration and cultural practice. Mar Gaitan (Universitat de València; ICCROM) highlighted how heritage collections and humanities can support sustainability through practical toolkits and better knowledge organisation. Composer and curator Miguel Berbis reflected on contemporary music ecosystems—Ensemble d'Arts, the RafelFestival and the Re\_Cre@ competition—showing how festivals and artistic production can model low-impact practices while strengthening local identities; he also drew on his experience teaching music technology at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Castellón. Adding a policy-transfer lens, Sandra Rainero (Lead Expert, URBACT ITN Hydro-Heritage Cities) framed culture as both a sector to align with environmental goals and an active driver of climate transitions through public engagement, behaviour change and place-based co-creation.

Methods and examples grounded the discussion. The URBACT **C-Change** Network approach—piloted in Manchester and transferred in Italy—combines investment in sustainable cultural infrastructure with positioning cultural actors as contributors to climate action. Cities have adapt-



ed these levers in different ways: Mantua's Carbon Literacy training builds sectoral capacity; Cuneo co-designed a "Manifesto for Environmental Sustainability" endorsed by more than 20 organisations; Siena, Rovereto and Avellino tested carbon-neutral dialogues, festival panels and cross-disciplinary events. The experience of Corigliano-Rossano—introducing sustainability criteria in cultural grants without prior consultation—showed that top-down shifts can spark resistance but also catalyse debate and longer-term adaptation, underscoring the need for participatory change. From the **Hydro-Heritage Cities** ITN URBACT network, the revitalisation of the Hadrian Aqueduct demonstrated how heritage can integrate water management, community engagement and urban regeneration through cross-sector collaboration. Together, these practices offer a concrete menu for l'Horta Nord's stakeholders—universities, cultural institutions and municipalities—to co-design climate-adaptive initiatives that strengthen inter-municipal identity while advancing environmental goals.



## From ideas to testing actions

After the panel, by using the Testing Action Canvas, each partner created a prototype of TA and participated in peer-review sessions. The emphasis was on starting small, learning fast, measuring simply, and using the results to shape the IP. Partners agreed on shared criteria, local relevance, co-creation with ULG members, feasibility and visibility, to help actions gain early traction.

## Communication and management essentials

Fanni Kosztolany organised and conducted a session on communication. During the session, it was discussed the Network's Communication strategy: Be specific and incremental, define precise target groups, tailor messages, prioritise digital tools and set measurable indicators are some of the key insights of the session.

The l'Horta Nord meeting captured RECUP's transformation: shifting from understanding to purposeful adaptation. With ULGs as the backbone and testing actions as our learning engine, partners are now equipped to design investment plans that are fundable, believable and shared



with their communities.

## VOICES FROM THE STAGE

In this section of the RECUP Journal, we introduce the podcast series “Voices from the Stage” dedicated to amplifying the voices of local stakeholders from the *Reinventing Culture in Urban Places* URBACT Network.

Hosted by URBACT Lead Expert **Elisa Filippi**, episodes feature an in-depth conversation with key players, decision-makers, cultural practitioner and urban innovators from across the six partner cities. They explore how culture and creativity are being used as tools to **reconnect communities, revitalise public spaces, and tackle loneliness** through innovative and participatory urban policies.

This podcast is not just a communication tool—it is designed as a space for listening, reflection, and the sharing of real stories from the ground. Each episode offers a window into how cultural policies are being reimagined across diverse urban contexts. Through personal experiences and local insights, we uncover the challenges cities are facing, the creative solutions emerging in response, and the role that Europe can play in supporting and amplifying these efforts.

The first episode of this journey takes us to **Újbuda**, Budapest’s most populous district and the birthplace of the original **UIA project CUP4Creativity**—the innovative good practice now at the core of RECUP’s transfer process.

Our guest is **Bálint Köves**, architect, urbanist, and one of the driving forces behind CUP4Creativity. In the episode, Bálint shares personal insights on the transformation of Újbuda, the hidden cultural potential of brownfield areas, and how meaningful engagement begins not online—but in the physical, everyday spaces of our neighbourhoods.

[Enjoy your listening here!](#)



### URBACT RECUP Network Journal - Voices from the Stage



We introduce the podcast series “Voices from the Stage” dedicated to amplifying the voices of local stakeholders from the Reinventing ...

## METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

In this section, we present (6.1) the methodological tools used during the Core Network meetings, to support the transfer of knowledge between the partners and (6.2) by the partners itself in engaging their URBACT Local Groups.

### 6.1 Tools used during the two Core Network Meetings (CNM1 – Újbuda (Nov 2024) & CNM2 –

### Mancomunidad de l’Horta Nord (May 2025))

#### Stakeholders mapping & engagement

**1.Stakeholder mapping matrix “Meet my ULG”.** To identify key actors, roles, influence, and gaps in each city’s cultural ecosystem.

**2.Poster carousel (“gallery walk”).** Partners presented city challenges, assets, and ambitions; peers added questions and ideas. *Output:* shared challenge map and peer inputs.

**3.Governance map analysis.** Used to assess the ULG composition and representativeness.

#### Framing & planning

To facilitate the deep understanding of the original CUP4Creativity good practice and its transfer/adaptation process, two tools have been designed:

#### 4.Modularisation of the good practice

**5.Transferability Matrix** partners used to match interest/capacity to transfer and adaptation

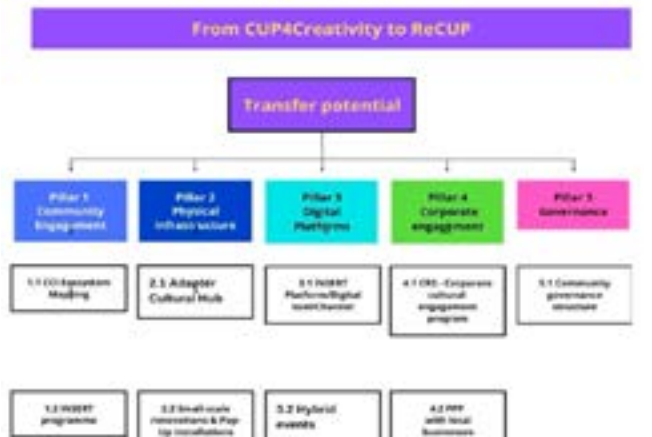
#### Integrated design & evaluation

**Investment Plan canvas.** Four-part structure, including indicator design and a financial matrix.

**Testing Action canvas + peer review.** Partners design a test action, assessing different dimensions, received rapid critique by other cities and the Lead expert, and refine feasibility, outcomes and measurement.

#### 6.2 Tools used by partners for ULG establishment and animation

In addition to the tools already explored in the Transnational meetings, and as a complementary activity, RECUP’s partners used different tools and

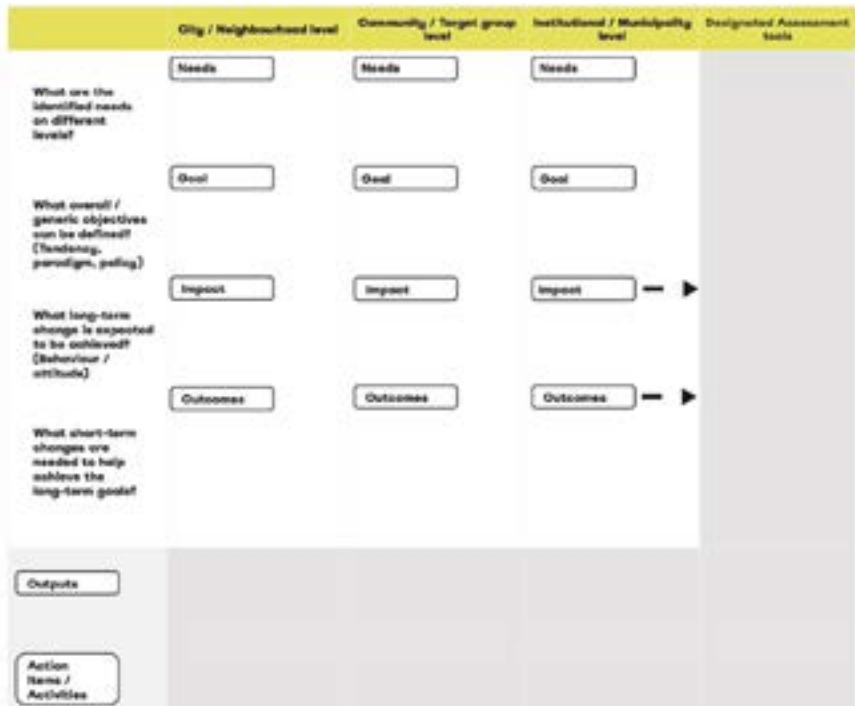




methods to create and animate local ULGs. Here below you can find some of the most commonly used tools.

Common ULG toolset across cities

- Double Diamond to facilitate discussion and foster consensus through the structure



INVESTMENT PLAN CANVAS



Discover-Define-Develop-Deliver.

- URBACT Local Impact Assessment Framework for outcome pathways, indicators and iterative steering.

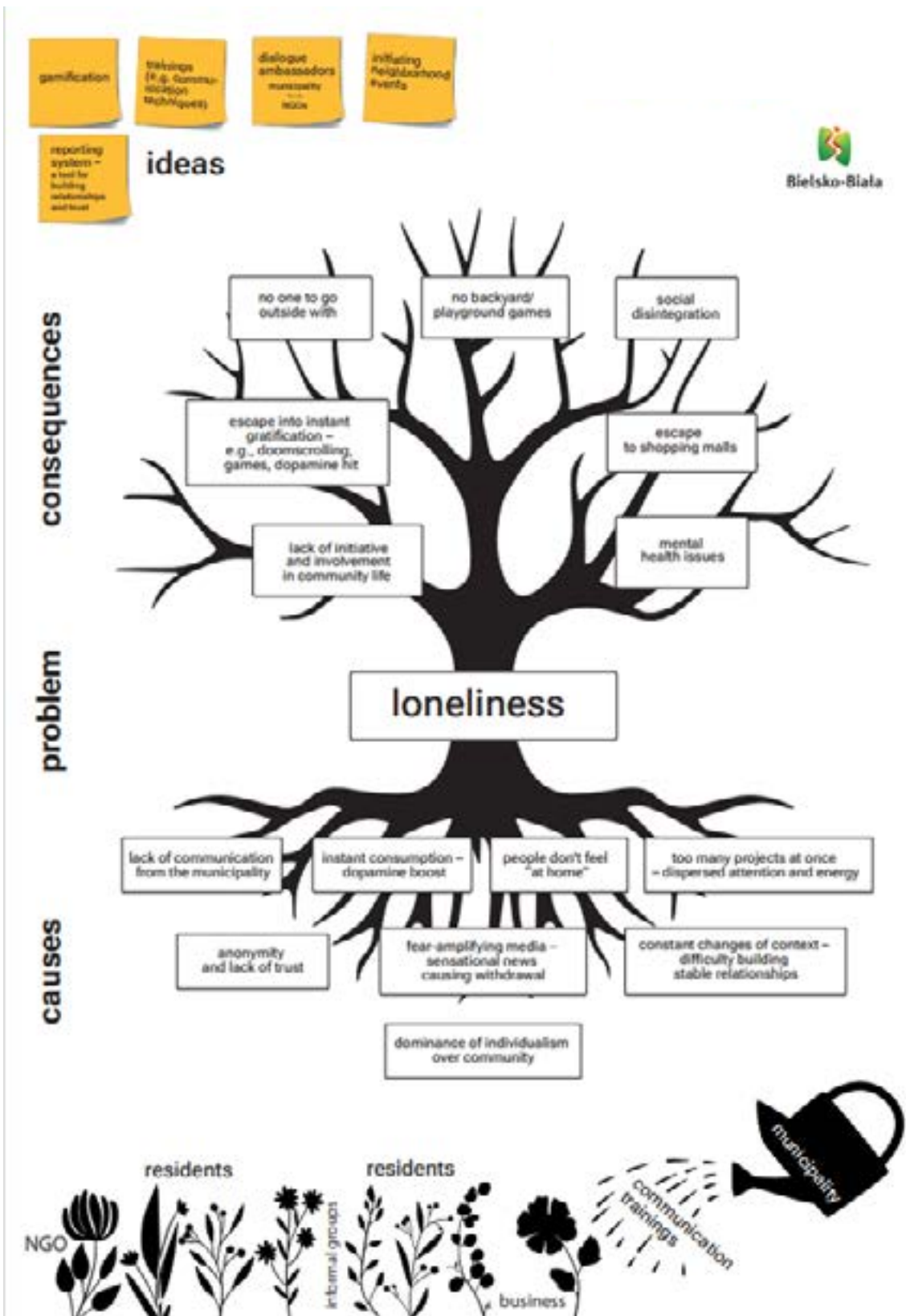
- Creative co-creation sessions (e.g., experiential formats on loneliness and belonging).
- Facilitation between residents and professionals (World Café, Open Space, Holding Space).
- “Coffee Connect” micro-briefings to widen internal buy-in.

Testing Action - Canvas

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

- Problem/ “Tree of Loneliness” analysis, empathy mapping, storytelling, and a simple Project Fiche to move ideas toward testable actions.
- ULG self-assessment via an interactive tool (levels: information → consultation → engagement) to surface gaps.





WHAT'S NEXT?

*In the coming months, the partners of Reinventing Culture in Urban Places (RECUP) move fully into the Adapt phase—running until February 2026. With URBACT expert support and regular transnational exchanges, each city will work with its URBACT Local Group (ULG) on two major outputs. First, they will design and run a Testing Action: a small, low-risk experiment to confront a local challenge with an innovative, not-yet-tested solution. The approach is incremental—start in a specific place, measure what changes, and learn. Success is welcome but not obligatory; what matters is the insight gained about needs, behaviours, and dynamics that will inform what comes next.*

*Building on those lessons, partners will co-design their Integrated Investment Plan (IP). The Testing Action is intentionally foundational to the IP: evidence from the test—what worked, what didn't, and why—will shape priorities, governance, budget, and indicators. Meanwhile, network learning continues both online and in person. In October, an online Masterclass on innovative funding models for cultural and creative policies will gather voices from EU institutions, academia, and leading urban practitioners. In November, the third Core Network Meeting will be hosted by Sandyford Business District. It will deepen two RECUP pillars—using digital tools to promote culture and creativity, and business engagement in urban regeneration and cultural policies—and include a mid-term reflection with all partners.*

*Ahead of reconvening for an URBACT capacity-building event in Paris, the network will hold an additional online Masterclass on Loneliness (psychological and sociological perspectives). The cycle then brings partners to Bielsko-Biala at the end of February. As the Adapt phase concludes, cities will finalise IP v1.0 and take part in peer-review sessions to exchange comments and recommendations. The Paris capacity-building event will be a key moment to consolidate learning, surface unexpected challenges and successes, and prepare the network for the final stage: Prepare for Re-Use.*

*Curious to follow along? A new issue of the REinventing Culture in Urban Places URBACT Network Journal will be published after the Sandyford meeting to share progress and next steps.*



