Cities After Dark
Braga, Portugal
Integrated Action Plan

Executive Summary

Braga embraces the challenge of rethinking nightlife as a vital part of its urban identity and collective future. As a young, creative and vibrant European city, Braga proposes — through the **Integrated Action Plan: Braga After Dark** — a new approach to the night, combining **culture, safety, sustainability and social innovation**.

Developed within the framework of the **URBACT Cities After Dark** network, this plan brings together European cities committed to reimagining how urban life unfolds after dark. As lead partner, Braga positions the **BADlab – Braga After Dark Lab** at the heart of a pioneering model of **collaborative night-time governance**, built upon data, citizen participation and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The Plan is structured around **four strategic axes**:

1. **Cultural and Economic Vibrancy** – strengthening nightlife as a space for creativity and cultural entrepreneurship through initiatives such as *Braga After Dark Fest* and *Night Tour Braga After Dark guide*.
2. **Safety, Wellbeing and Inclusion** – ensuring a safer, more equal and respectful night through awareness campaigns and safe points networks.
3. **Sustainability and Green Mobility** – promoting environmentally responsible practices, night-time transport and green certification for venues and operators.
4. **Governance and Innovation – BADlab** – consolidating the night-time lab as a permanent structure for coordination, monitoring and European cooperation.

The **Braga IAP** embodies a clear vision:

The night belongs to everyone — to be lived with safety, respect and creativity.

More than a plan, it is a political and social commitment to build an inclusive, healthy and sustainable city at all hours. Braga aims to become a **European reference in participatory night-time policies**, affirming that urban development is not measured only in daylight, but also in how we care for, celebrate and share the night.

Part I – Diagnosis and Strategic Vision

1. Introduction

Braga is a city that breathes youth, culture and innovation. It was European Youth Capital (2012), European City of Sport (2018) and is part of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network in the field of Media Arts. This energy is also reflected in its nightlife — a space for socializing, creativity and experimentation.

The **URBACT Cities After Dark** network is based on the idea that European cities should plan not only what happens during the day, but also what happens after sunset. Night-time is a dimension of urban life that has an impact on multiple sectors: the economy, safety, public health, culture and the environment.

Braga's **Integrated Action Plan (IAP)** stems from this context and reflects a political and community commitment: **to create an inclusive, safe, sustainable and innovative night-time environment that reflects the city's identity and values.**

2. Local Diagnosis and European Context

Braga has a diverse night-time ecosystem, but one that is still consolidating. With bars, restaurants, cultural venues and street events, the city has been enhancing its appeal, especially among younger generations and the student population. However, challenges remain in relation to **noise, mobility, safety and the diversity of cultural offerings**.

At European level, a profound transformation is taking place in the night-time economy:

- The emergence of **soft clubbing**, which combines leisure with wellbeing and sustainability;
- The appreciation of nightlife as **a factor in public health and social cohesion**;
- The creation of participatory governance structures, such as **Night Commissions** and **Night Mayors**;
- The defense of nightlife as **living heritage** and a space for cultural experimentation;
- The emergence of **temporary spaces (pop-ups)** and **creative incubation** projects;
- And the growing **professionalization and appreciation of night-time work**.

Braga has the ideal conditions to become a **European laboratory** in this area — a city that experiments, measures and shares solutions for a more sustainable, safe and inclusive nightlife.

3. Vision 2030

"We believe in a city that lives every hour to the fullest."

The IAP's vision for Braga in 2030 is clear:
to build a healthy, creative and inclusive nightlife that promotes quality of life, citizen participation and sustainable development.

This vision is based on four strategic pillars:

1. Culture and creativity as drivers of identity and the economy;
2. Safety and well-being as shared rights;
3. Environmental sustainability and accessible mobility;
4. Innovation and collaborative governance.

Part II – Strategic Axes

4. Strategic Structure

Four **Strategic Axes** emerge from the co-creation of the Local Urban Group, which structure the Integrated Action Plan:

1. **Axis 1 – Cultural and Economic Vibrancy**
2. **Axis 2 – Safety, Well-being and Inclusion**
3. **Axis 3 – Sustainability and Green Mobility**
4. **Axis 4 – Governance and Innovation – BADlab**

Each axis includes objectives, priority actions and impact indicators.

5. Axis 1 – Cultural and Economic Vibrancy

Objective:
Promote a diverse, creative and sustainable nightlife that brings together culture, economy and social innovation.

Action	Description	Responsible Entities	Period
Braga After Dark Fest	Annual festival of night-time culture and urban arts, occupying public spaces with performances and music.	BADlab / CMB / Faz Cultura / Chamber of Commerce	2025–2030
Meanwhile Braga Programme	Activation of temporary spaces and pop-ups for creative and cultural incubation.	BADlab / BragaHabit / HPH / UMinho	2026–2028
Mapping of Nightlife	Continuous survey of cultural practices and audience profiles.	BADlab / UMinho / Cultural Entities	Permanent

Expected Impact:

- Strengthening of the night-time cultural ecosystem;
- Creation of creative jobs;
- Enhancement of living heritage.

6. Axis 2 – Safety, Well-being and Inclusion

Objective:
Building a safe and inclusive nightlife, focused on prevention, awareness and mediation.

Main actions:

Action	Description	Responsible Entities	Period
"The Night Belongs to Everyone" Campaign	Raising awareness about responsible behaviour, equality and respect.	BADlab / CMB / Police / NGOs/Chamber of Commerce	2025–2030
Safe Points Network	Support and mediation spaces with trained volunteers and technicians.	BADlab / IPDJ / Red Cross	2026–2028
Training course: "Working at Night with Respect"	Training night-time professionals in equality and safety.	BADlab / HPH / IEFP/ Chamber of Commerce	2025–2027

Expected Impact:

- Reduction in incidents and risky behavior;
- Greater confidence in public spaces;
- More inclusive and safer nightlife.

7. Axis 3 – Sustainability and Green Mobility

Objective:
To reduce the environmental impact of nightlife and ensure safe and accessible transport.

Main actions:

Action	Description	Responsible Entities	Period
Night-time Green Certification	Environmental seal for sustainable establishments.	BADlab / AGERE / CMB	2025–2028
Sustainable Night Mobility	Extension of night lines and creation of the BADmap app.	TUB / BADlab / CMB	2025–2030
Braga Circular at Night	Circular economy programme for restaurants and events.	AGERE / BADlab	2026–2029

Expected impact:

- Reduction in noise and emissions;
- Improved night-time mobility;
- Adoption of sustainable practices.

8. Axis 4 – Governance and Innovation – BADlab

Objective:
Create a permanent structure for collaborative, data-driven night-time governance.

Main Actions:

Action	Description	Responsible Entities	Period
Braga Night Council	Participatory forum with citizens, businesspeople and security forces.	BADlab / CMB / PSP / UMinho/ Faz Cultura	2025–2027
Night Observatory	System for collecting and analysing data on mobility, security and noise.	BADlab / UMinho	Permanent
Night Academy	Training night workers in culture, safety and hospitality.	HPH / IEFP / BADlab	2026–2029

Expected Impact:

- Integrated and participatory governance;
- Continuous improvement based on evidence;
- European benchmark in urban night-time policies.

Part III – Governance, Evaluation and Conclusion

9. Governance: Cooperation and Participation Structures

Braga's night-time governance is based on trust, data and participation. **BADlab – Braga After Dark Lab** will be the driving force behind this structure, coordinating policies, partnerships and evaluation.

The model is based on three levels:

Level	Description	Responsible
Strategic Coordination	Integration of the IAP into municipal policies and alignment with the European Urban Agenda.	Municipality of Braga / Faz Cultura
Operational Management	Implementation and monitoring of actions through BADlab.	BADlab / Faz Cultura
Citizen Participation	Involvement of citizens, businesses, associations and universities in the Night Council.	Braga Night Council

Key principle: night-time is a shared responsibility — between the administration, operators and citizens.

10. Funding and Sustainability

The success of the IAP depends on a sustainable and diversified financial model.
Braga will coordinate **municipal resources, European funds and private partnerships** to ensure continuity.

Source of Funding	Description
Municipal Budget	Basic funding for coordination and structural actions of BADlab.
European Programmes	CERV, FSE+, Horizon Europe and Creative Europe for projects promoting equality, culture and social innovation.
Private Partnerships	Support from local businesses in campaigns, events and green certifications.
Intermunicipal Cooperation	Collaboration with neighboring municipalities on sustainable mobility and night-time tourism.

The aim is to create a **hybrid model** that combines public efficiency with social innovation and collective responsibility.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is continuous, participatory and public.
The **Night Observatory** will collect data systematically, sharing results transparently.

Indicator	Dimension	Assessment Method	Frequency
Perception of Safety	Social	Surveys and focus groups	Annual
Noise and Emissions	Environmental	Sensors and AGERE reports	Half-yearly
Cultural Participation	Cultural	Event and audience counts	Half-yearly
Decent Night-time Employment	Economic	IEFP and BADlab data	Annual
Equality and Inclusion	Social	Interviews and PSP data	Annual
Resident Satisfaction	Community	CMB / UMinho Surveys	Biannual

This data feeds into the **Night Data Panel**, accessible to the public in *open data* format, reinforcing trust and democratic scrutiny.

12. Communication and Public Participation

Braga believes that communication creates a sense of belonging.
The implementation of the plan will be accompanied by an **ongoing communication strategy**, coordinated by BADlab, focusing on:

- Awareness and night-time literacy campaigns ("The Night Belongs to Everyone");
- Public forums and assemblies;
- Collaboration with schools, universities and youth associations;
- Dissemination of results through digital platforms and social networks.

The tone will be inclusive, inspiring and educational — showing that the night is also a space for active citizenship and living culture.

13. Expected Impact

The Braga IAP projects clear results in the medium and long term:

Dimension	Expected Impact
Social	Increased perception of safety and well-being; improved gender equality and social cohesion.
Economic	Strengthening of the cultural and creative economy; new jobs and talent.
Environmental	Reduction in noise, emissions and waste; greater green mobility.
Governance	Implementation of a permanent and collaborative night-time policy model.
Cultural	Recognition of living heritage and multiplication of creative spaces.

These impacts will be monitored through annual reports from BADlab and the Night Council, reinforcing the cycle of planning, action and learning.

14. European Legacy and Cooperation

Braga wants to leave a legacy that goes beyond its territory. The **BADlab** model could be replicated in medium-sized cities across Europe, reinforcing the idea that night-time is an essential dimension of urban policy. It will also be lauching the informal network Global Cities After Dark to promote our work regarding the night economy.

European cooperation will continue through:

- URBACT networks and new joint applications;
- Horizon Europe and Creative Europe projects;
- Partnerships with urban observatories and universities;
- Transfer of good practices to other Portuguese and European cities.

Braga aims to establish itself as **a European benchmark in night-time governance**, placing knowledge, inclusion and culture at the heart of the city of the future.

15. Conclusion: The Night Belongs to Everyone

The night is a mirror of the city — it shows who we are, what we fear and what we desire.
With this Plan, Braga is making a clear choice: **to build a shared, safe and inspiring night-time**, where culture, health and conviviality go hand in hand.

The night belongs to everyone — and it starts in Braga.

Appendices

Annex I – References and Sources

- URBACT IV – Cities After Dark (2023–2025)
- Braga Manifesto (2024)
- OECD/Eurostat – Oslo Manual, 3rd Edition (Social Innovation)
- New European Bauhaus / European Urban Agenda
- Articles "Nightlife Futures Series" (LinkedIn, 2024–2025):
  - *Is the Future of Clubbing Softer Than You Think?*
  - *The Underestimated Health Capital of the Night-Time Economy*
  - *Co-Designing the 24-Hour City*
  - *From Night Mayors to Night Commissions*
  - *Rethinking Heritage: Living Culture Protection*
  - *Pop-Up Bars and Temporary Night Venues*
  - *Ignoring the Night: How Government Neglect Is Silencing Britain's Night-Time Economy*
  - *Raving Against the System*
- Final Braga Manifesto – Cities After Dark Network (2025)

Annex II – Local Partners

- **Municipality of Braga** – General coordination and strategic planning
- **BragaHabit EM** – Housing and social inclusion programmes
- **Human Power Hub** – Promotion of social innovation and acceleration programmes
- **Chamber of Commerce** – AEB – Partners in Braga After Dark fest
- **University of Minho** – Scientific production and impact assessment
- **FAJUB – Federation of Youth Associations of Braga** – Youth participation and community mobilisation
- **AGERE EM** – Sustainability, waste and circular economy
- **Theatro Circo / GNRation** – Cultural programming and artistic curation
- **PSP / Red Cross** – Safety, mediation and first aid
- **Local associations and cultural collectives** – Co-creation of events and community mediation

Annex III – Implementation Structure

Entity	Function	Responsible
BADlab	Technical coordination and monitoring	BADlab coordination
CMB – Culture and Youth	Cultural and awareness-raising actions	Department of Culture
Faz Cultura	Branch of the night time policies of Braga	Municipal Company for Culture
Associação Empresarial de Braga	Strategic partner of the public authorities for night life	Chamber of Commerce of Braga

Entity	Function	Responsible
European partners (URBACT)	Cooperation and knowledge transfer	Lead Partner Braga

(End of Document – IAP Braga After Dark / URBACT Cities After Dark 2025)