

**Driving
change
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cities**

WHAT IS A THRIVING GREEN URBAN ECONOMY?

**URBACT Webinar
13 November 2025**

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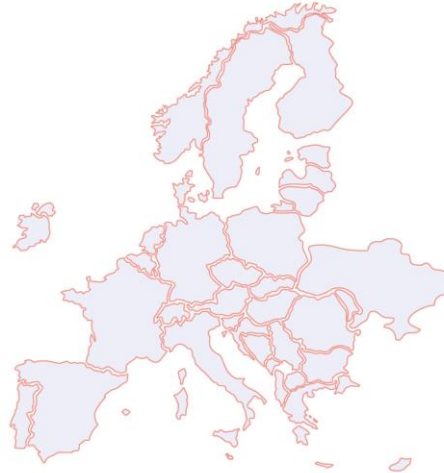
URBACT is an EU-funded programme supporting sustainable urban development in Europe through:

Networks of European cities

Capacity building activities & tools



Knowledge uptake and sharing



Currently 525 cities involved in 65 networks

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Three types of networks of cities



Cities and local stakeholders co-produce an Integrated Action Plan to tackle their common policy challenges.



Cities share and adapt a successful Good Practice **that has already been implemented** in their Network's lead city.



Cities adapt the experience of a successful Urban Innovative Actions' project **and develop an investment plan** to implement it.

Next call for networks in March 2026 – stay tuned and sign up for the newsletter: urbact.eu/subscribe-newsletter

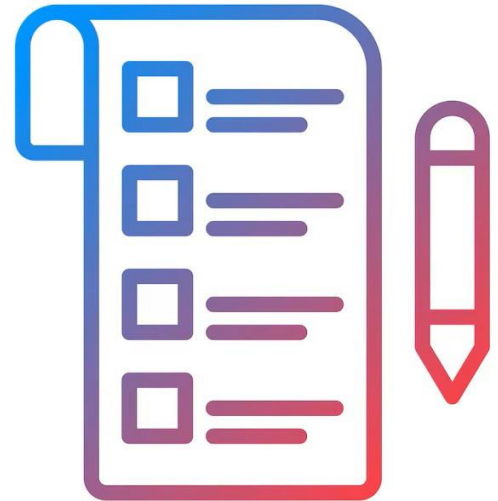
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Agenda

1. Common ground
2. Impact stories from URBACT networks of cities
3. Stories of change by ICLEI
4. Key takeaways
5. Next opportunities and wrap up



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COMMON GROUND
**GREENING URBAN ECONOMIES:
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL
IMPACT**

**Dr Eleni Feleki - LET'S GO
CIRCULAR! Lead Expert**

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Key components of green cities

Soft mobility, green corridors, cycle-friendly

Clean energy

Optimised flows (water, energy, electricity)

High green density

Responsible consumption

Biodiversity, nature-based solutions

Environmental quality

Green roofs, walls

Infrastructure



Green cities: reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities

Green cities and green urban economies

Green urban economy is one that results **in improved human well-being** and **social equity**, while significantly **reducing** environmental risks and ecological scarcities.



The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

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Five pillars of a green urban economy



Health and Wellbeing

- Enables all people to create and enjoy prosperity.



Justice, Equity, Equality

- Promotes equity within and between generations.



Planetary boundaries

- The green economy safeguards, restores and invests in nature.



Efficiency and sufficiency (resilience)

- Geared to support sustainable consumption and production.



Good governance

- Guided by integrated, accountable and resilient institutions.

The role of local authorities in greening urban economies



- Vision setting, strategic planning and monitoring
- Regulation and incentives
- Public investment and infrastructure
- Exploiting assets
- Support for local businesses and innovation
- Community engagement and behavioural change

[In a nutshell

- **Creates jobs and value while cutting emissions, waste and resource use, so people's lives and the environment improve together**
- **Governance is key**
- **Innovation and Collaboration**
- **The opportunities are immense**



How URBACT cities create greener urban economies

✓ **Health and wellbeing**

- ✓ Unlocking green potential of citizen action (COPE)

✓ **Investing in nature**

- ✓ “Recycling” unused urban areas & social participation tools (GreenPlace)

✓ **Efficiency and sufficiency**

- ✓ Circular city ecosystems & innovative solutions (LET'S GO CIRCULAR!)
- ✓ Assisting local businesses to transition to low carbon energy sources and sustainable mobility options (EcoCore)

✓ **Good governance**

- ✓ Reshaping and modernising industrial areas (In4Green)

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**URBACT CITIES' STORIES
FOR GREENER URBAN
ECONOMIES**

COPE network

Øystein Leonardsen

Copenhagen, Denmark

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What is the network about

The **COPE** (Coherent Place-based Climate Action) network will **unlock the green potentials of citizen action through:**

- A place-based approach
- Recognizing citizens and local action groups as fundamental stakeholders to accelerate the green transition
- Municipality as a facilitator

A green and just transition in cities is key to achieving carbon neutrality in Europe by 2050

By actively engaging communities that have traditionally been left out of climate action, COPE increases the scope and impact of municipal policies



Our entry point for greening the local economy

- Place-based
- Holistic
- Asset oriented
- Transparent



Our Story, our Impact: Interventions that shaped a greener economy – Bistrita (RO)



BEFORE

- Fossil based mobility
- Low awareness
- No alternatives
- In dire need of change



AFTER

- A multi-level governance approach and engaging communities is now unlocking the green potential



Tools and methods behind the Story

- Investments in infrastructure and equipment
- Using SMART solutions
- Engaging schools and the bike community
- Making the transition easy

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



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**URBACT CITIES' STORIES
FOR GREENER URBAN
ECONOMIES**

GreenPlace network

Joanna Gańcza-Pawelczyk
Municipality of Wrocław, Poland

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What is the network about

- **GreenPlace:** URBACT network consisting of nine partners who aim at developing a set of activities for **"recycling" unused urban areas,** using **social participation tools.**
- Takes into account the regional specificities and conditions of each of the partners, **introduces greenery** as a key factor in limiting **climate change in urban areas.**



Our entry point for greening the local economy

- **Abandoned buildings**
- **Forgotten Tram depots**
- **Unused green areas** and a medieval wall
- **Unused built areas:** former military barracks and post-industrial neighbourhoods.



Our Story, our Impact: Interventions that shaped a greener economy – Wrocław

2 day Hackathon with residents to:

- Determine possible functions of the depot.
- Identify nature-based solutions.

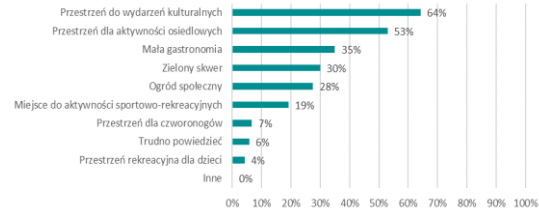
Creation of a Green Boiler House zone to:

- Provide a leisure space.
- Build a stronger sense of community.
- Increase the visibility of the depot.
- Test blue-green and water management solutions on-site.



Tools and methods behind the Story

- **Workshops** with residents on their vision
- **Inventory** of the tram depot
- 2-day **Hackathon**
- **Survey** on needs and interests
- **Public event**



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URBACT CITIES' STORIES FOR GREENER URBAN ECONOMIES

LET'S GO CIRCULAR! network

Wibke Borngesser

City of Munich, Germany

URBACT



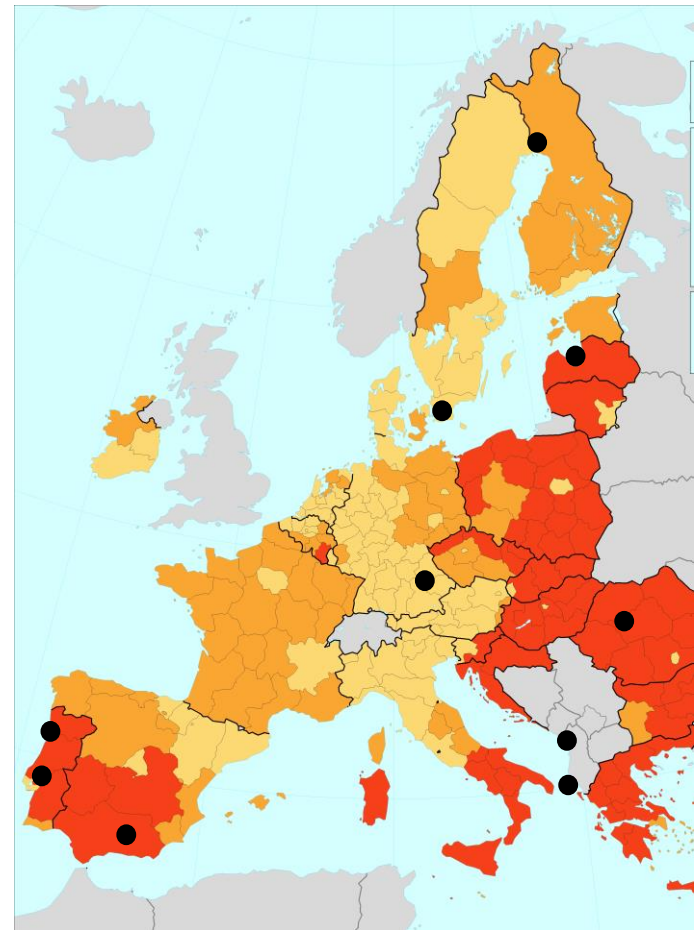
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What is the network about

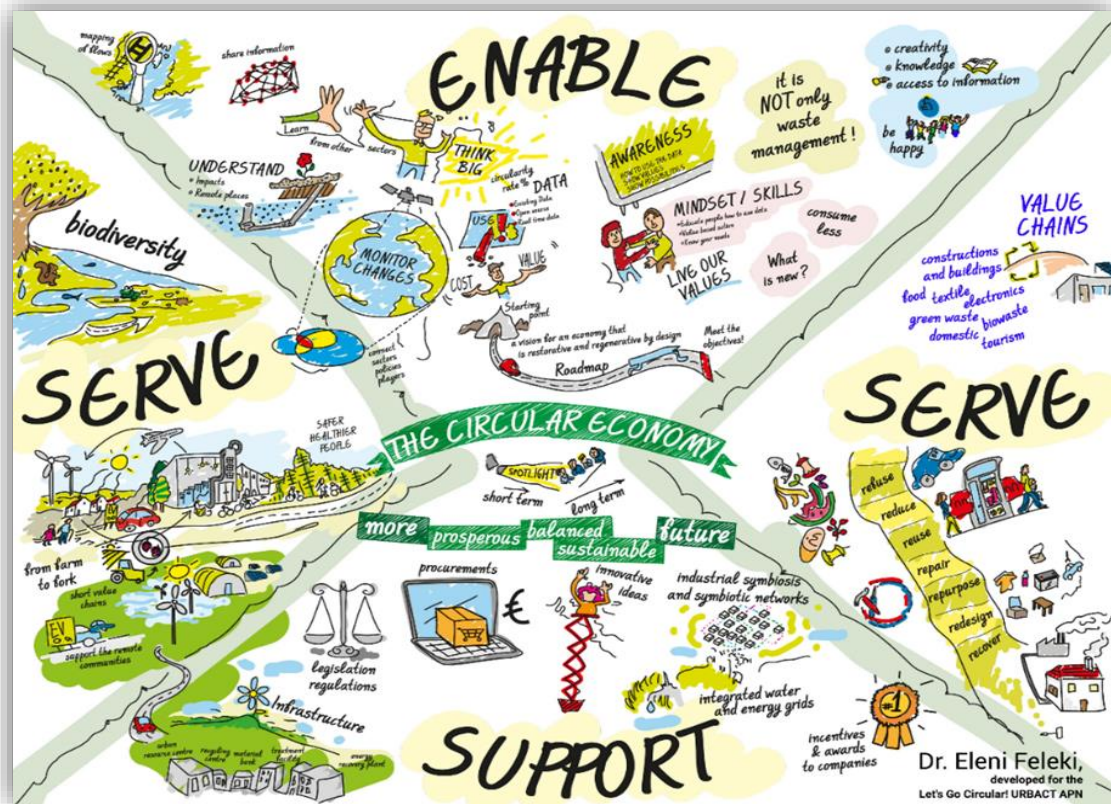
LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Pave the way towards circular cities,
by:

- Drafting circular economy strategies
- Designing actions that can enhance the roles of local authorities
- Enabling, serving and supporting



Our entry points for greening the urban economy



Our Story, our Impact: Interventions that shaped a greener economy - Munich, Lisbon, Granada

Enabling Circular Economy
Circular restaurant



Procurement Guidelines in
Munich (DE)

Supporting Circular Economy
Linking supply & demand



Circular Neighbourhoods
in Lisbon (PT)

Serving Circular Economy
Refurbishing unused bicycles



Bike Hospital in Granada
(ES)

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Tools and methods behind the Story

Enabling Circular Economy: Procurement guidelines for City's restaurants in Munich.

- Working more closely with suppliers to strengthen cooperation.

Supporting Circular Economy: Circular Neighbourhoods in Lisbon.

- Use / update of existing tools and evaluating the interest in participation.

Serving Circular Economy: Bike Hospital in Granada.

- App for number of rides, CO₂ reductions.

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EcoCore network

Aoife Sheridan

Balbriggan, Fingal (Ireland)

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What is the network about

- Accelerating the **green transition** in small cities in strategic transport corridors.
- **Build capacity** in small cities to address climate change.
- Promote **sustainable economic development**.
- Work with business to transition to low carbon **energy** sources and sustainable **mobility** options.

The EcoCore Project

Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors



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Our entry point for greening the local economy



Leading the green transition



Working with business stakeholders



Telling the story

Our Story, our Impact: Interventions that shaped a greener economy – Balbriggan, Pärnu

Engaging business stakeholders:

- Sustainability Journey Videos
- Sustainability Awareness Raising
- Green Skills Development
- New Sustainability Strategy



Balbriggan (Ireland)

Leading Green Transition: Economic Forum:

- Event to engage stakeholders
- Focus: Driving Green Strategic Projects
- Building strategic collaboration
- Recurring annual event planned



Pärnu (Estonia)

Tools and methods behind the Story

1 Day
Hackathon
Challenge

Get ready to brainstorm, innovate, and network with like-minded individuals passionate about sustainability and business.

This in-person event is your chance to make a difference and contribute to a greener future.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to showcase your skills and ideas!

[Sign Up Now](#)

For More Information
caitlin@what-the-hack.solutions
EventBrite

SMART BALBRIGGAN
A Smart Dublin District

URBACT
European Union
The EcoCore Project
Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors



Green Transition in Small Cities

THE ECOCORE PODCAST



The EcoCore Project
Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

Ongoing Closing in 3 months

City-to-City Exchanges EUI – Capacity Building

The Call for Applications for city-to-city exchanges is now open, providing support to urban authorities in addressing implementation challenges related to sustainable urban development.



Listen on Apple Podcasts:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ie/podcast/e-cocore-podcast/id1841429370>

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URBACT CITIES' STORIES FOR GREENER URBAN ECONOMIES

In4Green network

Manuel Campa

Councillor of Economic and Urban
Development, Avilés, Spain

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What is the network about

In4Green is a network that brings together ten small and medium-sized industrial cities working towards the green transition.

10 industrial cities & 4 main themes:

-  Green & Smart Industrial Zones.
-  Circular Economy.
-  Digitalisation & Innovation.
-  Climate Neutrality.

Learning, testing, acting together.



Our entry point for greening the local economy

- **Industrial areas** → testing grounds for the green transition
- **Cities + Businesses + Citizens =**
Collaboration for change
- **Green transition:** Opportunity for reinventing the local economy



Our Story, our Impact: Interventions that shaped a greener economy in Avilés

Avilés: From heavy industry to innovation hub:

- **Avilés Innovation Model:** long-term public-private collaboration (since 2015).
- Isla de la Innovación **Science & Technology Park:** Hub for research & development, education & green industry.
- **10 Research & Development centres:** 8 created in 6 years.
- **Innovation forums**, STEAM programmes, training & strategic working groups.

From pollution to green energy, new materials
& advanced manufacturing.



Tools and methods behind the Story

Governance & collaboration:

Structured public-private partnership

Innovation ecosystem tools:

Science & Technology Park as testing & visibility space.
URBACT approach: Local Groups, co-design, peer learning.

People & skills:

Continuous education power green economy

Monitoring & alignment

Linked to Avilés Urban Agenda 2030

Core lesson: Collaboration scales: **Small cities can** lead big green **transitions.**



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STORIES OF CHANGE BY ICLEI

Vassilis Latinos

Head of Resilience and Climate
Adaptation, ICLEI Local
Governments for Sustainability

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What is the organisation about

ICLEI IN EUROPE: >210 Members, >35 countries



Get connected and exchange with peers through global ICLEI network

Be heard on European and international stages

Work together with other cities on innovative tools with our technical assistance

Gain access to up-to-date resources, media, communications and outreach support

Learn through priority access and reduced fees to events and networks



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The Five ICLEI Pathways and the link to a greening economy



**LOW EMISSION
DEVELOPMENT**



**NATURE-BASED
DEVELOPMENT**



**EQUITABLE AND
PEOPLE
CENTERED
DEVELOPMENT**



**RESILIENT
DEVELOPMENT**



**CIRCULAR
DEVELOPMENT**

The **FIVE ICLEI PATHWAYS** reflect ICLEI's approach to achieving a sustainable city as well as local contributions to implementing the goals laid out in international frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Any of our individual projects or initiatives can be oriented along one or more specific pathways. We also look at how the pathways connect to bring about change in an **INTEGRATED** way. For example, we consider how nature-based development contributes to resilience, or how to bring equity into low emission development.

Our entry point for greening the local economy



Leading change with integrated and multi-level governance.



Working with local and regional stakeholders in developing and implementing **Local Green Deals**.



Acting, Connecting, Accelerating.

Stories of change from ICLEI Member Cities – Mannheim (DE)

Characteristics:

- City centre, Innenstadt/Jungbusch district, one of the **most diverse but deprived neighborhoods**.
- Residents mostly living in rented flats, have a higher **risk of energy poverty and less access to green and healthy spaces** in comparison to other areas.

Challenges

- Heat Stress
- Fragmented ownership
- Impermeable surfaces
- Competition for space
- Pollution



Stories of change from ICLEI Member Cities - Mannheim



ONGOING PILOT PROJECT

- Set up a **collaborative platform** “House of Change for the inner city” that goes beyond joint planning but **brings together city administration, stakeholders and citizens.**
- Design **a simulation game** in an agile format as part of the project where citizens and stakeholders identify the goals for their neighborhood and recognize their contribution.

Partners Involved

- Mannheim, Creative Climate Cities, ICLEI Europe, Sub-contracting expected.



Stories of change from ICLEI Member Cities - Novi Grad (Sarajevo, BIH)

Characteristics

- Construction boom **prior to the 1984** Winter Olympic Games.
- Urban fabric with large residential high-rises that open towards **large open spaces**.
- Atriums offer **great potential** for climate change adaptation measures and community life.

Challenges

- Growing population
- Urban grid
- Poor quality of urban spaces
- Flooding and heat



Stories of change from ICLEI Member Cities - Novi Grad (Sarajevo)

ONGOING PILOT PROJECT

- The city develops a plan for the urban rehabilitation **of green spaces** at Alipašino polje-Dobrinja area, applying a **new approach and innovative solutions** to development of green areas while **considering ecosystem services** and applying **participatory approaches**.
- Location within the area selected together with the community to implement a **pilot** that will be used as an example for the **redevelopment of the rest of the area**.



Partners Involved

- Sarajevo Canton, CENER21, Sub-contracting expected

Stories of change from ICLEI Member Cities - Vejle Vedelsgade (DK)

Characteristics:

- The Vedelsgade street is in the centre of Vejle situated close to the Grejs Stream.
- Vedelsgade is one of the few remaining **cultural heritage** streets in Vejle's Center.
- **Mix of Danish and immigrant communities** mostly young families and students.

Challenges:

- Flooding
- Traffic



Stories of change from ICLEI Member Cities - Vejle Vedelsgade



ONGOING PILOT PROJECT

- Explore and apply **innovative multifunctional solutions** such as “**cloudburst roads**”, **canals for rapid drainage of water on terrain**, while at the same **time recreational value** for the community and visitors while **enhancing the safety** in the area.
- The upgrading of the street will also **motivate the local owners and local investors** to start renovating and beautifying their properties and private outdoor areas.

Partners Involved

- Vejle municipality, Aarhus University, ICLEI Europe, Sub-contracting expected

[Join the community on Greening urban economies!

Contact us at: communication@urbact.eu



Join the activities
of the Knowledge Hub
on Greening urban
economies!

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Meet the community at the 2026 URBACT City Festival!



Register now!

31 March - 1 April 2026
Nicosia, Cyprus

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Δήμος Λευκωσίας
Nicosia Municipality



Register here: urbact.eu/city-festival-2026

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