

City of Osijek, Croatia

Integrated Action Plan – Osijek, Croatia

URBACT IV – Cities@Heart Action Planning Network

URBACT IV –

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Cities@Heart INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

1. Some words from our political leadership

Osijek, as the largest city in Eastern Croatia, has always been a place where cultures meet, where history inspires, and where communities grow stronger through collaboration. But like many European cities, our urban center has faced challenges—demographic changes, economic pressures, and the evolving needs of citizens.

That is why we have developed a clear and ambitious response: our Integrated Action Plan (IAP). It is not just a technical document—it is a vision for a people-centered, sustainable, and inclusive city.

Projects for the New Programming Period

In this programming period, the City of Osijek is preparing a number of projects that will be realized using diverse funding sources from the European Union. These include:

The redevelopment of Writers' Park (Park pisaca) into a cultural and green landmark.

The creation of new public parks, offering more green infrastructure and inclusive recreational spaces.

Upgrading of urban equipment in the city center to ensure functionality, accessibility, and beauty.

Expanding the cultural offer in the historic core, making the center more vibrant and attractive for residents and tourists alike.

Improving mobility and accessibility, including pedestrianization projects and new sustainable transport solutions.

Each of these projects reflects our ambition not only to build infrastructure but to create spaces of meaning and belonging.

Alignment with the New European Bauhaus

*Through this plan, Osijek proudly aligns itself with the values of the **New European Bauhaus**:*

Sustainability, by investing in resilient and green urban design.

Inclusion, by ensuring accessibility and co-creation with citizens, especially our youth.

Beauty, by creating spaces that are not only functional but also inspiring.

Our work focuses not only on physical transformation but on people-centered regeneration—where every street, park, and square becomes an opportunity to restore connection, foster belonging, and spark new urban life.

City That Listens

We believe that cities speak through their spaces. In Osijek, we want our spaces to express openness, creativity, and dignity. That is why citizens are not just observers but co-creators of our future. Through participatory workshops, cultural events, and educational programs, we invite them to help shape the identity of their neighborhoods and the spirit of the city center.

Conclusion

With Cities&Heart, Osijek joins a collective European ambition to give our urban centers new vitality. For us, this is not just a plan for infrastructure. It is a plan for people. For a city that speaks through its public spaces—and listens through its processes.

I thank our partners, our citizens, and our dedicated teams who are making this transformation possible. Together, we are building a more sustainable, inclusive, and inspiring Osijek.

Ivan Radić

Mayor



2. Cities@Heart

Cities@Heart brings together ten European urban areas with diverse profiles but with one common goal: achieving a balanced and inclusive city centre for all users. By gathering relevant indicators and using a common methodology, this network aims to create a holistic policy framework for lasting and meaningful change in the heart of the city. Working hand in hand with local stakeholders and users, Cities@Heart is here to develop tools that foster happy, healthy and harmonious places.

It is led by the Métropole du Grand Paris and is composed of 9 project partners:

Kraków Metropolis Association - Poland

Granada - Spain

Osijek - Croatia

Associação de Municípios de Fins Específicos Quadrilátero Urbano - Portugal

Celje - Slovenia

Sligo - Ireland

Cesena - Italy

Fleurus - Belgium

Amfiktyonies - Greece

3. Why an Integrated Action Plan?

An URBACT Integrated Action Plan (IAP) is a key element of the URBACT methodology. It is a city-level output that defines actions to be implemented within the city in order to respond to a specific urban policy challenge - reflecting the lessons learned from local stakeholders, transnational partners and the testing of actions at local level.

IAPs thus provide both a focal point and end goal of the action planning journey that cities undertake within their URBACT Action Planning Network (APN). IAPs help to ensure that both local-level discussions (within the URBACT Local Group) and transnational exchange (between the network

partners) have a practical focus on planning a coherent set of actions to address the local policy challenge in each participating city, embedding an integrated and participative approach.

IAPs are future oriented – setting out the actions that cities will implement beyond the life cycle of the URBACT network. For this reason, each IAP not only sets out what the city intends to do on its specific topic, but also has a strong implementation focus, for example through the identification of specific funding opportunities, governance structures and timelines for how the actions will be implemented and monitored.

4. Context, needs and vision



(Photo of the Tvrdica fortress and the Osijek Downtown, source: Outdooractive.hr)

Osijek, even though one of the four biggest cities in Croatia, and the regional center of Slavonia and Baranja, has for a long time been negatively portrayed in the media as the “empty city”, “city where the development has been the slowest among bigger cities after the 90s” and “city that has become the “sore spot” of Croatia when it comes to emigration of young people”.

In the recent years, that trend has started to change and it is the strongest “wind to our back” when it comes to motivation to improve the city and make it more hospitable for the citizens and visitors. Revitalizing the city, especially its center, parks and the most used areas such as the river Drava promenade, that were once described as empty and depressing has become one of the biggest goals of the current city administration.

With the new investments and businesses after the COVID pandemic, as well as the biggest number of private housing investments in the last few decades because of the never-stronger real-estate market, Osijek witnesses some great news every day.

From the all-time-record low unemployment rate to the biggest number of children enrolled in the kindergartens, positive trends are great motivational start to rethink all the policies and actions that can be done in the following years, to create even better grounds regarding the revitalization not only of the city center, but the city as a whole.

(Photo by Net.hr; empty businesses in the strict city center)

A proof that Osijek still has a long way to go, and that there is a great need for strategical and integrated action planning, especially when it comes to the revitalization of the city center, is an article from the national media portal, Net.hr, from “only” five years ago:

“In the past, Osijek was associated with the Drava, tambourine traditional music, typically Osijek’s “lega” slang and the Kohorta football fan group, while today it has become a term for desolation and emigration of the population. The alarming situation with young people leaving, is known to every citizen of Croatia, so it sometimes seems that Osijek is becoming a ghost town.

According to last year's calculation by Glas Slavonije portal, 97,000 inhabitants lived in Osijek in 2018, which means that in five years it lost approximately 10,000 inhabitants, or 10 percent of them. (...) The team of journalists arrived in Osijek on Thursday, during the working hours.

On the main square in Osijek, there weren't too many people. There were mostly those who were waiting for the tram because there is a tram station there. (...) What can be noticed is that many shops and places in Osijek are closed. On some doors it is written that it is “closed due to renovation”, which is a common Croatian lie when it comes to business closing.” (Net.hr portal, article from 18th November 2019, article published by author Ivana Petrić)

During the COVID pandemic, situation was even worse with the feeling of emptiness in the city’s streets and squares, but the statistics have shown that the world pandemic actually positively



influenced the emigration trends. Seeing that the “grass is not greener” on the other side, many young people stayed in Osijek and started to open their own businesses.

Exactly that, is Osijek’s biggest need. It needs its citizens to stay, to have motivation to start businesses, to attract investments, to create a positive environment for all the generations living together in the beautiful, green Osijek, that is now more often portrayed as the “city made to measure”.



(Photo: City of Osijek. Advent celebrations in Tvrd̑a Fortress)

Since the population of Osijek has fallen under 100.000 for the first time in the newer history (national census 2021), public administration has made the retention of the citizens (as well as attracting the new) one of its biggest goals. Soon followed the public policies such as:

- abolition of surtax and reduction of income tax
- Subsidies for the start-up companies and of economic activities of entrepreneurs
- Subsidized housing loans for first time owners
- Opening of the new kindergartens
- Free school materials for all Osijek's elementary school students
- Increased fees for the equipment of every newborn child
- Investments in the public transport (renewed tram network)
- Investments in cultural facilities (concert hall, library)
- Greening of the public spaces with new trees and plants
- Enlargement of the entrepreneurial zone Nemetin to attract more investments and create more job opportunities
- Many other indirect policies that contribute to retention of the population and attracting new citizens

Not only is the main goal the retention and attraction of the population, but also making their lives in Osijek more comfortable and livelier. When it comes to the city center, there are a few categories that need special attention during the strategical planning of the revitalization:

1. HOUSING

The city centre boasts a variety of typologies, including blocks of flats and single-family houses, some of which are old and protected as heritage, while others are of more recent construction. These properties are usually either owneroccupied or in long-term rental arrangements. Osijek's location within the national context results in housing prices being higher than in the surrounding areas, although specific data for the urban centre is unavailable. In general, the built-up area requires comprehensive renovation and updates to enhance sustainability, energy efficiency, and accessibility.

2. PUBLIC SPACE AND MOBILITY

In Osijek, two prominent central squares stand out as public spaces that, when interconnected, host various events in the city. Additionally, there are open spaces within the housing blocks and sizable green areas protected for both environmental and historical reasons. These spaces serve as meeting points and foster social cohesion. Particularly through the organisation of diverse events and through their role as distinctive landmarks that attract the population, they engender a unique identity within these areas. Generally conceived as inclusive and accessible, the public spaces offer dedicated areas for children and young people. They are secure spaces, often carfree; however, these areas lack integrated sustainability aspects in their design. One of the main problems that is oftenly discussed in the public discourse is the lack of parking spaces and the non-existence of the public garage.

3. COMMERCE

The distribution of essential goods is adequate, with approximately 50% of businesses dedicated to this purpose. However, this contrasts with the lack of variety in other types of commerce, which has generally moved to the outskirts or into shopping centres. This situation has also resulted in some commercial spaces being vacant (due to legal constraints regarding the unclear ownership of some premises), although there is a trend toward reversing this.

4. TOURISM

There is a significant tourism cluster in the urban centre, along with annual events that utilise the public and green spaces within the city centre. Despite the concentration of the tourism sector in the city centre, there is an absence of nightlife activities, which are instead located in other areas of the city.

Even though Osijek is in “the biggest developmental phase in the newer history” (mayor Ivan Radić at the ceremony on the Day of the City of Osijek, December 2nd 2024), the city still needs to fullfill one of the older generations’ biggest nostalgia: vibrant city center, attractive for its citizens and tourists, protected by green shades of autochthonous trees and plants and accessible for all visitors.



(Photo of St. Peter's and Paul's concathedral in Osijek city center, source: Osijek031.com)



(photo by Osijek Cultural Center, main city square during the Kaleidoskop festival)

4.1. Context



The city of Osijek, located in the Pannonian basin, is the fourth largest city in Croatia and the largest in the Eastern part of the country. It is the administrative, economic, educational and cultural center of Osijek-Baranja County, as well as of the historic region Slavonia.

The history of the city is well presented by its historic remains and architectural

monuments dating back to the prehistoric times and the Roman times (archaeological sites), to the

Middle Ages and the Baroque (the Fortress remains) as well as to the Historic and Art Nouveau streets in the present-day city center.

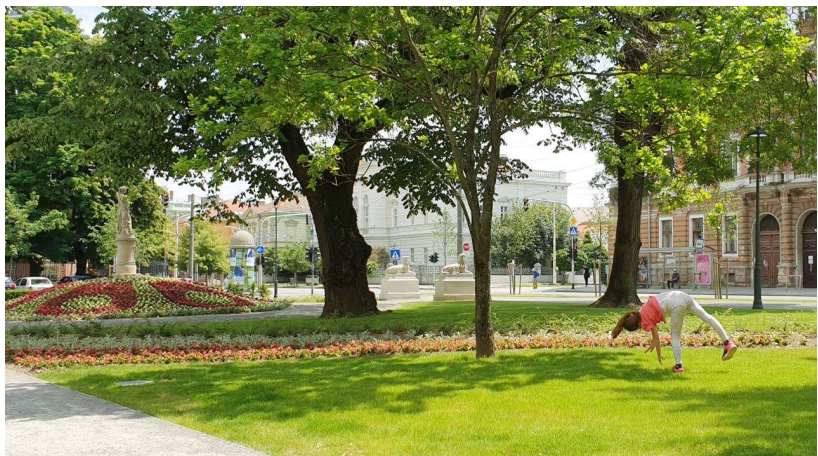
Currently around 19.000 students attend the 20 faculties/departments of the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Osijek used to be one of the strongest industrial centers of Croatia in the 19th and 20th century. However, in the last decade of the 20th century Osijek was seriously shaken during the Homeland war (1991-1995), which caused a serious setback in the development of the city. The population of the city is 96,848 (Census 2021), but, just like all around Croatia, the number of Osijek population is slightly decreasing, primarily due to young people moving to West-European countries as well as the natural population decline.

Consequently, the current population density stands at 553.9 inhabitants per square kilometre. The demographic composition illustrates an ageing population, with 18.3% aged over 66 years and 13.5% falling within the age group of 15 years or younger. Osijek boasts an average income of €15,544, slightly below the national average.

Osijek has traditionally been a university city, higher education facilities dating back 300 years ago. Nowadays it is much less of an industrial city, currently transitioning towards the smart city.

IT industry has experienced a very strong growth, and with the new IT Park and future IT incubator/accelerator building it is expected to boost even more.

Osijek is primarily a green city located on the banks of river Drava, with numerous green areas around and within the city (17 parks and 2 urban forests). In the vicinity there is Kopački Rit Nature Park, placed in the corner formed by the river Danube and its tributary Drava. As one of the best-preserved floodplains in Europe, including the Special Zoological Reserve as the most valuable part of the park,



Kopački rit is a very significant example of biodiversity in the region. The Osijek city center is divided into two different polarities: the first corresponds to the perimeter of the historical heritage protection area, the 17th century settlement, Tvrđa, to the east of the city; the second is the downtown area, characterised by a mix of historical and modern buildings, as well as significant green areas.



(Photo of St. Trinity Square in the Old Town Tvrđa, Source: SiB.hr)

In this last case, many of the historic buildings are rather neglected, having lacked systematic maintenance. The green areas in the center mostly need renovation, in which case they will contribute significantly to upgrading the surrounding areas and improving the climate resilience of the city center.



(Photo of the main Ante Starčević Square, modern Osijek downtown, source: Baseline Study)

In Osijek, two prominent central squares stand out as public spaces that, when interconnected, host various events in the city. Additionally, there are open spaces within the housing blocks and sizable green areas protected for both environmental and historical reasons. These spaces serve as meeting points and foster social cohesion. Particularly through the organization of diverse events and through their role as distinctive landmarks that attract the population, they engender a unique identity within these areas.

Generally conceived as inclusive and accessible, the public spaces offer dedicated areas for children and young people. They are secure spaces, often carfree; however, these areas lack integrated sustainability aspects in their design.

While precise data is unavailable, estimations suggest an approximate allocation of space within the urban center, with roughly 15% dedicated to commercial activities, 20% to services, 30% designated for offices or workspaces, and 35% reserved for residential areas.

This allocation showcases a notable diversity in its composition. This distribution implies that a significant portion of the workforce operating in the urban center does not necessarily reside within its limits; workers are dispersed across the city. As a result, there is substantial labour mobility among different neighbourhoods and their surrounding regions.

The city of Osijek and its administration is especially proud of the green policies; As reported by the City on its website, at the Days of Regional Development and EU Funds held in Šibenik on December 5 2024., the City of Osijek was declared the best Croatian Eco City for the third year in a row.

"The triple title confirms that Osijek is a leader in the implementation and creation of green policies in Croatia. We are the first and only among the big cities to exceed 50 percent of separately collected waste. With a result of 57 percent of separately collected waste, we even reached the new European norm for the period 2025-2030 two years before the others.

Osijek is a city that has more parks than squares, and this is a heritage that we preserve. Thus, a large-scale planting of as many as 1,700 trees is underway, which will make Osijek even greener and more resistant to climate change", pointed out the mayor of Osijek, Ivan Radić, and added that since the beginning of his mandate, about 4,700 trees have been planted, and announced that by the end of next year that number increased to as many as 6,000, which is a fifth of the total number of trees in the City of Osijek.

In addition to defending the title of Eco City, the City of Osijek was in two other finals for the Best City - for the title of Smart City, and the most successful city in the use of EU funds.



(Sakuntala Park in the center of Osijek, photo source: SiB.hr)

In 2024, Unemployment is also a record low in the history of Osijek. Consequently, the result is a record-breaking city budget, recently voted, of almost 200 million euros. As a result, new tram lines, new roads, and new walkways are being built, and there is room for further development.

The most important part of the positive development trends in Osijek's later years is that the differences between the less developed east of Croatia and the more developed part of the country are slowly, but steadily decreasing.

4.2. Relevant existing strategies

Current approach/model

Although there is currently no national or local strategy to activate Town Centre Management schemes, the revitalisation of the city centre is managed through planning.

Mainly, the urban design plan prescribes the land use and construction potentials and obligations in detail for each part of the city, while some other sectoral strategies are in place to support specific questions (e.g., to manage the impacts generated within the city centre by external agents such as traffic, tourism, and the impact of restoration activities, among others).

Integration between local and national strategies

In addition to the town centre use regulation plan, a national urban regulation strategy addresses broader issues.

Existing policies in the city centre

During the preparation of the Territorial Strategy (the development strategy for the functional urban area of Osijek, 2021), all relevant stakeholders were involved in strategic decisions on urban issues. In particular, Osijek has been involved in several projects at the European level covering many of the issues presented in the Urban Agenda of the EU. This has resulted in the development of various thematic strategies, such as the Waste

Management Action Plan, the Air Quality Action Plan, the Strategic Noise Map, the Climate Change Mitigation Programme, Green Infrastructure, etc. Although these documents do not focus only on

the city centre, their thematic approach can be significant in solving several of the detected challenges.

Governance model

As previously mentioned, Osijek currently lacks a public-private Town Centre Management scheme, with revitalisation strategies primarily overseen by the city council. However, a city representative assumes a principal role in managing policies and stimulating investment

in the town centre. While overseeing a slightly larger area, this representative manages and promotes policies to foster growth and investment in the city centre.

Decision-making tools

Although the city council lacks a dedicated system of indicators specifically tailored for the city centre, they operate a Geographic Information System (GIS) that gathers fundamental data encompassing the entire city. This system primarily focuses on administrative boundaries, infrastructure, and related aspects across the city.

However, a specialised team within the council diligently collects data on energy consumption within public buildings, allowing for informed decisions and targeted strategies to enhance energy efficiency and sustainability.

4.3. Local challenge

Making the city Centre of Osijek a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable urban environment that fosters community engagement. Key initiatives include enhancing public spaces with green areas and pedestrian-friendly pathways and preserving the city's cultural heritage while introducing new cultural and touristic offer.

Focus: IAP will focus in making the city centre more appealing for citizens and tourists by making it's public space more people-centered and sustainably green. Also, the focus is on improving the mobility as well as involving residents in the design and activation of public spaces to ensure they meet community needs and foster a sense of ownership.

1. Lack of commerce and other offer due to urban sprawl and lack of accessibility to the city center

When business owners are asked, why arent there more stores and shops on the main city square, the answers include:

- Buyers prefer to shop in the shopping malls because its more accessible by car and there are many shops in one place
- No parking spaces in the vicinity of commercial spaces
- Less business when its raining or when it's too hot outside
- Vacant spaces that have ownership problems and can't be rented to business owners
- Expensive rent

This can be described as the vicious cycle, when there's no offer, there's no motivation for citizens to walk around the main city square, but also when there's no people, there's also no motivation for more commercial offer.

2. Non-resilience to climate change

The public space around the city center offers many beautiful parks, but the main square has no green patches and other than water fountain, it offers no relief from the hot summer climate.

In the same way, citizens are not motivated to walk around the city square when it's raining or snowing, because there are not much facilities that offer shelter.

In the Greening strategy 2030, there are plans to plant trees in the raised beds on the main city square, which should provide much needed shade during the summer months.

3. Population loss and lack of motivation to stay around the city center

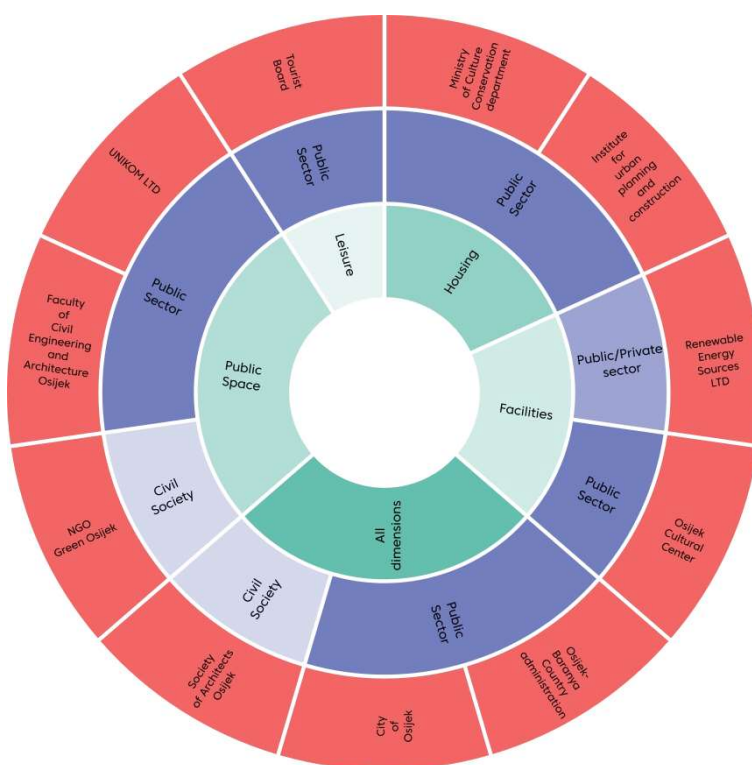
Since Osijek faced a big population loss in the last decade, it also become evident in the streets, parks and squares. It was often said that the city is big enough to receive an influx of 50.000 people and it still wouldn't be too crowded. Even though many of the emigrants came back, and recently there are many foreign workers residing in Osijek, there are still many vacant houses around the city center. Also there are limited options for taying in the city center since there are not many urban equipment pieces such as benches.

In the recent years, with the economic growth, came more opportunities for touristic activities and attraction of visitors from other parts of the country and the region. Still, osijek needs to find a way to make them stay a little bit lnger around the city center and explore its corners.

By doing more cultural and touristic events in the city center, we can create a balance and create more offer for citizens and tourists that will opt to stay in the city center for a while longer.

4.4. Problem identification with and by local stakeholders

4.4.1. Cities@Heart ULG



The ULG builds on the highly motivated group of stakeholders from various field of work. The group is composed of representatives of the public administration (municipal and county), professionals in the realm of urban planning and architecture (the Institute of Spatial Planning and the Society of Architects), academia (university), and several organisations and institutes focusing on culture (such as the Conservation Department of the Ministry of Culture and the Osijek Cultural Centre) and tourism, among others.

All the meetings are open to new members, even though the existing members are constant at attending

the meetings.

The ULG

There have been altogether 6 plenary ULG meetings, all of which have taken place in the premises of Osijek Cultural Center. Four meetings have taken place in 2024, with plans to organize at least one more by the end of the year. ULG meetings are held in-person and besides presentations by

the ULG coordinator and project coordinator, there is always an open discussion moderated by the ULG coordinator.

Osijek ULG members are highly motivated and keen on contributing to the making of the IAP. Most of the data collected for the IAP comes from institutions, companies and organizations of the ULG members.



(ULG meeting in November 2024.)

ULG Members:

<i>Krunoslav</i>	<i>Kolombo</i>	<i>Renewable Resources Organization</i>	<i>Head of department for green and renewable energy use</i>
<i>Darija</i>	<i>Walter</i>	<i>NGO "Plantaza"</i>	<i>President of the NGO for promotion of green spaces in the urban area</i>
<i>Kristina</i>	<i>Banjac</i>	<i>The city of Osijek</i>	<i>Officer at the Department of Construction and Housing</i>
<i>Ivana</i>	<i>Milicevic</i>	<i>The City of Osijek</i>	<i>Officer at the Department of Construction and Housing</i>
<i>Ana Marija</i>	<i>Nedic</i>	<i>The City of Osijek</i>	<i>Officer at the Department of EU projects</i>
<i>Fran Ivan</i>	<i>Skoric</i>	<i>The City of Osijek</i>	<i>Officer at the Department of EU projects</i>
<i>Valerija</i>	<i>Vukovic Kondza</i>	<i>Agency for renewal of Fortress Tvrda</i>	<i>Officer at the public agency</i>
<i>Snjezana</i>	<i>Klaric Culjak</i>	<i>Ministry of Culture</i>	<i>Conservatory Department</i>
<i>Natasa</i>	<i>Bosnjak</i>	<i>The City of Osijek</i>	<i>Head of Department for Construction</i>
<i>Livio</i>	<i>Medurecan</i>	<i>Osijek-Baranya County</i>	<i>Head of Department for Urban Planning</i>
<i>Silvija</i>	<i>Mlinarevic</i>	<i>The City of Osijek</i>	<i>Department of Construction</i>
<i>Dinko</i>	<i>Pesic</i>	<i>NGO Green Osijek</i>	<i>Project coordinator for NGO Green Osijek</i>

<i>Ana</i>	<i>Nemet Durdevic</i>	<i>The city of Osijek</i>	<i>Head of the subsection for environmental protection and sustainable waste management</i>
<i>Oliver</i>	<i>Grigic</i>	<i>Architect's Association</i>	<i>Architect</i>
<i>Zlatica</i>	<i>Skaric</i>	<i>Institute for spatial planning</i>	<i>Head of Department</i>
<i>Mira</i>	<i>Mutter</i>	<i>State Institute for Statistics</i>	<i>Public officer</i>
<i>Juraj</i>	<i>Kopic</i>	<i>BP Consulting</i>	<i>Architect</i>
<i>Mirela</i>	<i>Ravas</i>	<i>Ministry of Culture</i>	<i>Conservatory Department</i>
<i>Behar</i>	<i>Recica</i>	<i>GPP, Public transport company</i>	<i>Department for EU projects</i>
<i>Vlasta</i>	<i>Budisa</i>	<i>Ministry of Culture</i>	<i>Conservatory Department</i>
<i>Gordan</i>	<i>Sestic</i>	<i>Creative Hospitality</i>	<i>Owner of cafes and restaurants in the city center</i>

Project coordinator and financial officer: Srećko Kukić, The City of Osijek

ULG coordinator: Helena Neff, Osijek Cultural Center



(ULG meeting in April 2024.)

4.4.2. ULG Methodology

ULG meetings are held regularly and all the stakeholders are invited on every meeting with presented agenda.

On every invitation, we point out that the meetings are open for new participants that can contribute to the topics.

After the short presentations of the good practices from the partners' cities, as well as local project activities and plans, ULG coordinator moderates an open discussion with all the ULG members.

Usually, the Osijek ULG members are very active and ready to contribute with their knowledge and resources. On every meeting, we are presented with various data from their organizations and companies, as well as ideas for future steps and actions.

Since we have many members of the ULG, there is a big input of ideas and knowledge into creation of the IAP.



(Photo of the ULG meeting)

Osijek ULG uses following methodology:

1. URBACT Tools and methods

All the available URBACT tools, Road map, Baseline study and all the documents provided by the URBACT Programme and Lead Partners/Lead Expert

2. OPEN DISCUSSION TABLE

All the participants have equal opportunities to express opinions and ideas

3. MARK MY IDEA

All the statements are carefully written down by the ULG coordinator and sintetized into a few main categories that are easy to understand and easy to implement into the further work.

4.4.3. Co-identification of local priorities

All of the local priorities in the action plan were identified during the local ULG meetings. Not only as experts, but also as regular citizens, our ULG members contribute to the local actions by expressing ideas and solutions.

Stake-holders are also well-aware of local strategies and frameworks, as well as possible solutions to the problems that have been identified at the meetings (such as accessibility problems for the meain square)

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
City center by the river (river cruises and tourists)	Lack of accessibility by vehicles
Big, open public space	Lack of data

Rich cultural heritage	Ownership problems
Opportunities	Threats
Attractive parks around the city center that can be opened to the public	Climate change and high summer temperatures
Place for public and touristic events	Lack of funding
Creating new green oasis	Population loss

4.4.4. Co-created a vision for Cities@Heart

Co- created vision of Osijek's ULG is to create a:

“Resilient Oasis that attracts citizens and visitors of all generations”

4.4.5. Main integration challenges

Current approach/model

Although there is currently no national or local strategy to activate Town Centre Management schemes, the revitalisation of the city centre is managed through planning.

Mainly, the urban design plan prescribes the land use and construction potentials and obligations in detail for each part of the city, while some other sectoral strategies are in place to support specific questions (e.g., to manage the impacts generated within the city centre by external agents such as traffic, tourism, and the impact of restoration activities, among others).

Integration between local and national strategies

In addition to the town centre use regulation plan, a national urban regulation strategy addresses broader issues

Governance model

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larger area, this representative manages and promotes policies to foster growth and investment in the city centre

Decision-making tools

Although the city council lacks a dedicated system of indicators specifically tailored for the city centre, they operate a Geographic Information System (GIS) that gathers fundamental data encompassing the entire city. This system primarily focuses on administrative boundaries, infrastructure, and related aspects across the city.

However, a specialised team within the council diligently collects data on energy consumption within public buildings, allowing for informed decisions and targeted strategies to enhance energy efficiency and sustainability

Existing policies in the city center

During the preparation of the Territorial Strategy (the development strategy for the functional urban area of Osijek, 2017), all relevant stakeholders were involved in strategic decisions on urban issues. In particular, Osijek has been involved in several projects at the European level covering many of the issues presented in the Urban Agenda of the EU. This has resulted in the development of various thematic strategies, such as the Waste Management Action Plan, the Air Quality Action Plan, the Strategic Noise Map, the Climate Change Mitigation Programme, Green Infrastructure, etc. Although these documents do not focus only on the city centre, their thematic approach can be significant in solving several of the detected challenges

4.5. Potential testing action

The action to be tested is an intervention that will aim to improve accessibility to Županijska street, which is directly connected to the main city square. At the current state, This small part of Županijska street, that is located right in front of the Croatian National Theater and the County Hall, is swamped with parked vehicles that often block the traffic and decrease safety for cyclists and pedestrians trying to reach the main square or surrounding areas. As a pilot action, Osijek

plans to temporarily pedestrianize the most crowded part of Županijska street, making it accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport (trams).

This will also leave room for the greening of the space in the future, because without parked cars, there will be room for planting the trees and more urban equipment.

As part of the Cities@Heart initiative, the focus of the city of Osijek is to make a series of actions aimed at improving the accessibility to the city center, improving and renewing urban environment. Within These actions, we will collect data, explore the possibilities of improvement, and explore solutions that can be used in future development plans. The following actions will be tested by

1. Public Officers Survey (The city of Osijek and its companies):

To assess local authorities' perceptions and opinions about the urban environment, a survey will be distributed to municipal employees (and the employees of the companies and institutions founded by the local authorities). The survey will focus on getting data on the actions that are planned, as well as the suggestions for improvement and innovative solutions. The results will provide valuable data on local challenges and help identify areas for improvement.

2. Public Survey for Citizens and Users of the Public Space

As part of the action, Osijek plans to survey the citizens that use the public space in order to get their opinion.

3.. Public Engagement and Citizen Participation

The pilot actions will also include an ongoing effort to engage citizens in the decision-making process through workshops and feedback sessions. At the start of the action, there will be an informational meeting open to the public, as well as the public event at the end of the action.

5. Overall logic and integrated approach

Greenery speaks of renewal

Street furniture encourages rest and social exchange.

Color and texture echo the cultural fabric of the city.

A city does not communicate through words—it speaks through its spaces. Urban form, the design of public areas, material choices, and spatial organization all become a powerful, symbolic language. Among these, public spaces serve as the most expressive medium through which a city conveys its values, identity, and priorities.

Public surfaces, squares, and streets are more than functional transit zones—they are symbols of civic intention. In their layout and details, these places can communicate openness, creativity, dignity, and shared belonging.

In the context of Osijek’s Integrated Action Plan, this understanding is embraced to:

- Promote democracy and inclusion by encouraging participatory design processes that invite citizens to shape their environment.
- Highlight heritage and identity through spatial interventions that reflect local narratives and cultural memory.
- Support sustainability and equity via green spaces, universal access, and climate-responsive design.
- Foster belonging and cohesion by designing spaces that are safe, beautiful, and inclusive for all generations and social groups.

Through intentional and symbolic design, public spaces become the non-verbal manifesto of the city—articulating Osijek’s aspirations for openness, trust, and meaningful urban life. The city center, thus, becomes both a canvas and a voice, expressing a shared urban identity in line with New European Bauhaus principles.

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) of the City of Osijek represents a strategic vision aimed at fundamentally enhancing the liveability, resilience, and inclusivity of the city centre. The central goal of this plan is to create a well-balanced urban core that is attractive to both residents and visitors by transforming public spaces into people-centred, environmentally sustainable, and functionally efficient areas.

The logic of the IAP rests on the belief that cities thrive when their infrastructure, mobility systems, and public realms are designed with citizens at the heart of development. Osijek’s plan is driven by the values of inclusivity, innovation, local empowerment, and environmental stewardship.

Aligned with the ambitions of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, the IAP integrates the NEB's core values:

- **Sustainability:** embedding green solutions and climate resilience into urban development.
- **Aesthetics:** enhancing the beauty and design quality of public spaces to promote civic pride and cultural identity.
- **Inclusion:** ensuring accessibility, participation, and equity in the design and use of the urban environment.

Additionally, the IAP reflects the NEB's broader ambition to bridge the worlds of art, culture, social inclusion, science, and technology. Osijek's transformation aligns with NEB's vision of creating more beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive places, embracing local identity while addressing pressing urban challenges through creativity and innovation. The principles of co-design, experimentation, and knowledge sharing form the backbone of Osijek's participatory approach.

The plan is organized around three strategic pillars that address the root causes of urban stagnation and provide a framework for regeneration:

Urban Decay and Infrastructure Deterioration – Reversing physical decline and modernizing essential public infrastructure.

- **Economic Constraints** – Stimulating local economic activity, supporting entrepreneurship, and strengthening the financial foundation of the city.
- **Demographic Trends and Migration** – Responding to population decline and youth outmigration by creating a more attractive, inclusive, and opportunity-rich environment.

These pillars are operationalized through a set of interlinked actions that reflect the NEB values and directly correspond to the specific measures from Osijek's IAP action table:

- **Action 1: Micro-mobility** increase (shared eBikes and e-scooters) – aligns with NEB's Sustainability and Inclusion, reducing car dependency and encouraging healthier lifestyles.
- **Action 2: Collecting mobility data** – promotes data-informed planning for equitable urban mobility (Innovation, Inclusion).
- **Action 3: Pedestrianization of northern Županijska Street** – a bold public realm transformation that embodies Aesthetics and Sustainability, enabling greening and safer pedestrian circulation.
- **Action 4: Promote wider land-use mix** – addresses urban sprawl and promotes local living through the "15-minute city" concept (Sustainability, Inclusion).
- **Action 5: Promotion of the "15-minute city" model** – integrates proximity and accessibility, reducing emissions and boosting local economic vitality (Sustainability, Inclusion, Aesthetics).

Each of these actions includes specific output targets, timelines, and defined lead stakeholders from municipal departments and partners, ensuring traceable and accountable implementation. Together, they contribute to a cohesive IAP framework that connects concrete interventions to NEB ideals.

Through these strategic and actionable steps, the IAP not only targets technical improvements in mobility and public space, but it also commits to delivering beauty, equity, and sustainable prosperity in the spirit of the New European Bauhaus. This multifaceted approach ensures that Osijek's development is human-centered, climate-resilient, culturally rich, and socially inclusive.

To bring the IAP's vision to life, Osijek will undertake a series of interconnected initiatives grounded in participatory governance and long-term sustainability.

- Strategic Measures
- Mobility and Accessibility
- Expand shared eMobility (eScooters, eBikes) to improve urban connectivity.
- Collect and utilize mobility data to inform traffic planning.

Pedestrianize sections of key central streets (e.g., Županijska Street) to increase walkability and green usability.

- Green and Public Space Revitalization
- Introduce green micro-interventions (tree planting, shaded benches) to improve microclimates.

Enhance multifunctionality of squares like Ante Starčević through temporary events and permanent urban furniture.

- Cultural and Commercial Activation
- Incentivize pop-up events, outdoor exhibitions, and performance spaces.
- Partner with cultural institutions and local creatives to animate underused public zones.

Urban Education and Awareness

- Conduct public workshops on inclusive design and NEB values.
- Include educational components in greening and construction campaigns to raise awareness of climate and cultural goals.
- Stakeholder Integration

These actions are co-produced with the URBACT Local Group (ULG), composed of local government representatives, architects, cultural and environmental NGOs, and public institutions. The ULG provides strategic feedback, shares local knowledge, and ensures that all measures reflect the lived needs of Osijek's diverse residents.

Outcomes and NEB Alignment

Each initiative in the IAP contributes directly to NEB ambitions:

- Greener mobility systems and revitalized infrastructure address Sustainability.
- Artistic and cultural interventions improve the city's Aesthetic quality.
- Co-designed spaces and participatory planning enhance Inclusion.

In order to pursue that goal, it is necessary to:

1. Make a people-centered city center

The city center needs to be more accessible for citizens and tourists. Even though Osijek has one of the most developed bicycle path networks and most of the strict center is a pedestrian zone with access to public transport, many citizens still think that the city center is empty because there is limited accessibility by car. One of the biggest needs that is communicated by the public is the lack of the public garage and adequate parking spaces near the city center. One step closer to the more accessible city center is already made by the micro-mobility options like eScooter and eBike services.

2. Upgrade the quality and resilience of public and green spaces in the city center

Even though Osijek is one of the greenest cities in Croatia, the main Ante Starčević square is quite unresilient when it comes to climate change. With limited options for natural shade, it is often considered “too hot to be around”. The summer temperatures in Osijek can reach up to 42° Celsius, while the average summer day temperature is around 30° Celsius. (Source: DHMZ.hr)

This accentuates the need to be creative with urban equipment, flower beds and trees that can be put on the Ante Starčević square that currently has no green patches other than few trees in the ornamental containers.

3. Attract both inhabitants and tourists to the city center by increasing the cultural and touristic offer

Since the renovation of the area of the old fortress Tvrđa and the opening of the newest city square, Vatroslav Lisinski square in Tvrđa, many of the cultural events and touristic offers “moved” there. Although it’s positive that the old part of the city attracts more and more people and tourists, but it often leaves the modern downtown and the main city square, quite empty. With more cultural programs strategically located on the main square, we can create a better atmosphere and livelier city center.

Together, these measures create a cohesive framework where Osijek is not just responding to challenges, but actively shaping a resilient, inclusive, and future-oriented urban identity rooted in European values.

5. Action planning detail

A. MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY							
Action Number	Action description	Output target(s)	Action Lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Where can we get inspiration from ? Local Level, Transnational Meetings, Testing Actions, Expertise
1	Micro-mobility increase: shared eBikes and scooters	Increased use micro-mobility of citizens and tourists; reduction of emission gases; Increased use of public and shared transportation	Department of the City of Osijek	GPP d.o.o. (public transportation company)	10.000-15.000 €	2025-2029	local level and testing actions
2	collecting mobility data to improve the micro-mobility services	Improving micro-mobility options for citizens; collecting data about citizens' mobility habits; creating user-friendly options	Department of the City of Osijek	GPP d.o.o. (public transportation company); BOLT (eScooter company)	5.000-10.000 €	2025-2030	local level /ULG meetings
3	Pedestrianization of the north part of Županijska Street	Improving accessibility to the city square; less motor vehicles in the strict city center; bigger pedestrian area in the city center	Department of the City of Osijek	Osijek-Baranya County; GPP d.o.o.,	2.300.000 €	2026-...	Local level, testing actions and transnational meetings
B. Quality and resilience of public and green spaces							
Action Number	Action description	Output target(s)	Action Lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Where can we get inspiration from ? Local Level, Transnational Meetings, Testing Actions, Expertise
1	Promote a wider mix of uses for land and buildings in city center	Number of educated stakeholders; number of organized workshops on the topic	Department for EU projects	Osijek Architects Association; Osijek Cultural Center; Osijek-Baranya County	5.000,00 €	2025-2026	transnational meetings and local level
2	Promotion of the "15-minute cities" concept	Number of educated citizens; number of organized workshops	Department for EU projects	Osijek Cultural Center; GPP; Osijek-Baranya County	5.000 €	2025-2026	local level
3	Upgrading of the urban equipment	Number of procured urban equipment (benches, trash bins, public lights, flower beds...)	Departments of the City of Osijek	UNIKOM, Osijek-Baranya county, Zeleni Osijek	20000-25000 €	2025-2029	transnational meetings, expertise
4	Opening of 2 new parks for public	Number of parks opened to the public; number of square meters greened; number of urban equipment refurbished	Departments of the City of Osijek	UNIKOM, Osijek-Baranya county	2.500.000,00 €	2025-2030	local level and expertise
C. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM							
Action Number	Action description	Output target(s)	Action Lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Where can we get inspiration from ? Local Level, Transnational Meetings, Testing Actions, Expertise
1	Creating more cultural offer in the city center	Number of cultural events in the city center; number of citizens that visit	Departments of the City of Osijek	Osijek Cultural Center	10000-20000 €	2025-2030	local level and ulg meetings
2	Creating tourist-friendly city center	Number of touristic offers (thematic guided tours etc); number of tourists in the city center accomodation	Departments of the City of Osijek	Osijek Cultural Center; Tourist board	5.000 €	2025-2027	local level and ulg meetings

6.1. Objectives, actions and schedule

Objectives focus on improving accessibility, enhancing public space resilience, strengthening cultural vitality and embedding participatory governance.

Area A – Mobility and Accessibility

Actions include pedestrianisation, micro-mobility expansion and improved data collection to reduce car dependency and improve accessibility.

Area B – Public and Green Space

Actions focus on greening, climate adaptation, urban equipment upgrades and inclusive design of public spaces.

Area C – Culture, Tourism and Activation

Actions support cultural programming, tourism development and activation of underused public spaces.

Area D – Data-driven governance

Actions introduce monitoring tools, participatory platforms and cross-departmental coordination mechanisms.

6.1 Action Planning Tables

The action planning tables below provide a detailed, implementation-focused overview of the IAP. They clarify objectives, responsibilities, partnerships, resource implications, timelines and evidence sources.

Area A – Mobility and Accessibility

Action No.	Action description	Output target(s)	Action lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Inspiration / evidence base
A1	Micro-mobility increase (shared eBikes and e-scooters)	Increase uptake of shared micro-mobility; reduce short car trips; improve first/last	City of Osijek – mobility/transport department	GPP d.o.o.; micro-mobility operators; University partners	€10,000–15,000 (pilot/annual support; communication, infrastructure adjustments)	2025–2029	ULG inputs; local needs; testing actions; transnational examples of shared mobility

		-mile connectivity					
A2	Collect mobility data to improve services and planning (counts, surveys, digital tools)	Regular dataset established; evidence-based measures for city-centre accessibility	City of Osijek – Smart City / mobility unit	GPP d.o.o.; University; technology providers	€5,000–10,000 (tools, data collection, analysis, reporting)	2025–2030	Baseline evidence; ULG methodology; SSA survey tools; transnational exchange
A3	Pedestrianisation of the north section of Županijska Street (progressive approach)	Improve safety and walkability; reduce obstructive parking; enable future greening of the corridor	City of Osijek – Urban Planning / Traffic management	Osijek-Baranya County; GPP d.o.o.; Police; cultural institutions	To be defined (design, traffic regulation, signage, enforcement, communications)	2026–2027	Testing action logic; citizen feedback; network practices on tactical pedestrianisation

Area B – Quality and Resilience of Public and Green Spaces

Action No.	Action description	Output target(s)	Action lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Inspiration / evidence base
B1	Promote a wider mix of uses for land and buildings in the city centre	At least 3 stakeholder workshops; pipeline of mixed-use initiatives aligned with	City of Osijek – Department for EU projects / spatial planning	Architects Association; Osijek Cultural Center; County; business	€5,000 (events, facilitation, materials)	2025–2026	Transnational learning; ULG stakeholder knowledge; local planning

		proximity principles		community			frameworks
B2	Promotion of the “15-minute city” concept (education and pilot interventions)	At least 2 public workshops + 1 pilot walk audit; increased public awareness of proximity benefits	City of Osijek – Department for EU projects	Osijek Cultural Center; GPP; County; NGOs	€5,000	2025–2026	ULG priorities; URBACT tools; partner-city examples on proximity and inclusion
B3	Upgrading urban equipment (benches, bins, lighting, planters, accessible elements)	Procurement and installation improving comfort and inclusion in the city centre	City of Osijek – competent municipal departments	UNIKOM; NGOs (Green Osijek / Plantaza); County	€20,000–25,000 (indicative)	2025–2029	SSA feedback (comfort, shade, seating); NEB principles; local maintenance capacities
B4	Opening and revitalisation of two parks for public use (access, equipment, programming)	Two parks opened/renewed; increased usable green area; improved inclusivity and safety	City of Osijek – Green services / Urban development	UNIKOM; County; cultural and sport organisations	To be defined (design and works; potential ERDF/LIFE co-financing)	2025–2030	Green strategies; ULG proposals; climate adaptation priorities; network good practices

Area re C – Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Urban Activation

Action No.	Action description	Output target(s)	Action lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Inspiration / evidence base
C1	Creating more cultural	Increase annual events in	City of Osijek – culture-	Osijek Cultural Center;	€10,000–20,000 (annual	2025–2030	Local cultural ecosystem

	offer in the city centre (programme diversification)	downtown and main square; higher footfall and dwell time	related departments	cultural institutions; creative sector	programme support, production, logistics)		; ULG inputs; transnational inspiration on activation and placemaking
C2	Creating a tourist-friendly city centre (thematic routes, information, services)	At least 2 thematic routes; improved visitor information; increased overnight stays in/near centre	City of Osijek – tourism/culture departments	Tourist Board; Osijek Cultural Center; private sector	€5,000 (development, communication, training)	2025–2027	Heritage assets; NEB narrative; partner-city examples; local tourism trends

Area ream D – Data-driven Governance and Participation

Action No.	Action description	Output target(s)	Action lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Inspiration / evidence base
D1	Permanent citizen engagement framework for the city centre (regular forums + digital feedback)	Minimum 2 city-centre forums/year; digital feedback channel established; youth engagement ensured	City of Osijek – participation/communications focal point	ULG members; youth organisations; universities; NGOs	€3,000–8,000 (facilitation, tools, communications)	2025–2030	SSA experience (Kahoot); URBACT participation tools; ULG methodology

D2	Monitoring dashboard and annual city-centre report (IAP indicators)	Annual report produced; indicator baseline and trend tracking for key actions	City of Osijek – Smart City / strategic planning	Municipal departments; GPP; statistical partners	€5,000–12,000 (data integration, reporting, visualisation)	2025–2030	Baseline study; data-driven governance priorities; transnational learning
D3	Capacity building for integrated delivery (cross-department routines)	Defined governance routines; clear responsibilities; improved implementation coordination	City of Osijek – City management	All relevant departments; County; public companies	Mostly staff time; minor facilitation (€1,000–3,000)	2025–2027	URBACT methodology; ULG collaboration model; implementation readiness sessions

Timeline (Gantt Chart)

Expected Results and Indicators for Each Action

Area A – Mobility and Accessibility

A1. Micro-mobility increase (shared eBikes and e-scooters)

Expand shared eBike/eScooter services to reduce short car trips and improve first/last-mile connectivity to the city centre. Delivery includes coordination with operators and GPP, plus basic supporting measures (communication, small infrastructure adjustments). Success is measured through usage growth and reduced reliance on cars for short trips.

A2. Collect mobility data (counts, surveys, digital tools)

Establish a regular mobility dataset to support evidence-based decision-making for accessibility and traffic management in the city centre. Activities include counts, user surveys, and data analysis with partners (GPP, university/tech). Outputs are periodic mobility reports and better-targeted mobility interventions.

A3. Pedestrianisation of north Županijska Street (progressive approach)

Implement a phased pedestrianisation approach to improve walkability and safety, reduce obstructive/illegal parking, and prepare the corridor for future greening. Requires traffic regulation, signage, enforcement and public communication. Success is measured through reduced traffic conflicts and increased pedestrian movement.

Area B – Quality and Resilience of Public and Green Spaces

B1. Promote a wider mix of uses (land/buildings in city centre)

Run stakeholder workshops and guidance to support mixed-use development and stronger functional diversity in the city centre (services, culture, commerce, living). This builds a pipeline of initiatives aligned with proximity and vitality goals. Success is measured through workshop delivery and follow-up initiatives generated.

B2. Promote the “15-minute city” concept (education + pilot)

Deliver public education and a pilot “walk audit” to embed proximity thinking into planning and public understanding. The aim is to make everyday services reachable by walking/cycling/public transport. Success is measured through number of workshops, pilot completion, and increased awareness.

B3. Upgrade urban equipment (comfort, accessibility, inclusion)

Procure and install benches, bins, lighting, planters and accessible elements to improve comfort and usability of public space—responding directly to citizen/youth feedback (shade, seating, micro-comfort). Success is measured through installed units and improved user satisfaction.

B4. Open and revitalise two parks for public use

Improve access, safety, equipment and programming in two parks to increase usable green space and support climate resilience and inclusion. Delivery may combine municipal works with ERDF/LIFE co-financing. Success is measured through parks opened/renewed, upgraded m², and increased use.

Area C – Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Urban Activation

C1. Increase cultural offer in the city centre

Strengthen and diversify cultural programming in the downtown and main square to raise footfall and dwell time, and rebalance activity between different city-centre nodes. Delivery is through

annual event programming with cultural partners. Success is measured through event numbers and audience/footfall indicators.

C2. Create a tourist-friendly city centre (routes + information)

Develop thematic routes, visitor information and service improvements that encourage longer stays and better exploration of the centre. Implemented with the Tourist Board and cultural partners. Success is measured through routes created, visitor uptake, and tourism performance indicators.

Area D – Data-driven Governance and Participation

D1. Permanent citizen engagement framework (forums + digital feedback)

Institutionalise regular public forums and a digital feedback channel to ensure ongoing co-creation—building on the SSA participation model (including youth-friendly tools). Success is measured through number of forums, participation rates, and actionable inputs collected.

D2. Monitoring dashboard + annual city-centre report

Create a dashboard/reporting system to track IAP indicators annually (mobility, public space improvements, participation, events). The output is an annual City Centre IAP progress report supporting adaptive management. Success is measured through publication regularity and indicator completeness.

D3. Capacity building for integrated delivery (cross-department routines)

Set up cross-department working routines, clear responsibilities and coordination practices to improve implementation speed and coherence (integrated delivery). Mostly staff-time based, supported by minor facilitation. Success is measured through established governance routines and improved coordination outcomes.

6.2. Small Scale Actions (SSA)



As part of the URBACT IV Cities&Heart project, the City of Osijek implemented a Small Scale Action aimed at increasing public awareness of ongoing and completed urban development projects while actively engaging citizens in discussions on the future of public spaces. The SSA was designed as an open, inclusive, and participatory event, creating a direct interface between the City, project stakeholders, and the wider public.

During the Cities&Heart event, a moderated panel discussion was held with the audience, focusing on urban projects currently being implemented or recently completed in the City of Osijek. The discussion enabled a two-way exchange of information: the City presented strategic investments and spatial interventions, while citizens contributed comments, questions, and proposals based on their everyday experience of the city centre. This open dialogue reinforced transparency and strengthened trust between local authorities and the community.

A particularly innovative and impactful component of the SSA was the youth-led participatory segment. Students from the Faculty of Economics facilitated an interactive discussion using the Kahoot digital tool, which introduced an innovative approach to shared decision-making and the co-creation of the city centre's public space. By enabling participants to provide real-time feedback, rank priorities, and express preferences in a collective and transparent manner, Kahoot transformed passive attendance into active participation. This digital tool lowered participation barriers, encouraged broad engagement, and ensured that diverse opinions—especially those of young people—were immediately visible and considered within the discussion.

The results of the Kahoot survey highlighted several recurring priorities. Green infrastructure and user comfort emerged as dominant themes, with strong support for additional trees, greenery, shaded seating, and smart urban furniture. Participants expressed a clear interest in multifunctional public spaces that can accommodate outdoor fitness, cultural events, workshops, concerts, and informal youth gatherings. There was also a notable emphasis on child-friendly elements, such as playgrounds, fountains, and designated event zones. Opinions varied regarding mobility, with some participants advocating for a fully pedestrianised, car-free zone, while others stressed the importance of retaining limited parking capacity. Additionally, respondents proposed community-oriented uses of space, including regular local markets, sports activities, and events that would ensure the area remains lively, inclusive, and socially cohesive.

The overarching purpose of this Small Scale Action was to introduce the public to city-led projects and strategic urban initiatives, while enabling citizens to participate meaningfully in shaping public space.

Special emphasis was placed on engaging young people, recognising them as future decision-makers and key contributors to long-term urban development. By incorporating their ideas and perspectives through an innovative digital participation tool, the SSA strengthened co-decision-making processes and contributed to the creation of higher-quality public spaces that respond to real user needs.

In line with the principles of the New European Bauhaus—sustainability, inclusiveness, and aesthetics—the SSA demonstrated how innovative participatory tools can enhance democratic urban governance and support the co-creation of more attractive, functional, and people-centred city centre spaces.

6.3. Framework for delivery

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders for the Implementation of Actions:

Municipal Authority

- **Role:** The Municipality will be the central body responsible for coordinating and overseeing the actions. It will take responsibility for managing the project, securing the necessary resources, and ensuring the successful implementation of interventions.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Coordination of all involved stakeholders.
 - Management of the budget and financing.
 - Provision of infrastructure and human resources for the implementation of actions.

Municipal Development Organization

- **Role:** The Municipal Development Organization will assist the Municipality in coordinating actions and implementing development strategies.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Providing technical support and guidance for the actions.
 - Collaborating with other bodies to ensure the sustainability of the project.
 - Managing relations with external partners and consultants.

Traffic and Urban Planning Services

- **Role:** Responsible for the development of technical interventions in public spaces and the implementation of new urban planning strategies.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Designing and implementing traffic regulations.
 - Installing and maintaining infrastructure (smart lighting systems, sensors, green spaces, etc.).

Advisory Committee/External Consultants

- **Role:** Providing technical and strategic guidance for sustainable development and the integration of smart solutions.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Strategic guidance for the use of new technologies.
 - Supporting the development and implementation of smart tools and infrastructure.

Volunteers and Citizen Participation Groups

- **Role:** Enhancing citizen participation and supporting public engagement actions and data collection.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Collecting data from neighborhoods.
 - Supporting the organization of events and public participation activities.

Private Entities (e.g., Technology Companies)

- **Role:** Providing and installing technological solutions.
- **Responsibilities:**
 - Installing smart tools such as sensors, digital signage, and lighting systems.
 - Maintaining these tools during the project.

2. Governance During and After the Implementation of the Action Plan

During the Implementation of the Action Plan

- **Governance Based on Collaboration:** During the execution of the project, governance will focus on the collaboration between various stakeholders, with particular emphasis on the Municipal Authority, the Traffic and Urban Planning Services, and external consultants. This collaboration will ensure the proper implementation of actions and the effective execution of interventions in the city.
- **Governance Committee:** A governance committee will be established, which will include representatives from the Municipality, technical consultants, and relevant services. This committee will be responsible for monitoring progress, evaluating results, and making decisions.
- **Support from the Municipal Development Organization:** The Municipal Development Organization will continuously support the coordination of actions and the management of the project, ensuring the smooth execution and effective cooperation of the involved stakeholders.

After the Completion of the Action Plan

- **Sustainability of Actions:** After the completion of the action plan, governance will continue through the municipal authorities, who will take responsibility for maintaining and ensuring the sustainability of the installed infrastructure and smart tools.
- **Maintenance and Support:** The Municipality will take on the ongoing maintenance of infrastructure (such as lighting systems, smart pedestrian crossings, and traffic monitoring systems).
- **Public Governance and Participation:** After the completion of the project, public participation will remain important, with the goal of strengthening collaboration with citizens and maintaining transparency in the management of infrastructure and resources.
- **Support from the Municipal Development Organization:** The Municipal Development Organization will continue to provide support for the management and monitoring of the project to ensure the sustainability of the actions and infrastructure.

6.4. Resourcing

Resources Required for the Actions:

a. Personnel:

- **Municipal Employees:** A team from municipal services (Urban Planning, Traffic Management, Public Safety, etc.) will be needed for the coordination and supervision of the testing actions.
- **External Consultants/Experts:** Experts in smart city issues, urban mobility, and sustainable design may be involved for technical guidance.
- **Volunteers and Citizen Participation Groups:** Volunteers can assist in data collection, organizing events or workshops, and supporting public participation activities.

b. Physical Infrastructure:

- **Offices:** Municipal offices or designated spaces for coordinating and planning the project.
- **Open Spaces/Urban Areas:** Park Square is the main location for implementing physical interventions (tree planting, smart lighting, pedestrian crossings, etc.).
- **Smart Technology Infrastructure:** Installation of sensors, GPS systems, and digital information boards will require supporting infrastructure (e.g., cable installation, creation of signs).

c. Capital and Operational Expenditures:

- **Capital Expenditures:** Initial costs for infrastructure improvements, such as smart pedestrian crossings, green spaces, solar-powered lighting, and sensor installation.
- **Operational Expenditures:** Operational costs for monitoring and maintaining the new infrastructure, staff payments for the project, and expenses for public consultations.

d. Structural Changes:

- Structural changes may include the redesign of traffic in the city center, changes in urban policies (e.g., creation of car-free zones), and the introduction of new ways for citizens to engage in local governance.

Sources of funding

The Greek URBACT Campus for Action Planning Networks (APNs) took place in Rethymno, on 05-06/11/2024. The purpose of this two-day event was to bring Greek partners of the APNs closer together and to provide them with useful tools and innovative methodological approaches, in the context of their preparation for the start of the implementation phase of the Integrated Action Plans (IAPs).

During the two-day event, we focused on the challenges we may face in terms of the implementation and financing of our IAP. We were also presented with **various sources of funding** for the implementation and completion of the IAPs.

Sources of funding

SMALL-SCALE ACTIONS FOR FUNDING

SOCIETY AND SPONSORS

1. Global Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding platforms for reaching global communities.

2. Sponsors

Sponsors/ Funding bodies whose interests and objectives align with the objectives of the ICD

3. Local communities

Intangible actions are more related to quality of life, education, youth, culture, events.

4. The city itself

Co-financing from other financial instruments that do not finance 100%

MEDIUM AND LARGE-SCALE ACTIONS FOR FUNDING

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

a) European Investment Bank

EIB loans and advisory services focus on improving public investment.

b) Development Banks

Development Banks' support addresses two major barriers to investment: lack of financing and technical capacity.

c) Commercial Banks

Direct lending by commercial banks to mobilize smaller investments and support sound investments by public sector and private sector entities - Public-Private Partnerships.

EU FUNDING PROGRAMS

URBACT

The URBACT programme helps cities to develop an integrated set of actions of sustainable change. The budget finances URBACT networks, as well as all the activities linked to expertise, capitalisation and communication.

For URBACT III, one axis is dedicated to networking, expertise, capitalisation and communication activities. The other axis is dedicated to the technical assistance of the programme.

For URBACT II, two axes were dedicated to networking, expertise, capitalisation and communication activities. They had their own priorities:

Priority axis 1: cities, engines of growth and jobs

Priority axis 2: attractive and cohesive cities

A third axis was dedicated to the technical assistance of the programme.

The main beneficiaries are cities from EU 28 Member States, Norway & Switzerland. While talking about cities, URBACT actually includes cities, municipalities, towns (without limit of size), infra-municipal tiers of government, metropolitan authorities as well as organized agglomerations. Other beneficiaries include local agencies; provincial, regional and national authorities; universities and research centers. All beneficiaries shall be public or public equivalent bodies.

ERASMUS+

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme for the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2021-2027. Education, training, youth and sport are key sectors that support citizens in their personal and professional development. High-quality and inclusive education and training, as well as non-formal and informal learning, essentially equip young people and participants of all ages with the qualifications and skills needed for their effective participation in democratic society, intercultural understanding and a successful transition to the labor market. Building on the success of the

Programme during the 2014-2020 period, Erasmus+ is stepping up its efforts to increase the opportunities offered to more participants and a wider range of organisations, focusing on its qualitative impact and contributing to more cohesive, greener and better digitally prepared societies.

HORIZON EUROPE

Horizon Europe is a multiannual Programme for scientific research and innovation, the successor to the recent Horizon 2020 Programme and the previous Framework Programmes for research and technological development. It is an initiative that aims to ensure European leadership in cutting-edge research, tackle climate change, develop new technologies and innovations, achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals and boost the EU's competitiveness and growth. The Programme facilitates cooperation and enhances the impact of research and innovation in the development, support and implementation of EU policies, while addressing global challenges. It supports the creation and better dissemination of knowledge and technologies.

It creates jobs, fully engages the EU's talent pool, boosts economic growth, promotes industrial competitiveness and optimises the impact of investments in a strengthened European Research Area. The structure of the Programme includes three pillars:

Pillar 1 - Excellent Science. This strand aims to increase the EU's global scientific competitiveness. It supports cutting-edge projects through the European Research Council, funds fellowships for experienced researchers, and doctoral training networks.

Pillar 2 - Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness. This pillar supports research related to societal challenges and technological and industrial competences, through clusters. It also includes the Joint Research Centre which supports EU and Member State policymakers with independent scientific evidence and technical support.

Pillar 3 - Innovative Europe. This part of the Programme aims to make Europe a leader in market-creating innovation through the European Innovation Council.

It also helps to develop the EU's overall innovation landscape, through the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, which promotes the integration of the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation.

CREATIVE EUROPE

The Creative Europe Programme invests in actions that enhance cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sector. The main objectives of the Programme are: 1) to safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage, 2) to strengthen the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, in particular the audiovisual sector.

The Creative Europe Programme is divided into 3 strands:

The Culture strand of the Creative Europe Programme supports a wide range of cultural and creative sectors, including:

- architecture
- cultural heritage
- design
- literature and publishing
- music
- performing arts.

The MEDIA strand of the Creative Europe Programme supports the European film and audiovisual industry in the development, distribution and promotion of European works, taking into account today's digital environment.

The CROSS-SECTORAL strand aims to strengthen cooperation between the different cultural and creative sectors, to help them address common challenges and find new, innovative solutions. This is achieved, for example, through cooperation on policy issues, the services provided by the Creative Europe Programme offices and the Creative Innovation Lab.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION (LIFE)

The LIFE Programme is the most important Financial Instrument for the Environment and its main objective is to finance and support the implementation of Community environmental policy and legislation. After more than 22 years of €3.4 billion and 4,170 LIFE projects, the Programme continues to finance environmental and climate action

The general objective of the LIFE Programme is to contribute to the shift towards a sustainable, circular, energy-efficient, renewable, climate-neutral and climate-resilient economy, in order to protect, restore and improve the quality of the environment, including air, water and soil, as well as to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and address ecosystem degradation, including by supporting the implementation and management of the Natura 2000 network, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

CONNECTING EUROPE FACILITY

The Connecting Europe Facility is a key EU financial instrument to promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through infrastructure investment at European level.

Programme Areas:

- Energy Infrastructure (Connecting Europe Facility): is the EU funding programme for the implementation of the Trans-European Networks for Energy policy. It aims to support investments in

the creation of new cross-border energy infrastructure in Europe or the rehabilitation and upgrading of existing ones.

- Connecting Europe for Transport Facility: supports the European transport infrastructure policy by helping to implement key projects across Europe.
- Connecting Europe Facility: Aims to support and catalyse investments in digital connectivity infrastructures of common interest

DIGITAL EUROPE PROGRAMME

The Digital Europe Programme is the first EU funding programme focused on delivering digital technology to businesses and citizens. With a planned total budget of EUR 7.5 billion (in current prices) over 7 years, it will accelerate the economic recovery and shape the digital transformation of Europe's society and economy, bringing benefits in particular to small and medium-sized enterprises. The Digital Europe Programme will be implemented through multiannual work programmes. The Digital Europe Programme will complement investments under other EU programmes, such as Horizon Europe, EU4Health, InvestEU and the Connecting Europe Facility, as well as investments under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Programme has five interrelated specific objectives:

- a) specific objective 1 – “High Performance Computing”,
- b) specific objective 2 – “Artificial Intelligence”,
- c) specific objective 3 – “Cybersecurity and trust”,
- d) specific objective 4 – “Advanced digital skills”,
- e) specific objective 5 – “Deployment and best use of digital capabilities and interoperability”

INNOVATION FUND

The Innovation Fund is one of the world's largest financing programmes for the commercial demonstration of innovative low-carbon technologies, aiming to bring industrial solutions to the market to decarbonise Europe and support its transition to climate neutrality. Among the wide range of financial instruments available at EU level, it plays a unique role due to its size and focus on the last steps in the development of innovative clean technologies.

The Innovation Fund targets:

energy-intensive industries, including environmentally safe carbon capture and use (CCU) that contributes significantly to climate change mitigation, as well as products that substitute carbon-intensive products environmentally safe CO2 capture and storage (CCS) projects innovative renewable energy technologies energy storage technologies. Its aim is to create the right financial incentives for businesses to invest in clean technology now and to enable them to play a leading role in the field of clean technology at a global level.

ESPON

The ESPON fund is an EU funded programme that bridges research with policies. We provide territorial analyses, data and maps to:

- support EU development policies –and particularly Cohesion Policy- with facts and evidence.
- help public authorities to benchmark their region or city, identify new challenges and potentials and shape successful development policies for the future.

ESPON creates evidence and knowledge. It develops studies based on the needs of European public authorities at all levels. Any local, regional or national authority as well as an EU institution can inform the ESPON about policy support needs and become an ESPON stakeholder. Its studies have a territorial focus, which means that the analyses are adjusted to the specificity and needs of the people and the places that need support.

For the ESPON 2030 Programme, the studies and events are clustered within the so-called Thematic Action Plans (TAPs) . The results of these studies are then used in different ways:

Directly feed policy debates at the EU, national, regional and local level

Make the key EU policies, such as the Cohesion Policy, more effective, and boost the implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2030

Support the priorities of EU presidencies with tailor made research

Inspire policy dialogues at early stages and trigger policy transformation

Help citizens/policymakers to understand how their place (city/regions/area) performs in comparison to other European places

Provide fresh information and analyses on the topics that are high on the European agenda

EUROPEAN ENERGY EFFICIENCY FUND (EEEF)

As energy demand in the Member States of the European Union continues to rise, mitigation of climate change by improving energy efficiency and renewable energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions remains increasingly important. The growing energy demand of private households and the transport and service sectors is a driving force of CO₂ emissions in the European Union economies that needs to be addressed. The EU countries have agreed on the 2030 climate and energy framework, including EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period between 2020 and 2030. As part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission proposed in September 2020 to raise the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction target to at least 55%. These targets aim to help the EU achieve a more competitive, resource-efficient and sustainable system and to help Europe become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 – an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions – by increasing the use of renewable energy by at least 32% and improving energy efficiency by at least 32.5%.

The European Energy Efficiency Fund (eeef) therefore aims to support the climate goals of the European Union (EU 2030 framework for climate and energy and the climate-neutral objectives of the European Green Deal) to promote a sustainable energy environment and foster climate protection by

enabling projects in European cities, regions and communities to build resilient infrastructure. The Fund's objectives are:

1) Contribute to the mitigation of climate change and transitioning to resilient, energy-efficient and green infrastructure.

The eeef contributes to enhancing energy efficiency and fostering renewable energy in the form of a targeted public-private partnership, primarily through the provision of dedicated financing via direct finance and partnering with financial institutions. The eeef facilitates sustainable investments in the public sector, where projects are often hindered or decelerated due to budget restrictions and lack of experience with this kind of investment. On the targeted impact level, the eeef invests at the city, region and community level in the EU Member States by financing technologies in energy efficiency, small-scale renewable energy and clean urban transport, with all projects to achieve annually a minimum of 30% primary energy savings or greenhouse gas savings compared to the baseline. The eeef may only invest when the project's energy or carbon savings, among other investment criteria, are fulfilled. As part of the Fund's due diligence and for the duration of each individual investment, the Fund periodically evaluates and monitors the carbon emissions and primary energy savings performance in alignment with the International Performance Monitoring and Verification Protocol (IPMVP), which requires every project to establish a baseline energy consumption and then conduct a post-project implementation assessment.

The Fund has also registered its partnership with the UN on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) partnership platform. The fund has been contributing effectively to three of the 17 SDGs: Goal 7 – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; Goal 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and Goal 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

2) Achieve environmental and economic sustainability for the Fund

The eeef pursues its environmental goals by offering funding for energy efficiency and small-scale renewable energy projects. The Fund observes the principles of sustainability and viability, combining environmental considerations and market orientation. It does so by financing economically sound projects, allowing for a sustainable and revolving use of its means.

3) Build public-private partnerships for climate financing

By achieving the first two objectives, the eeef aims to attract additional capital into climate financing. The environmentally and socially responsible way of conducting its business, the innovative public-private partnership structure and the experience of its stakeholders will be used to bring more capital into an area whose financial means are currently insufficient to strongly contribute to the mitigation of climate change.

INTERREG

Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme, co-funded by the European Union. The European Union strives to reduce disparities in the levels of development, growth and quality of life in and across Europe's regions. The INTERREG programme contributes to this objective and runs from 2021 to 2027. The programme contributes to all EU priorities and strives for better regional governance through capacity building. The priorities are:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) Smarter Europe | 4) Greener Europe |
| 2) More connected Europe | 5) More social Europe |
| 3) Europe closer to citizens | 6) Better regional governance |

COVENANT OF MAYORS

The Covenant of Mayors is the main European movement involving local and regional authorities, who voluntarily commit to increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in their territories. With their commitment, the signatories of the Covenant aim to achieve and exceed the European Union's target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 20% by 2020.

Following the adoption of the EU's climate and energy package in 2008, the European Commission developed the Covenant of Mayors to promote and support the efforts of local authorities to implement sustainable energy policies.

Thanks to its unique characteristics, as it is the only movement of its kind that mobilizes local and regional actors around the fulfillment of the objectives of the European Union, the Covenant of Mayors is presented by the European Union institutions as an excellent model of multi-level governance.

EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE

The European Urban Initiative has a total ERDF budget of €450 million.

The overall objectives of the European Urban Initiative (EUI) are to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development, and to provide a stronger link to EU policies, and to Cohesion policy and investments in urban areas. The initiative aims to offer coherent support to cities to overcome the landscape of manifold initiatives, programmes and instruments in support of cities under Cohesion policy, and, by maximising synergy and complementarity with the interregional cooperation programme URBACT IV. The EUI will also support the multi-level working of the Urban Agenda for the EU and intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters.

The EUI is structured around different levels of assistance:

- Supporting urban authorities with up to 80% direct co-financing and up to €5M ERDF, allowing EU cities to experiment as testbeds for their innovative idea and transferring it to other cities
- Strengthening capacities of cities in the design of sustainable urban development strategies, policies and practices in an integrated and participative way
- Providing a knowledge environment for cities to ensure easier access to horizontal and thematic knowledge and share the know-how on sustainable urban development.

This ground-breaking initiative serves as a key resource for cities of all sizes, supporting their efforts to increase capacity and knowledge, foster innovation and develop adaptable and scalable solutions to address EU-relevant urban challenges. The programme is well suited to a wide range of economic sectors, in particular social enterprises proposing innovative urban solutions.

SMART CITIES MARKETPLACE

The Smart City Infrastructure Fund is an investment vehicle which provides long-term private institutional capital for the development of sustainable urban ecosystems. The Fund helps cities deal with:

- Continued urbanization
- Climate change and resource scarcity
- Development of sustainable communities
- Technological advancement and digitalization

EEA and NORWAY Grants

The EEA and Norway Grants represent the contribution of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to reducing social and economic disparities in the European Economic Area (EEA) and to strengthening bilateral relations with 15 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe. The operation of the two complementary Funding Mechanisms is based on and contributes to strengthening fundamental European values, such as democracy, tolerance and the rule of law.

One of the two main objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants is to increase cooperation and relations between the beneficiary countries and the donor countries. Partnerships between institutions from the beneficiary countries and their counterparts in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are a fundamental part of the grants and offer a unique opportunity to address common European challenges. Networking and cooperation between individuals and institutions at administrative and political level and in the public and private sectors, academia and civil society is a prerequisite for strengthening bilateral relations and is widely encouraged.

6.5. Risk analysis

Description of type of risk (e.g. operational, financial, legal, staffing, technical, behavioural)

Categorisation into low, medium or high risk

Outline of steps which could be taken to mitigate risk

1. Behavioral Risk

Risk Description:

Behavioral risks arise from resistance to change by key stakeholders, including public transport users (especially older passengers), shopkeepers, and businesses around the Parkou Square. The proposal to relocate the public transport starting points and terminals outside the city center may lead to dissatisfaction due to increased inconvenience for both passengers and businesses.

Public Transport Users: Elderly passengers, in particular, might oppose the relocation due to the loss of proximity to services and the Square's central location.

Businesses/Shopkeepers: Local businesses may experience a decline in foot traffic, leading to reduced profits if the public transport system moves away from the Square.

Risk Categorization:

Public Transport Users: Medium to High Risk

Businesses/Shopkeepers: Medium Risk

Steps to Mitigate:

Engage stakeholders early: Conduct surveys and public consultations with local residents, especially elderly citizens and business owners, to gather input and concerns.

Create alternative solutions: Explore ways to provide convenient alternatives, such as shuttle buses from the new public transport terminals to the Square.

Provide incentives for businesses: Consider providing support or incentives to local businesses to help them adjust to changes in foot traffic.

Offer education and outreach: Organize information campaigns to explain the benefits of the changes to both citizens and businesses.

2. Financial Risk

Risk Description:

The financial risks are mainly tied to the high costs involved in implementing the IAP, particularly the relocation of public transport infrastructure. There are also costs associated with planting trees, maintaining green spaces, installing digital dashboards, setting up the underground rainwater storage system, and developing the digital platform.

Risk Categorization:

High Risk (due to the scale and investment required)

Steps to Mitigate:

Secure funding through multiple sources: Apply for funding from local, regional, and European sources such as the Green Fund, Recovery Fund, and ERASMUS for digital/educational aspects.

Cost-sharing agreements: Explore partnerships with private stakeholders, such as local businesses, who may benefit from the changes (e.g., in terms of increased tourism or business traffic).

Phased implementation: Break down the project into smaller, manageable phases to spread costs over time and reduce the immediate financial burden.

Develop a detailed budget and financial plan: Create a detailed cost estimate to ensure that all financial needs are covered, including unexpected costs.

Explore alternative funding models: Investigate crowdfunding, public-private partnerships, or sponsorships for certain aspects of the project.

3. Technical Risk

Risk Description:

The technical risks concern the implementation of digital features, such as digital dashboards, sensors, and the development of the digital platform for local entrepreneurs. These technologies must be well-integrated, functional, and user-friendly to ensure success.

Risk Categorization:

Medium Risk

Steps to Mitigate:

Ensure technical feasibility: Work closely with technical experts and university partners to assess the feasibility of the technological components.

Pilot testing: Implement pilot phases for the digital systems (e.g., dashboards, sensors) to identify issues early and adjust before full-scale implementation.

Collaboration with trusted tech partners: Engage with reputable technology providers who have experience in smart city solutions.

Regular updates and maintenance: Set up a system for ongoing monitoring and maintenance to ensure the long-term functionality of digital components.

4. Legal Risk

Risk Description:

Legal risks may arise from potential conflicts related to land acquisition, regulatory approvals for changes in transportation, or data protection issues associated with the digital platform and sensors. Specifically, a significant issue is the need for changes to the city's urban planning, which is not easily adaptable due to strict regulations and bureaucratic processes related to land use, zoning, and infrastructure. The proposed changes to the urban map may face resistance or delays in approval, given the stable rules governing urban development.

Risk Categorization:

High Risk

Steps to Mitigate Risk:

Comprehensive urban planning study: Before proceeding with any changes, it is crucial to conduct a thorough study on how the proposed changes will impact the existing urban planning and to understand the potential bureaucratic and legal procedures required for the approval of these changes.

Collaboration with urban planners and legal experts: Collaborate with specialized professionals in urban planning and legal fields to ensure that proposals are compatible with existing planning and to move forward with modifications only if absolutely necessary.

Public consultation and awareness: Organize public consultations with citizens and relevant authorities to explain the needs and benefits of changes and to gain their support, minimizing the chances of resistance.

Exploring alternative solutions: In case urban planning changes face difficulties, exploring alternative solutions that achieve similar outcomes without the need for significant modifications to the existing planning.

5. Staffing Risk

Risk Description:

Staffing risks arise from the challenges in coordinating and managing various stakeholders, including municipal staff, local university teams, and contractors. The success of the IAP depends on effective project management and communication among all involved parties.

Risk Categorization:

Medium Risk

Steps to Mitigate:

Clear roles and responsibilities: Define roles and responsibilities for all parties involved in the implementation of the IAP.

Training and capacity building: Provide adequate training for municipal staff and local partners to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to support the project.

Project management: Appoint experienced project managers to oversee the coordination of activities and ensure timely execution.

6. Operational Risk

Risk Description:

Operational risks concern the daily functioning of the project once it is implemented, such as the maintenance of the newly planted trees, green spaces, infrastructure, and the smooth operation of the digital systems.

Risk Categorization:

Low to Medium Risk

Steps to Mitigate:

Long-term maintenance plan: Develop a long-term maintenance plan for the green spaces, benches, and digital infrastructure, ensuring that there are sufficient resources and personnel dedicated to ongoing care and updates.

Stakeholder involvement in operations: Encourage local businesses and residents to take part in monitoring and maintaining the square, such as through volunteer programs or partnerships with local groups.

01. Example of an action

OSIJEK,
CROATIA

A. MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Action Number	Action description	Output target(s)	Action Lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Where can we get inspiration from ? <i>Local Level, Transnational Meetings, Testing Actions, Expertise</i>
1	Micro-mobility increase: shared eBikes and scooters	Increased use micro-mobility of citizens and tourists; reduction of emission gases; Increased use of public and shared transportation	Department of the City of Osijek	GPP d.o.o. (public transportation company)	10.000-15.000 €	2025-2029	local level and testing actions
2	collecting mobility data to improve the micro-mobility services	Improving micro-mobility options for citizens; collecting data about citizens' mobility habits; creating user-friendly options	Department of the City of Osijek	GPP d.o.o. (public transportation company); BOLT (eScooter company)	5.000-10.000€	2025-2030	local level /ULG meetings

3	Pedestrianization of the north part of Županijska Street	Improving accessibility to the city square; less motor vehicles in the strict city center; bigger pedestrian area in the city center	Department of the City of Osijek	Osijek-Baranya County; GPP d.o.o.,	yet to be disclosed	2026-2027	Local level, testing actions and transnational meetings
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B. Quality and resilience of public and green spaces

Action Number	Action description	Output target(s)	Action Lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Where can we get inspiration from ? Local Level, Transnational Meetings, Testing Actions, Expertise
1	Promote a wider mix of uses for land and buildings in city center	Number of educated stake-holders; number of organized workshops on the topic	Department for EU projects	Osijek Architects Association; Osijek Cultural center; Osijek-Baranya County	5.000,00€	2025-2026	transnational meetings and local level
2	Promotion of the "15-minute cities" concept	Number of educated citizens; number of organized workshops	Department for EU projects	Osijek Cultural Center; GPP; Osijek-Baranya County	5.000€	2025-2026	local level
3	Upgrading of the urban equipment	Number of procured urban equipment (benches, trash bins, public lights, flower beds..)	Departments of the City of Osijek	UNIKOM, Osijek-Baranya county, Zeleni Osijek	20000-25000 €	2025-2029	transnational meetings, expertise

4	Opening of 2 new parks for public	Number of parks opened to the public; number of square meters greened; number of urban equipment refurbished	Departments of the City of Osijek	UNIKOM, Osijek-Baranya county	yet to be disclosed	2025-2030	local level and expertise
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C. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Action Number	Action description	Output target(s)	Action Lead	Key partners	Resource needs	Timeframe	Where can we get inspiration from ? <i>Local Level, Transnational Meetings, Testing Actions, Expertise</i>
1	Creating more cultural offer in the city center	Number of cultural events in the city center; number of citizens that visit	Departments of the City of Osijek	Osijek Cultural Center	10000-20000€	2025-2030	local level and ulg meetings
2	Creating tourist-friendly city center	Number of touristic offers (thematic guided tours etc); number of tourists in the city center accomodation	Departments of the City of Osijek	Osijek Cultural Center; Tourist board	5.000€	2025-2027	local level and ulg meetings

7. Annexes

7.1.1. Annex 1: Interventions in centre of Osijek before and after

National Theatre in Osijek



Hotel Royal



Hotel Central



Sakunatala Park



Park Weil



Park behind cinema Urania



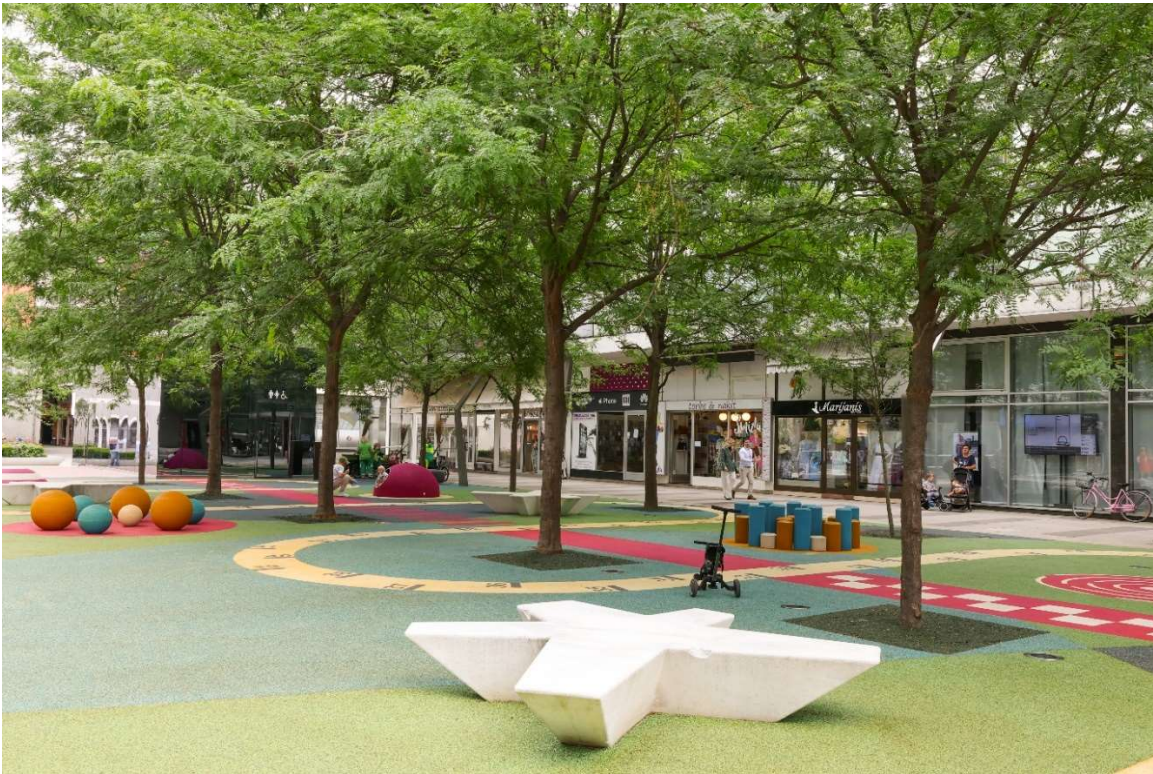
Park Zrinjevac



Županijska street



Kids 'playard in the center



New tram



Park Oscar Nemon



Railway station



7.1.2. Annex 2: Action Infographics

This annex presents one-page action fiches for each IAP action (A1–D3), summarising objectives, responsibilities, tasks, resources, timelines and expected results.

A1 Micro-mobility increase: shared eBikes and e-scooters	
<p>Objective</p> <p>Expand shared micro-mobility services to improve first/last-mile access to the city centre and reduce short car trips.</p>	<p>Responsibilities</p> <p>Municipal mobility team: coordination and permits. Operators: fleet management and maintenance. GPP/university: data sharing and evaluation.</p> <p>Tasks</p> <p>Agree service areas, rules and designated parking zones. Run seasonal campaigns focused on city-centre access. Monitor use patterns and adjust coverage for events.</p> <p>Expected results</p> <p>Higher uptake of micro-mobility in the city centre. Reduced short-distance car trips and improved accessibility perceptions. Data-backed adjustments to services and zones.</p>
<p>Key objectives</p> <p>Maintain/expand coverage of shared eBikes/eScooters in the city centre and key corridors. Increase usage by residents and visitors through targeted communication and accessibility measures. Improve safe parking zones and integration with public transport nodes.</p>	
<p>Lead</p> <p>City of Osijek - mobility/transport department</p>	
<p>Key partners</p> <p>GPP d.o.o.; micro-mobility operators; university partners; traffic police (as needed)</p>	
<p>Resources</p> <p>EUR 10,000-15,000 (annual; communication, minor infrastructure)</p>	
<p>Timeframe</p> <p>2025-2029</p>	

A2

Collect mobility data to improve services and planning

Objective

Establish a regular evidence base for city-centre mobility decisions through counts, surveys and digital tools.

Key objectives

Implement periodic pedestrian/cyclist counts and user surveys. Create an annual mobility snapshot for the city centre (baseline and trends). Use findings to refine interventions and communication.

Lead

City of Osijek - Smart City / mobility unit

Key partners

GPP d.o.o.; university; technology providers; ULG members

Resources

EUR 5,000-10,000 (tools, analysis, reporting)

Timeframe

2025-2030

Responsibilities

Smart City/mobility unit: methodology and reporting. University: analysis support and survey design. Partners: provide operational data.

Tasks

Define indicators and data calendar. Deploy surveys and targeted counts. Publish annual results and feed into action reviews.

Expected results

Reliable dataset for evidence-based mobility planning. Better targeting of measures. Increased transparency through public reporting.

A3

Pedestrianisation of north Zupanijska Street (progressive approach)

Objective

Improve walkability and safety on a key approach to the main square by prioritising pedestrians and reducing obstructive parking.

Key objectives

Implement a phased traffic regulation scheme by 2027.Reduce conflicts and improve safety.Enable future greening and urban equipment upgrades.

Lead

City of Osijek - Urban Planning / Traffic Management

Key partners

Osijek-Baranya County; GPP d.o.o.; police; cultural institutions; local businesses

Resources

To be defined (design, signage, enforcement; potential ERDF)

Timeframe

2026-2027

Responsibilities

Traffic management: regulation design and signage.Police/inspectors: enforcement during transition.GPP: service continuity and communication.

Tasks

Prepare concept and consultation (ULG + businesses).Implement pilot regulation and collect feedback/data.Adjust and formalise pedestrian priority regime.

Expected results

Safer access and improved pedestrian flows.Reduced illegal/obstructive parking.Feasibility for long-term improvements demonstrated.

B1

Promote a wider mix of uses for land and buildings in the city centre

Objective

Support mixed-use development and functional diversity through stakeholder alignment and guidance.

Key objectives

Deliver at least 3 stakeholder workshops by 2026. Identify priority streets/blocks for mixed-use opportunities. Generate a pipeline of feasible initiatives.

Lead

City of Osijek - EU Projects / Spatial Planning

Key partners

Architects Association; Osijek Cultural Center; county; business community; property owners

Resources

EUR 5,000 (workshops and materials)

Timeframe

2025-2026

Responsibilities

City: convene workshops and align with planning rules. Professional bodies: technical input and feasibility advice. Stakeholders: identify barriers and opportunities.

Tasks

Organise workshops on mixed-use and vitality. Map potential premises and use-cases. Prepare recommendations and integrate into pipelines.

Expected results

Improved coordination on land-use priorities. More diverse and resilient city-centre functions. Better-informed investment decisions.

B2

Promote the 15-minute city concept (education and pilot)

Objective

Increase awareness and practical application of proximity planning to make daily services reachable by sustainable modes.

Key objectives

Deliver at least 2 public workshops and 1 pilot walk-audit. Translate findings into actionable recommendations. Strengthen inclusion and accessibility in planning.

Lead

City of Osijek - EU Projects

Key partners

Osijek Cultural Center; GPP; county; NGOs; youth/student groups

Resources

EUR 5,000

Timeframe

2025-2026

Responsibilities

City: programme design and integration. Partners: outreach, facilitation and data collection. GPP: public transport and accessibility input.

Tasks

Run workshops on proximity and inclusion. Conduct a pilot walk-audit (barriers, comfort, safety). Publish recommendations and integrate into reviews.

Expected results

Higher public understanding of proximity benefits. Concrete barrier lists and priority interventions. Alignment with NEB principles.

B3

Upgrading urban equipment (comfort and accessibility)

Objective

Improve comfort, inclusion and microclimate performance through targeted urban equipment upgrades.

Key objectives

Install new benches, bins, lighting, planters and accessible elements. Increase shade, seating and usability for all ages. Improve cleanliness and perceived safety.

Lead

City of Osijek - municipal departments

Key partners

UNIKOM; NGOs (Green Osijek / Plantaza); county; local businesses

Resources

EUR 20,000-25,000 (indicative)

Timeframe

2025-2029

Responsibilities

Municipal services: procurement, siting and maintenance. UNIKOM: cleaning/maintenance integration. NGOs: user feedback and greening support.

Tasks

Prioritise locations based on SSA feedback. Select inclusive and durable equipment. Install and gather feedback annually.

Expected results

Improved comfort and longer dwell time. Visible micro-improvements aligned with NEB. Higher citizen satisfaction.

B4

Opening and revitalisation of two parks for public use

Objective

Increase usable green space and climate resilience by improving access, safety, equipment and programming in two parks.

Key objectives

Open/renew two parks with inclusive access. Increase usable green area and shaded zones. Support programming to encourage regular use.

Lead

City of Osijek - Green Services / Urban Development

Key partners

UNIKOM; county; cultural and sport organisations; NGOs

Resources

To be defined (design/works; potential ERDF/LIFE)

Timeframe

2025-2030

Responsibilities

Green services: design brief, works coordination and maintenance. Partners: programming and community stewardship. NGOs: biodiversity and climate-adaptation guidance.

Tasks

Implement access/safety upgrades. Install equipment and greening measures. Develop seasonal programming and evaluate use.

Expected results

More accessible and resilient green spaces. Increased use by diverse age groups. Improved microclimate and wellbeing benefits.

C1

Creating more cultural offer in the city centre

Objective

Increase footfall and vibrancy by strengthening and diversifying cultural programming in the downtown and main square.

Key objectives

Increase the number of annual city-centre events. Rebalance activity between different nodes. Strengthen partnerships with creatives and institutions.

Lead

City of Osijek - culture-related departments

Key partners

Osijek Cultural Center; cultural institutions; creative sector; schools/university

Resources

EUR 10,000-20,000 (annual programme support)

Timeframe

2025-2030

Responsibilities

City: programme planning and funding coordination. Cultural Center: production and delivery. Partners: co-curation and inclusive outreach.

Tasks

Design annual programme mix (events, pop-ups, exhibitions). Use public spaces for cultural activation. Measure attendance and adapt programming.

Expected results

Livelier city centre with higher footfall. Stronger civic identity and cultural visibility. More inclusive programming.

C2

Creating a tourist-friendly city centre (routes and information)

Objective

Improve visitor experience and encourage longer stays through thematic routes, better information and service coordination.

Key objectives

Develop at least 2 thematic guided routes by 2027. Improve visitor information and wayfinding. Increase engagement with heritage and businesses.

Lead

City of Osijek - tourism/culture departments

Key partners

Tourist Board; Osijek Cultural Center; private sector; heritage institutions

Resources

EUR 5,000 (development and communication)

Timeframe

2025-2027

Responsibilities

City: coordination and content quality. Tourist Board: promotion and feedback. Partners: route content and service readiness.

Tasks

Design routes and materials; train guides as needed. Improve information points and digital visibility. Collect visitor feedback and adjust seasonally.

Expected results

More coherent visitor offer and higher satisfaction. Increased local spending and longer stays. Better use of heritage assets.

D1

Permanent citizen engagement framework (forums + digital feedback)

Objective

Institutionalise continuous co-creation through regular forums and a digital feedback channel.

Key objectives

Minimum 2 city-centre public forums per year. Youth-friendly digital feedback tool building on SSA experience. Document feedback and show how it influences decisions.

Lead

City of Osijek - participation/communications focal point

Key partners

ULG members; youth organisations; universities; NGOs; cultural institutions

Resources

EUR 3,000-8,000 (facilitation, tools, communications)

Timeframe

2025-2030

Responsibilities

City: convening, moderation and publication of outcomes. Partners: outreach and inclusion of groups. University/youth: co-facilitation and tool support.

Tasks

Create annual engagement calendar and publish outcomes. Use real-time input tools (surveys, Kahoot-style). Track how feedback is integrated into actions.

Expected results

Higher trust and participation. Stronger youth voice in public space. Transparent record of priorities and responses.

D2

Monitoring dashboard and annual city-centre report

Objective

Track implementation through an annual reporting mechanism and a concise indicator dashboard.

Key objectives

Define indicator set and responsibilities. Publish annual city-centre IAP progress report. Use results to adjust actions and resource allocation.

Lead

City of Osijek - Smart City / Strategic Planning

Key partners

Municipal departments; GPP; statistical partners; universities

Resources

EUR 5,000-12,000 (data integration and reporting)

Timeframe

2025-2030

Responsibilities

Strategic planning: indicator governance and reporting. Departments/companies: provide operational data. University: analysis/visualisation support if needed.

Tasks

Agree indicator definitions and reporting template. Update dashboard and publish annually. Present results to ULG and political leadership.

Expected results

Improved transparency and implementation readiness. Evidence for funding applications and prioritisation. Clear annual overview of progress.

D3

Capacity building for integrated delivery (cross-department routines)

Objective

Improve implementation capacity through coordination routines and clear delivery responsibilities.

Key objectives

Define governance routines for IAP implementation by 2027. Clarify responsibilities across departments and public companies. Reduce implementation delays through structured coordination.

Lead

City of Osijek - City Management

Key partners

All departments; county; public companies; ULG representatives (advisory)

Resources

Mostly staff time; minor facilitation EUR 1,000-3,000

Timeframe

2025-2027

Responsibilities

City management: establish routines and decision points. Departments: nominate focal points and maintain ownership. ULG: advisory role and periodic feedback.

Tasks

Set up cross-department implementation group. Agree cadence, reporting format and escalation rules. Run short capacity-building sessions on integrated delivery.

Expected results

Better coordination and faster implementation. Clear accountability and ownership. Reduced duplication and improved integration.