



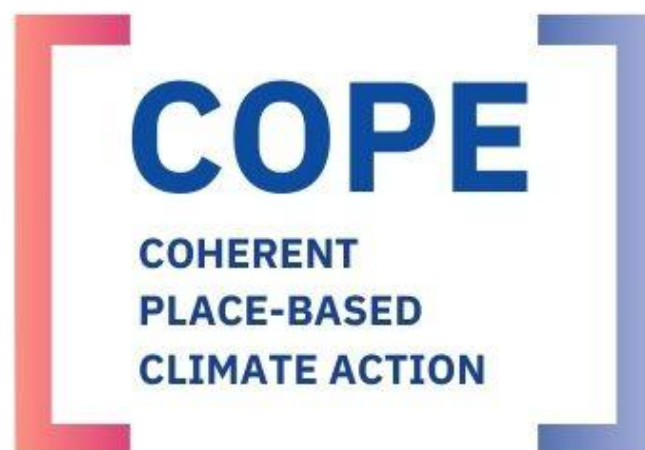
Quarterly Network Report #7

July - September 2025

By Lead Expert, Stine Skot

COPE

– Coherent, place-based, citizen centered climate action



URBACT



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This report is made using material and input from the network activities and material and input provided by the 8 COPE municipalities.

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1. COPE in short

COPE is an URBACT APN IV network. The network consists of 8 European municipalities, with the City of Copenhagen as lead partner. The seven partners are the cities of A Coruña in Spain, the two Greek cities of Kavala and Korydallos, the Romanian city of Bistrița, the French city of Saint-Quentin, the Portuguese city of Pombal and the Lithuanian capital Vilnius.

The COPE Network is about changing mindsets. As an URBACT Action Planning Network, the focus is on testing smaller initiatives to develop meaningful integrated action plans for urban development. To succeed in the green transition, change is needed in our political institutions, in the way we govern and plan our cities, and in civil society. Through co-created actions, deliberative dialogue, and the testing and evaluation of activities and governance structures, cities in the COPE network are working on developing and adjusting municipal policies, strategies and structures to become coherent and integrated and to push their cities for a green and just transition. In practice, this means that the municipality must be able to facilitate citizens' green actions in balance with the need for equity and a just transition.

In July - September 2025 the COPE network activities focused on planning and preparing the final products and the final sprint on delivering the Integrated Action Plans.

2. Core Network Meeting #7 in Bistrița

On September 16th – 17th the COPE network gathered in Bistrița, Rumania. The 2-day meeting was fully packed with project activities for learning and inspiration across the partners and not least for planning and preparing the final sprint of the network activities.

2.1 Host partner: Bistrița

The host introduction

Vice Mayor Mrs. Stefania Stere gave us a warm welcome and ULG coordinator Cristina Cudrec from Bistrița Municipality gave a thorough introduction to the situation in Bistrița.

In Bistrița Municipality the city is undergoing a huge development regarding mobility.

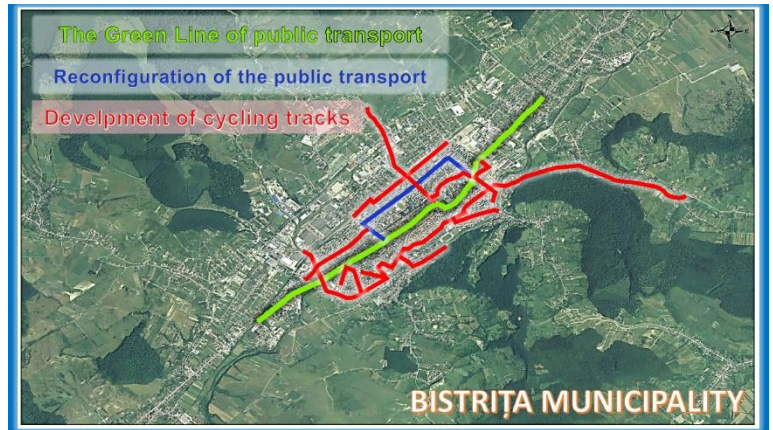
Through three major infrastructure projects the city mobility is transformed and they are facing a need for change of habits, change of mindsets and for creating a common conversation and understanding about the use and modes of transport.



The infrastructure projects counts :

-) A green line of public transport
-) Reconfiguration of the public transport
-) Development of bike lanes

The three major projects include building more than 26 km bike lanes on 28 streets and 7 bike sharing stations with 175 unisex bicycles and 10 electric bicycles. Furthermore, the dedicated bus line with 6.855 meters of dedicated lanes for the public transport, 10 electric buses, rehabilitation of 2.570 m of cars transport lanes and finally reconfiguration of the transport axis with modernization of pedestrian areas of 4,435 km and an underground pedestrian passage, introducing a “green light” traffic management system and modernization of 10 public transport stations.



The city now needs to shift from a car-oriented transport mindset to include other modes of transport.

The goal is that this change is accepted by the citizens in Bistrița. Their calculations show that if they make this change then they will decrease their CO2 emissions with 2370 tons. This decrease will be reached through an increasing number of passengers using urban public transport with 1574062 passengers and by increasing the number of people using the bike lanes by 25550 in 5 the next years.

The challenges are to have no more cars parked in the streets and on the bike lanes and to learn the kids how to go by bike to school.



The participation in COPE is one way for Bistrița to work on this hard change with soft methodology.

Local COPE introduction and site visits

During the Core Network Meeting the COPE partners were on an interesting tour of site-visits to some of the places and actions from the local COPE activities in Bistrița and the hard infrastructure elements on which the COPE activities are focused.

The Green line and the center of command

During the site-visits COPE partners (of course) used the new modes of transport to reach the sites. We saw some of the newly build transport stations and we took the new very comfortable and very clean 😊 electric green line.



We also visited the center of command, where the buses and the traffic is being monitored and where the buses are parked and serviced. We saw service being performed on the batteries on a bus and we talked with some of the people working both with the buses and on the traffic monitoring.

Bikelanes on the route : Gheorghe Șincai, Garii, Decebal, Nasaudului, 1 Decembrie and Hotel Bistrita



the tour reflecting both those who thinks this change in their city is anoying and an inconvenient intrusion into their daily lives and those who bid the change welcome.

Not all COPE partners are trained bikers, but we are up for the challenge of testing the new bike lanes in Bistrita.

Obviously the sight of 30 bicyclists are not a common sight in the streets of Bistrita and we received comments during



School No. 6 – Ștefan cel Mare

The local COPE activities in Bistrita have been focused on the schools and the children being the center of transformation based on the idea that if the children want to drive a bike to school or take the bus, then they can get the parents to stop driving them by car and slowly create the change of transport.

In School No. 6, Ștefan cel Mare we got a warm welcome from the teachers and children wearing local dresses, breaking and serving homemade bread and salt.



In this school they have started the discussions about the change of transport and why it is needed. The new bike racks are a visible way of testing if more children and teachers are shifting to using bikes and a way to encourage them to go by bike.



Municipal Park

In the Municipal Park we met the local police, the municipality and teachers holding their yearly educational event on traffic where small children are taught how to move around in the traffic and where older children have a day where they in different ways work with their city and the traffic. This gives a great opportunity to learn and discuss the challenges they face and how they as children and as municipality can develop it together.



See more here on the [URBACT Romania Facebook](#) and on the [Bistrița Municipality webpage](#).

2.2 What is Storytelling and how can we use it ?

In the Core Network Meeting we prioritised to spend time on a workshop on storytelling. The aim was to give room and time to reflect on why we want to tell stories and what is important when you tell stories.

At this stage of the project, where we are finalising the Integrated Action Plans, we are heading towards a time of sharing our plans and ideas. Of course we would like people to be interested in hearing about all of it and therefore we need to think about why it is relevant for other people and how we can tell about it in a way that relates and connects with people. And therefore the keyword for us is PEOPLE.

The workshop was based on the theory from PEOPLE, POWER, CHANGE by Marshall Ganz where STORYTELLING is a vital part of community organizing.

In very short we tell stories to **communicate our values** and to **motivate people to take action**. As a storyteller, the goal is to create empathy between listener and character so that, hopefully, listeners are encouraged to think about their own challenges and choices. The goal is to get listeners to experience or feel the outcome of the character's choices.

The story of self is about communicating your own values by painting pictures of concrete situations that made a difference for you and that led you to take on a leadership of making a change.

The story of us is where you relate your own values to the expected values of your listeners. Here you connect everyone offering a community.

The story of now is where you relate your shared values and understandings to the specific moment of time and the situation that urge you to act. Here you offer a common way out – a strategy to make change and a specific action that you call people to engage in.

Watch Marshall Ganz tell about this himself in this excellent presentation : [Marshall Ganz | Public Narrative](#)



2.3 Partner mission on site visits

Before the COPE partners went on site visits, they were given a mission based on the storytelling workshop.

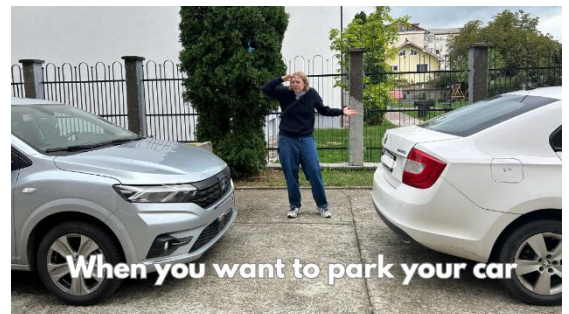
The mission was to give feedback to Bistrita on the safety of the bikelanes and on how to engage the citizens in the new parking regime – through memes !



Or actually the task was to give the feedback through producing visuals like videos or memes or through a podcast.

The COPE partners came up with very creative feedback using mostly the meme format. The meme format obviously put the storytelling tools in a very « in your face » position, but in order for the memes to work the **SELF** the **US** and the **NOW** have to be very clear and spot on.

Here are some of the outputs – not so bad 😊



SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN BISTRITA

28 KM OF BIKE LANES



ACCESSIBLE ELECTRIC BUSES WITH 23 BUS LINES



WITH LOW FARES AND CONTACTLESS PAYMENT



AND EVEN A MONITORING ROOM



imgflip.com

2.4 Organising the COPE final conference

As part of the last COPE core network meeting hosted by lead partner Copenhagen, the COPE network will host a final conference where the 8 COPE cities will present their most impactful, engaging, fun and inspiring project darlings. The cities will present in pairs using PowerPoint with only pictures or as little text as possible. The format in the conference will be engaging with time to reflect and discuss the presentations at the tables.



This format was presented for the partners and we had a workshop developing themes and headlines for the presentations and pairing up the partners.



The result was following pairs and headlines :

Citizen Gardens and Seeds for Community Building – creating engagement and green spaces
by Copenhagen and Saint-Quentin.

Through Garden to Community
by Vilnius and Kavala.

Move Green
by Pombal and Bistrita.

The Youth Paving the Green Road
by Korydallos and A Coruña.

2.5 Evaluation

When we evaluate at the end of a Core Network Meeting, we use our COPE MIRO board, where the partners can write any feedback or comment they have in mind. It looked like this after the CNM#7 evaluation:



3. Integrated Action Plans (IAPs)

3.1 One-on-ones focusing on feedback on IAPs

All COPE partners have during September met online with Lead Expert Stine Skot for a review on the full IAPs. These meetings gave room for zooming in on specific details and to test the overall logic of the IAP.

The 8 COPE partners are in very different situations, they have very different opportunities and experience – in short their contexts for writing this plan makes their IAPs turning out as very different in both content and style.

Our main conclusion during the one-on-one meetings were that the IAP should bring value to their local context and should be a plan that could bring their local citizens and stakeholders closer to the municipality and nourish their collaboration. And therefore the IAPs are reflecting these different target groups and participants.

The Integrated Action Plans are now going through the final adjustments before the final upload on the COPE webpage in the end of November 2025.

4. Coming up

COPE

November 4-6: CNM#8 in Copenhagen

November 5: COPE Final Conference

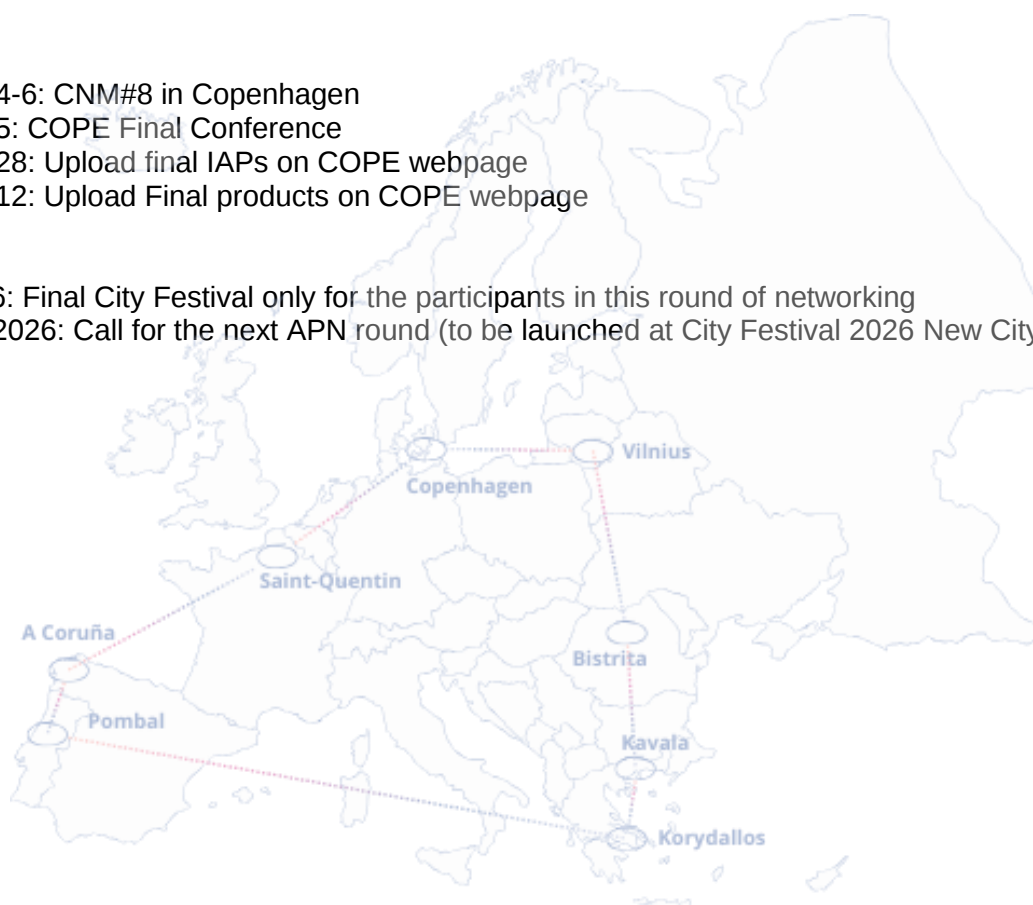
November 28: Upload final IAPs on COPE webpage

December 12: Upload Final products on COPE webpage

URBACT

March 2026: Final City Festival only for the participants in this round of networking

April-June 2026: Call for the next APN round (to be launched at City Festival 2026 New City Labs TBD by URBACT).



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