EcoCore IAP Report

Integrated action planning report

2025

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What is EcoCore?

EcoCore is a network of nine small European cities—Balbriggan, Santo Tirso, Ormož, Dubrovnik, Pärnu, Alba Iulia, Villena, Tuusula and Ķekava—each positioned along strategic transport corridors. Despite their differences, these cities face similar pressures: ageing industrial areas, shifting logistics patterns, skills gaps and the growing need to decarbonise local economies. They also share an important strength—the agility to test new ideas, engage citizens directly and build coalitions for a greener future.

From the beginning, EcoCore's journey was both technical and deeply human. Planners, engineers, businesses, mobility experts, researchers and residents came together to re-imagine how industrial and peri-urban areas could become

drivers of a green transition rather than relics from a fossil-fuel era.

This report reflects that three-year journey: from the diagnostic insights of the Baseline Study (2023), through the experimentation documented in the State of Actions / Mid-Term Review (2024), to the nine Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) that now guide implementation. Instead of offering a purely technical inventory, it tells a story of learning, collaboration and shared ambition.

EcoCore's work fully embodies the URBACT approach to Integrated Action Planning—cross-sectoral, participatory, transnational and implementation-focused, with clear attention to actions, governance and funding.

Our journey began in Malmö

The EcoCore story began in Malmö, in a vast room filled with hundreds of participants from across Europe, each arriving with their own hopes and uncertainties. Among them were representatives of nine small cities — Balbriggan, Santo Tirso, Ormož, Dubrovnik, Pärnu, Alba Iulia, Villena, Tuusula and Ķekava — who, at the time, shared little beyond size and ambition. Yet from the very first exchanges, it became clear that these cities were connected by a deeper question, one that shaped every discussion that followed:

How can a small city transform its industrial or peri-urban areas to lead the green transition?

For each partner, this question pointed to specific local realities: industrial zones built in a different era, mobility networks struggling to adapt to changing commuting patterns, skills mismatched with emerging green industries, and planning cultures that needed to break down silos. Some cities struggled with depopulation, others with growth pressure; some with tourism dependence, others with declining manufacturing. All faced increasing climate expectations from national governments and EU policy frameworks.

Just weeks after Malmö, the partners met again — this time in Balbriggan, Ireland — on a day marked by fierce winds that rattled windows and turned umbrellas inside out. Indoors, however, the mood was warm and curious. It was here that each city created its City Canvas, a deceptively simple tool for mapping challenges, assets and ambitions. Far from polished strategies, these canvases were candid portraits of nine cities at the beginning of a shared journey. They embodied uncertainty, but also an unmistakable willingness to learn and adapt.

In the months and years that followed, this willingness grew into confidence. Through site visits, challenge clinics, co-creation exercises, neighbourhood walks, and political dialogues, the group gradually built a shared vocabulary and a collective sense of purpose. Over time, EcoCore became more than a network: it became a community of practice, one where trust allowed difficult conversations, experimentation encouraged innovation, and shared learning illuminated new possibilities.

EcoCore's nine Integrated Action Plans (IAPs), developed throughout this process, reflect that evolution. Anchored in local needs yet enriched through transnational learning, these IAPs offer practical, grounded roadmaps for industrial transition that prioritise sustainability, economic resilience and social wellbeing.

This report tells the story of how these plans were made and presents the collective insights that emerged along the way.

Thematic focus of the action plans

Despite their geographic spread, EcoCore cities quickly discovered that they were wrestling with the same structural issue: the need to transform industrial and peri-urban areas into engines of a low-carbon, inclusive and competitive future. Each IAP emerged from a different starting point, yet a common thematic architecture became evident, suggesting that the challenges and opportunities of small-city transition share a recognisable pattern across Europe.

A Shared Commitment to the
Green Transition

1. Environmental Transformation

Environmental transformation sits at the core of every EcoCore IAP. Cities explored how industrial areas — often high emitters — could instead become testbeds for climate innovation. This took the form of rethinking how workers move, how goods flow, how energy is generated and shared, and how land is used. Several cities emphasised nature-based solutions, integrating trees, green buffers and water-sensitive design into industrial zones not only for climate resilience, but for improved wellbeing and placemaking.

Tuusula, for example, incorporated climate-risk assessment and advanced water-management planning into its sustainable district concept, ensuring that stormwater and rainwater resilience are embedded in future industrial development. Santo Tirso explored the potential of renewable energy communities as mechanisms for collective investment in cleaner and more affordable energy systems.

2. Economic Development

Economic considerations were closely intertwined with environmental ones. Cities recognised that greener industrial ecosystems can enhance competitiveness and attract new investment streams, particularly in logistics, clean tech, creative industries, and advanced manufacturing. Several cities saw EcoCore as a way to reposition themselves within broader regional economies.

Villena's logistics hub, for instance, is not just a transport project but a catalyst for innovation, circularity and employment. Pärnu's strategic alignment with Rail Baltica opened opportunities for multimodal industrial development. Even smaller cities such as Ormož used the IAP to clarify their economic identity and identify niches where they could thrive.

A Shared Commitment to the
Green Transition

3. Social Well-being

Industrial transition is often perceived as technical, but EcoCore cities emphasised that it is also deeply social. Mobility access, air quality, employment security and the attractiveness of industrial workplaces all shape the daily lives of residents. Improving cycling and walking routes, designing safer intersections and ensuring that industrial areas feel connected to the city — rather than isolated from it — became shared priorities.

Alba Iulia, for example, placed the lived experience of commuters at the centre of its behavioural approach to mobility. Dubrovnik also highlighted the social dimension of transition: demographic pressures, workforce shortages and limited geographic capacity mean that improving access to employment opportunities and creating more liveable, well-connected economic zones are essential for long-term resilience.

4. Spatial Regeneration

Industrial lands are not static. EcoCore cities recognised that they could be redesigned, densified, greened, made more multifunctional, or transformed entirely. Several partners used the IAPs to rethink the role of industrial sites within the wider fabric of the city.

Dubrovnik identifies opportunities within its existing industrial areas for developing greener entrepreneurial and innovation-oriented spaces through a stakeholder led co-design process. Balbriggan integrated the renewal of its industrial area into broader town-centre regeneration plans. Tuusula applied design excellence to envision what a truly "sustainable industrial district" might look like, including how it interfaces with nearby natural landscapes.

A Shared Commitment to the
Green Transition

5. Governance & Collaboration

Finally, all IAPs highlighted the importance of governance — not only within the municipality, but across levels of government, with industry, and with civil society. EcoCore cities developed more integrated planning cultures, fostered cross-departmental cooperation, and built coalitions around shared goals.

Villena's dry port governance model demonstrates how complex, multi-level initiatives can be shaped through collaboration. Pärnu institutionalised an annual, multisector strategic event. Tuusula employed structured dialogue approaches to difficult conversations. These governance innovations reveal that the green transition is as much a cultural process as a technical one.

Co-producing the Action Plans

Co-production was the defining characteristic of the EcoCore journey. It transformed unfamiliar partners into collaborators and quiet stakeholders into active contributors. During the closing workshop, participants offered single words to summarise their experiences — transformative, challenging, insightful, energising, new. These words point to co-production as far more than a method, but as an enriching lived experience.

Participation
As a Practice

1. Tools & Methods that Shaped the Journey

EcoCore drew on a broad suite of co-creation instruments.

The City Canvas brought clarity to early discussions, enabling each city to articulate its strengths and pressures. The Challenge Clinic format, used at nearly every Core Network Meeting, helped partners interrogate assumptions and generate new possibilities. When conversations became difficult or emotionally charged, Tuusula's Timeout Method created structure and calm, demonstrating that even sensitive topics can be navigated productively with the right facilitation framework.

Test actions were particularly influential. These small experiments converted uncertainty into evidence. A temporary cycling intervention in Ormož revealed behavioural patterns that statistics alone could not uncover. Ķekava's mobility pilots nudged a new identity around cycling. Alba Iulia's behaviour-change approach helped frame sustainable mobility as a shared political narrative rather than an abstract technical goal.

Throughout the process, peer learning acted as a connective tissue. Walking and cycling through another city's industrial areas — seeing loading bays, cycling lanes, brownfields and business parks first hand — opened new perspectives that presentations could never replicate.

Participation
As a Practice

2. ULGs - Engines of Collaboration

Each city established a URBACT Local Group (ULG) that became the local engine of EcoCore. These groups brought together public officials, businesses, residents, academics, NGOs and technical specialists. Over time, ULGs shifted from consultative forums to spaces of genuine collaboration.

Cities that began with hesitant or small groups gradually built stronger structures. Ormož's committed core evolved into a more representative coalition. Santiago Tirso's ULG expanded as circularity gained momentum. Villena used its ULG to align diverse interests around the dry port. Pärnu relied on its ULG to prepare major infrastructure transitions.

The most successful ULGs were those that learned to translate local complexity into shared ownership.

While membership evolved over time — with individuals joining or stepping back depending on the focus of each phase — the following charts provide an overview of average ULG composition across the nine EcoCore cities. These figures offer a snapshot of participation trends, including group size, gender balance, and representation from public, private, academic and civil society sectors.

ULG
Statistics

23	No. of ULG members

Balbriggan

Balbriggan ULG had an average of 23 members . 56% were men and 44% were women.

21	No. of ULG members

Alba Iulia

Alba Iulia ULG had an average of 21 members. 30% of members were women and 70% were men.

8	No. of ULG members

Ormoz

Ormoz ULG had an average of 8 members 50% of members were women and 50% were men.

24	No. of ULG members

Parnu

Parnu ULG had an average of 24 members . 75% were men and 25% were women.

22	No. of ULG members

Santo Tirso

Santo Tirso ULG had an average of 22 members. 50% of members were women and 50% were men.

16	No. of ULG members

Kekava

Kekava ULG had an average of 16 members. 56% of members were women and 44% were men.

11	No. of ULG members

Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik ULG had an average of 11 members . 55% were men and 45% were women.

20	No. of ULG members

Villena

Villena ULG had an average of 20 members . 62% were public sector representatives, 17% private, 17% civil society and 4% academic.

16	No. of ULG members

Tuusula

Tuusula ULG had an average of 16 members . 40% were public sector representatives, 30% private, 20% civil society and 10% academic.

The Integrated Approach

EcoCore cities approached the green transformation of their industrial and peri-urban areas through five interconnected pillars: Mobility & Accessibility, Circular Industry, Regeneration & Place, Skills & Talent, and Governance & Collaboration.

These pillars provided a practical, intuitive way for cities to structure their IAPs while remaining strongly grounded in URBACT's definition of integrated urban development.

Alignment with URBACT's
Integration Pillars

Rather than treating mobility, economic development, environment, skills and governance as separate domains, EcoCore cities demonstrated how these elements reinforce each other when planned together. The result was a set of IAPs that are cross-sectoral, multi-actor, multi-level, territorial and investment-ready—fully aligned with the URBACT integration model.

EcoCore's five pillars naturally map onto the URBACT integration framework:

1. Policy/Sector Integration

Across all cities, the EcoCore pillars helped integrate environmental, social and economic objectives into coherent strategies. Mobility improvements were linked to industrial productivity; circular economy actions supported job creation; regeneration projects strengthened community identity. This avoided siloed solutions and reduced negative externalities such as congestion, emissions and spatial inequality.

2. Horizontal Integration

The Governance & Collaboration pillar reflects the strong emphasis on local partnerships. Urban Local Groups brought together public bodies, SMEs, civil society, business associations and educational institutions. Tools like the Challenge Clinics and Test Action Canvas further deepened collaboration. Many cities reported that EcoCore created a "new local culture of shared problem-solving".

3. Vertical Integration

EcoCore cities worked to align their IAPs with regional, national and EU frameworks, including major infrastructure investments (Rail Baltica in Pärnu, logistics hubs in Villena, port and airport systems in Dubrovnik and Pärnu) and national decarbonisation strategies. This strengthened funding alignment and future investment readiness.

Alignment with URBACT's
Integration Pillars

4. Territorial Integration

Territorial integration is especially critical for small and medium-sized cities. Individually, these places often lack the visibility, critical mass, and political weight needed to influence national agendas or attract major investment. By positioning themselves within a wider functional region or metropolitan system, they can amplify their identity, relevance and economic potential. For many stakeholders — investors, logistics operators, talent, visitors — the region is the recognised brand, not the individual town.

A key learning that emerged across the entire EcoCore network is that territorial integration is not optional for small and medium-sized cities — it is fundamental to their capacity to succeed in the green transition. Every city, regardless of size or context, demonstrated that acting alone limits visibility, influence, and investment potential. By contrast, aligning with wider metropolitan areas, regional economic corridors, or cross-border systems allowed these cities to build the critical mass needed to raise their strategic importance, strengthen political leverage, and present a far more compelling value proposition to investors, businesses and talent. This was one of the clearest shared messages across the partnership: small cities become stronger, more competitive and more recognisable when they position themselves as part of something larger.

For small cities, territorial integration is not just about avoiding negative spill-overs — it is a strategic necessity for achieving visibility, building critical mass, and positioning themselves as part of a broader regional value proposition.

5. Hard & Soft Investments Integration

A defining feature of EcoCore was its blending of physical investments (industrial estates, mobility infrastructure, renewable energy systems) with soft interventions (skills development, business support, awareness campaigns, governance improvements). Cities showed they are prepared not only to build new infrastructures but also to ensure they are embedded within supportive social and economic systems.

EcoCore Thematic Pillars Comparison Matrix

City	Mobility & Accessibility	Circular Industry	Regeneration & Place	Skills & Talent	Governance & Collaboration
Balbriggan	Prepared to redesign industrial access routes, integrate active travel, and reduce car dependency	Supported the greening of SMEs and promoted early circular initiatives	Linked industrial renewal to wider regeneration in the town of Balbriggan	Strong alignment with workforce development strategies	Built cross-sector collaboration with SMEs, academia, regional & national agencies
Santo Tirso	Express public transport line, EV charging, upgraded bus stops	Promotes SME sustainability, industrial zone greening	City attractiveness improvement, youth-focused regeneration	Aligns local training with circular economy & green industrial development	Demonstrated strong multi-level and metropolitan coordination
Ormoz	Used test cycling data to reframe mobility planning	Promotes SME circularity and entrepreneurship	Pursued incremental improvements to industrial environments	Skills development via Green Innovation Hub & accelerator	Regional Accelerator Network; strong stakeholder ULG
Dubrovnik	Sustainable links to green business zones	Identified potential for emerging green business activities	Explored the potential of sites like TUP and existing industrial areas, for future innovation-oriented activities.	Early-stage skills reflection e.g. identifying skills gaps, inspired by Balbriggan. Retraining for green industries	Multi-municipality coordination; integrated planning
Alba Iulia	Electric buses, cycling networks, traffic optimisation	Promotes circular practices in industrial zone	Green industrial zone + spatial mobility corridor	Digital & mobility-linked training	Cross-municipal coordination on mobility and freight

EcoCore Thematic Pillars Comparison Matrix

City	Mobility & Accessibility	Circular Industry	Regeneration & Place	Skills & Talent	Governance & Collaboration
Tuusula	Integrated sustainable mobility within an advanced industrial district concept.	One of the network's strongest circular zoning models and climate-resilient planning.	High-quality industrial district featuring nature-based solutions.	Emphasis on technical and green skills supporting circular industry.	Structured, transparent governance supporting long-term visioning.
Villena	Freight and logistics access planning linked to the dry port.	Circular logistics principles embedded in hub development	Dry port as a major spatial catalyst for regional regeneration.	Development of logistics and transport-related training pathways.	Strong governance coalition across local, regional and national levels.
Kekava	Cycling pilots and active mobility shaping employment access and workplace connectivity.	Laying foundations for greener business practices. Some organic industrial symbiosis.	Mobility-focused placemaking tied to Rail Baltica opportunities.	Growing skills agenda linked to tourism, mobility and emerging industries.	Strong local & metropolitan coordination , wider perspective.
Parnu	Data-driven multimodal logistics planning linking Rail Baltica, port, airport and road corridors.	Circularity embedded through clean logistics, renewable energy and sustainable industrial zones.	Strategic transformation of industrial areas tied to corridor infrastructure	Skills agenda for logistics, digitalisation and renewable energy sectors.	Institutionalised multi-level collaboration via the Pärnu Economic Forum.

Summary of partner Integrated Action Plans

To ensure clarity for policy-makers and practitioners, this section provides short, narrative summaries of each of the nine EcoCore IAPs.

These are not exhaustive descriptions, but snapshots of the strategic direction each city is taking.

IAP
Snapshots

Balbriggan

Balbriggan's IAP connects industrial district renewal with the town's larger transformation agenda. It prioritises improving access routes, strengthening SME greening, enhancing the public realm and anchoring workforce development in the region's economic strategy.

Santo Tirso

Santo Tirso is building on its renowned textile sector to pioneer circular production. The IAP outlines steps for renewable energy communities, innovative circular hubs and deeper collaboration with research institutions and creative industries.

Ormoz

Ormož used cycling pilots to inform industrial access planning. The IAP focusses on green business zone activation and grassroots skills development

Parnu

Pärnu's IAP positions the city as a future multimodal logistics and green industrial hub by integrating Rail Baltica, the port, airport and key road corridors with expanding renewable energy systems. It advances greener industrial districts, cleaner freight access, digitalisation and coordinated multi-level governance through the Pärnu Economic Forum.

Alba Iulia

Alba Iulia centres its IAP on behaviour-change mobility initiatives designed to support industrial decarbonisation. The plan outlines how improved cycling and public transport can reduce congestion and emissions.
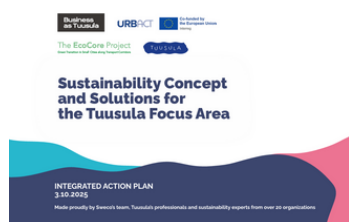

Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik aims to reduce overreliance on seasonal tourism by developing green, sustainable, innovative business zones. It emphasizes investment in entrepreneurial infrastructure, sustainable mobility & education aligned with green & digital sectors to build a more resilient, diverse & environmentally responsible economy

IAP
Snapshots

Tuusula

Tuusula presents a highly mature concept for a sustainable industrial district. Its IAP features circular zoning criteria, nature-based solutions, advanced design principles and a robust governance structure

Villena

Villena positions its dry port as a transformative regional asset. The IAP focuses on logistics sustainability, circularity integration and multi-level governance mechanisms for complex infrastructure delivery.


Kekava

Ķekava leverages its position on the Rail Baltica corridor to reimagine its mobility and industrial identity. Cycling pilots and strong stakeholder engagement inform a strategic approach to future growth.

Together, these plans form a shared blueprint for Europe's next generation of green industrial cities. They show that size is not a limitation: small cities can be experimental, collaborative and bold, using the green transition not just to reduce emissions but to improve quality of life, strengthen local economies and create places where communities can thrive. EcoCore's IAPs stand as a collective invitation to keep pushing this transformation forward.
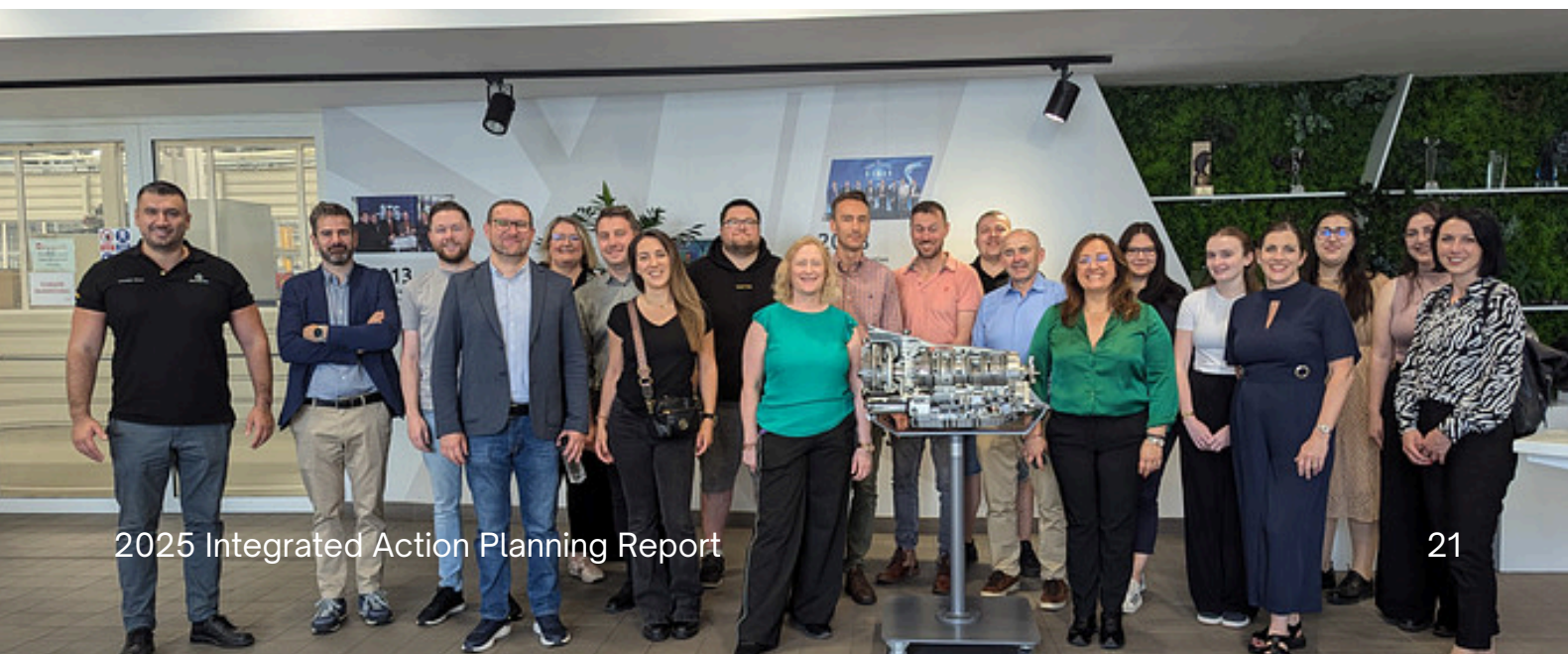
Balbriggan

Main local challenge

Balbriggan is a rapidly growing commuter town with a young and diverse population but low job density, higher-than-average unemployment, limited active travel infrastructure, and negative external perceptions. The town must transition from commuter dependency to a self-sustaining green economy while addressing skills gaps, supporting existing businesses in decarbonisation, and preparing 200 acres of new industrial land for sustainable development.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01 Business sustainability & circular practices

- Support companies to transition to renewable energy, meet CSRD/ESG requirements, adopt active travel measures and conserve biodiversity.
- Develop circular economy opportunities through waste-stream analysis and business collaboration.
- Impact: Lower emissions, stronger local resilience, and businesses prepared for future regulatory demands.

02 Development of Stephenstown as a model green industrial zone

- Prepare a comprehensive spatial and development framework; improve green public realm; embed low-carbon transport access.
- Position the industrial area to deliver significant employment and shift Balbriggan toward a 15-minute city model.
- Impact: A high-quality, accessible, future-ready industrial zone attracting green investment.

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Key Actions & Expected Impact

03 Green investment positioning and marketing

- Produce an investor guide; develop a green brand; run targeted communications; increase visibility through rankings and publications.
- Impact: Greater investor interest, a stronger identity as a sustainable industrial town, and improved national/regional profile.

04 Education and skills collaboration

- Strengthen ties with DCU, TU Dublin, and enterprise/skills bodies; develop programmes in green skills, training and apprenticeships.
- Impact: A skilled local workforce, higher-value employment, and reduced out-commuting.

Main beneficiaries

Local residents (new jobs, reduced commuting, improved quality of life), businesses (support for sustainability and investment readiness), education providers (partnerships and programme development), and the wider Dublin–Belfast Economic Corridor (enhanced green-industry capacity).

Next steps

Integrate the IAP into planning and economic development processes; advance the Stephenstown development plan; secure funding; expand sustainability support for local businesses; scale test actions; and continue ULG collaboration and monitoring structures

EcoCore added value

Before   Fragmented efforts, limited green-industry positioning, weak active travel links, and insufficient cross-sector collaboration.

After   A coherent strategy for a green industrial town, with clear objectives on sustainability, circularity, skills, investment attraction and community engagement, anchored by the development of the Stephenstown sustainable industrial zone.

Tuusula

Main local challenge

Tuusula faces the challenge of developing a major new industrial and logistics "Focus Area" next to Helsinki Airport while ensuring sustainability, energy resilience, attractive design, and circularity. Key issues include high energy demand, the need for low-carbon mobility, biodiversity protection, and establishing a governance model capable of coordinating many actors across energy, logistics, construction and land-use planning

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01 Sustainable Energy Ecosystem

- Designing a self-sufficient, energy-positive system using waste heat recovery, snow-based district cooling, local renewable production and smart storage;
- Building an energy ecosystem with data centres, hydrogen developers, grid operators and heating companies;
- Creating a long-term energy masterplan and value-proposition for investors.
- Expected impact: significantly reduced emissions, predictable energy costs, and an attractive environment for green-tech industries.

02 Sustainable Mobility & Logistics

- A shared mobility hub (on-demand shuttles, robot buses, e-bikes, multimodal links to Aviapolis);
- Shared distribution centres enabling consolidated logistics and lower emissions;
- Feasibility studies for heavy-duty EV/hydrogen charging and airport-connected hydrogen refuelling.
- Expected impact: lower car dependency, improved freight efficiency, and reduced congestion and emissions.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03   Sustainable Infrastructure & Circularity

- Strong biodiversity protection, ecological corridors and biophilic design;
- Circular materials and a regional buffer storage for soil and reusable construction components;
- Climate-resilient infrastructure, low-carbon construction materials and integrated stormwater systems;
- Sustainability certification for the entire Focus Area.
- Expected impact: a climate-resilient, circular industrial zone with reduced waste, higher reuse rates, and improved environmental quality.

04   Shared spaces, services & community-building

- A living-lab visitor centre and innovation showroom;
- Co-working and shared service facilities, wellbeing and sports spaces;
- Cultural and artistic programming to create a distinctive identity.
- Expected impact: improved worker wellbeing, stronger social sustainability, and a more attractive business environment.

Main beneficiaries

Local residents and workers (high-quality jobs, services, mobility options), businesses and green-tech investors (energy-positive and circular industrial environment), logistics operators (shared, low-carbon systems), and the wider Helsinki region (enhanced competitiveness and industrial diversification).

Next steps

Tuusula will formalise the energy ecosystem consortium, prepare detailed plans for the mobility hub and logistics services, embed circularity and biodiversity rules into planning, and launch investment promotion for green industries. The ULG continues as a cross-sector governance platform.

EcoCore added value

Before   Scattered ideas for industrial development, limited coordination around energy, mobility, circularity and biodiversity, and no unifying sustainability framework.

After   A coherent strategy positioning Tuusula as a Nordic frontrunner in sustainable industrial development, with integrated energy, mobility, circular materials management, shared services and nature-positive planning.

Villena

Main local challenge

Villena aims to reactivate its economy and create stable jobs amidst an ageing population, low household incomes, and uneven sectoral recovery. Despite its strong industrial tradition and strategic position at the intersection of major regions, the city faces slow administrative processes, skills gaps, and the need to coordinate multiple institutions for the development of a major logistics hub within the Mediterranean Corridor.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01   Governance for coordinated logistics development

- Strengthening multi-level institutional cooperation across regional, national and corridor actors.
- Securing official recognition of Villena as a strategic logistics hub within the Mediterranean Corridor.
- Developing a clear investor roadmap to guide private-sector engagement.
- Establishing an Investment Promotion Office to coordinate industrial and logistics investment.
- Creating an Impact Accelerator to support innovation and ESG-oriented business development.

02   Citizenship Engagement and Communication

- Implementing a transparent communication strategy about the hub's development and benefits.
- Running participatory processes to incorporate citizen input into planning and design.
- Delivering educational outreach in schools, communities and civic groups.
- Establishing trust-building mechanisms, including regular public updates and open forums.
- Developing communication materials that help reduce misinformation and clarify project intentions.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03 Sustainability, Green Mobility and Circularity

- Integrating sustainable mobility measures into the PMUS (urban mobility plan), prioritising multimodal access to the logistics hub.
- Applying landscape integration, environmental buffering and green corridors to reduce impacts.
- Advancing renewable energy solutions within the logistics platform and industrial areas.
- Supporting the development of energy communities involving residents and businesses.
- Promoting ESG uptake among companies, including reporting, guidelines and support tools.
- Enabling industrial symbiosis, linking local firms for shared resource use, waste recovery and circular flows.
- Impacts: A low-emission, energy-efficient logistics node with strong environmental credentials; Cleaner and more sustainable mobility for workers and freight; A resilient, circular industrial ecosystem generating new green business opportunities.

Main beneficiaries

Residents (new quality jobs, improved mobility), local businesses and SMEs (investment attraction, ESG support), logistics and industrial operators (modern multimodal infrastructure), and educational institutions (new partnerships and skills development).

Next steps

Villena will formalise governance agreements, refine the investor roadmap, launch the Investment Promotion Office, embed sustainability requirements in planning tools, attract funding from EU and national sources, and maintain an active URBACT Local Group as a long-term consultative body.

EcoCore added value

Before
Fragmented approaches to logistics development, limited multi-level coordination, and insufficient visibility or citizen engagement.

After
A structured, consensus-based strategy grounded in sustainability, clear governance, stronger alliances, professional investment attraction, and an integrated vision positioning Villena as a green logistics hub within the Mediterranean Corridor.

Pärnu

Main local challenge

Pärnu is transitioning from a tourism-dependent city toward a more diversified industrial and logistics economy. Key challenges include limited economic diversification, seasonal labour patterns and low wages, grid capacity constraints, skills shortages, and the need to integrate major new infrastructure (Rail Baltica, port and airport upgrades) into a sustainable, low-carbon development model.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01   Multimodal logistics and connectivity

- Developing industrial areas around the Rail Baltica cargo terminal;
- Creating green public-transport links to the Rail Baltica passenger station;
- Feasibility for an inner-city freight rail connection between port, airport and industrial zones.
- Expected impact: stronger freight efficiency, reduced truck movements, and enhanced investment appeal.

02   Green and digital solutions

- Expansion of renewable energy (wind, solar, biogas) for households and industry;
- Introduction of electric buses and charging infrastructure;
- A Smart City Innovation Fund supporting pilots such as smart meters, digital mobility and emissions monitoring.
- Expected impact: lower emissions, clean public transport, and a more data-driven urban system.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03   Sustainable industrial zones

- Acquiring strategic land near energy substations for clean-energy-intensive industries;
- Producing a Green Industrial Zone Planning Guidebook;
- Continuing the annual Pärnu Economic Forum to drive collaboration and investment.
- Expected impact: new high-value green industries, improved planning standards, and more resilient local jobs.

Main beneficiaries

Industrial firms (better logistics, clean energy access), residents and workers (green mobility, new jobs, skills), SMEs and innovators (smart city pilots), and regional logistics networks benefiting from multimodal connections.

Next steps

Pärnu will embed the IAP into municipal planning, advance funding applications (EU, national, private), scale the Economic Forum as a regional platform, and develop cross-border cooperation with Latvia. Monitoring will be supported by ULG structures and smart-city data systems.

EcoCore added value

Before   Fragmented industrial expansion, limited coordination around Rail Baltica, early-stage renewable energy integration, and no unified strategy for green logistics or industrial zoning.

After   A coherent plan linking multimodal logistics, digital and green energy solutions, and sustainable industrial-zone development, giving Pärnu a clear pathway to become a regional green-industrial hub.

Santo Tirso

Main local challenge

Santo Tirso faces strong growth pressures linked to its industrial base: labour shortages, high car dependency and congestion, the need to expand and modernise industrial land, and growing demands for sustainable water and energy management. Ensuring the city remains attractive to young people is also a key demographic challenge.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01 Collective and alternative mobility

- Expansion and operation of a new express public transport line (Line 1/271) linking industrial zones with train/bus stations.
- Upgrading 15 bus stops and shelters.
- Delivering 2 km of bike lanes, ⩾5 EV charging stations, and 20 e-bikes.
- Expected impact: reduced car dependency (currently 88% of workers commute alone), improved access to industrial zones, and a measurable shift toward sustainable mobility.

02 Demographic rebalance & talent retention

- Enabling 500 affordable housing units for under-35s.
- Developing a skills-to-work pipeline through CESAE Digital (444 learners/year).
- Refurbishing buildings in Fábrica de Santo Thyrso for training and co-working uses.
- Cultural/creative economy events to strengthen city attractiveness.
- Expected impact: stronger youth retention, increased skills availability, and a more vibrant urban environment.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03 Green business hubs & energy transition

- Incentives and recognition programmes to support SME sustainability upgrades.
- An annual sustainability-reporting competition involving ⩾30 companies.
- Development of local energy communities, supported by mapping, expert sessions and a roadmap.
- Expected impact: reduced energy costs, lower emissions, and stronger uptake of circular and renewable-energy practices across business zones.

Main beneficiaries

Workers and residents (improved mobility, skills, housing), young professionals (new opportunities and spaces), SMEs and industrial firms (energy efficiency, green incentives), and the wider Porto Metropolitan Area economy (enhanced competitiveness).

Next steps

Next steps include embedding pilots in municipal planning, securing additional national/EU funding, expanding public transport links, strengthening the youth and skills agenda, and scaling energy-community work with local businesses. A renewed ULG structure will support governance, stakeholder engagement and monitoring.

EcoCore added value

Before   High car dependency, limited youth retention, uncoordinated industrial sustainability efforts, and weak visibility of green transition opportunities.

After   A coherent strategy that links mobility, talent development and greener industrial zones—supported by four focused pilots, clear SMART objectives, and strong stakeholder collaboration.

Ķekava

Main local challenge

Ķekava faces rapid population growth, high car dependency, gaps in pedestrian/cycling infrastructure, and the need to prepare for the transformational impact of Rail Baltica. Businesses show varying levels of green-transition readiness, while residents require more incentives and awareness to shift mobility habits and adopt sustainable lifestyles.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01 Low-carbon mobility and behaviour change

- Construction of shared bicycle–pedestrian lanes (30 km+ including the Riga–Ķekava link).
- Installation of bike repair stations, micromobility chargers, and new EV charging points.
- Development of a unified public transport management system across the Riga metropolitan area.
- Annual cycling and active-lifestyle events to raise awareness.
- Expected impact: a 30% reduction in car dependency, increased cycling rates, safer public spaces, and improved inter-municipal mobility.

02 Energy efficiency & renewable energy expansion

- Energy-efficiency upgrades in municipal buildings and street lighting.
- Renovation of the Ķekava Sports Club to Class B energy performance.
- Feasibility studies for upgrades in six additional public buildings.
- Expansion of renewable energy sources (solar, biomass) in municipal utility companies.
- Expected impact: 20% reduction in municipal energy use by 2030 and a long-term target of 50% renewable energy by 2050.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03 Sustainable tourism development

- A new Tourism Strategy by 2026.
- Improved access to recreational waters on the Daugava River, including pathways suitable for people with reduced mobility.
- New walking and cycling trails across Baldone, Baloži and Ķekava, plus upgrades to the "Garden of Apple Trees" central recreation area.
- Expected impact: +7% annual growth in nature-based tourism and better use of green mobility for recreation.

Main beneficiaries

Residents (better mobility, healthier lifestyles, improved public spaces), local businesses (renewable energy and sustainability incentives), schools and community groups, and the wider metropolitan area (enhanced connectivity and tourism potential).

Next steps

Ķekava will integrate the IAP into municipal governance, strengthen cooperation with Riga and neighbouring municipalities, improve communication with residents, and scale pilot mobility actions. The ULG will continue as a multi-stakeholder platform supporting implementation, monitoring and awareness-raising.

EcoCore added value

Before Fragmented sustainability actions, low business engagement in green transition, limited cycling/pedestrian network, and slow behavioural change.

After A coordinated strategy emphasising sustainable mobility, energy efficiency and nature-based tourism, backed by SMART objectives, dedicated investment planning and strong metropolitan collaboration.

Alba Iulia

Main local challenge

Alba Iulia faces high car dependency, congestion, underdeveloped green transport, fragmented freight operations, and the need to green and modernise a significant industrial expansion area (30 ha publicly owned, part of a wider 200 ha zone). Behavioural change in mobility, energy efficiency practices, and industrial sustainability are key challenges.The IAP focuses on developing a green industrial zone powered partly by a municipal photovoltaic plant, supported by sustainable mobility improvements and circular/energy-efficient practices within businesses.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01 Smart mobility, traffic optimisation & behaviour change

- Creation of an Integrated Urban Mobility Dispatch Center (real-time traffic data, adaptive signals).
- Deployment of electric buses and expansion of green bus routes.
- Adoption of Local Green Deals to shift mobility behaviour and improve data sharing.
- Expected impact: reduced congestion, safer roads, better public transport performance, and measurable emissions reductions.

02 Sustainable transport infrastructure

- 17 km of new cycling lanes and a city-wide bike-sharing system;
- 30% increase in EV charging infrastructure;
- Incentives for low-emission vehicles.
- These support a modal shift away from cars and improve air quality.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03 Green industrial development & logistics hub

- Developing a sustainable development hub with logistics, co-working and green-energy support services;
- Promoting resource efficiency and circular practices among firms;
- Integrating renewable energy (including a 1 ha PV plant) into industrial operations.
- Expected impact: a greener, more competitive industrial base and stronger SME ecosystem.

Main beneficiaries

Residents (cleaner mobility, reduced congestion), commuters and workers (better transport access), SMEs and industrial firms (green energy, logistics hub, circular support), and the broader metropolitan economy (higher competitiveness and investment readiness).

Next steps

Priorities include: scaling electric bus routes, commissioning the Mobility Dispatch Center, expanding Local Green Deal partnerships, securing funding for the logistics hub, and embedding behavioural change programmes. The multi-stakeholder ULG continues as a coordination platform.

EcoCore added value

Before   Disconnected mobility actions, limited freight coordination, early-stage industrial greening, fragmented stakeholder involvement.

After   A coherent strategy focused on a green industrial zone, smart mobility, modal shift, and circular innovation—supported by active stakeholder partnerships, structured pilots, and clear monitoring pathways.

Ormož

Main local challenge

Ormož faces typical small-city pressures: high car dependency, brain drain, limited high-quality jobs, small business base, and low awareness of green transition opportunities. Despite these constraints, it has strong community cohesion, strategic location on transport corridors, and emerging business-zone potential.The IAP centres on developing Ormož's first green business zone, improving conditions for sustainable enterprises, and strengthening the ecosystem for innovation.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01 Skills, innovation and entrepreneurship support

- Establishing the Green Innovation Hub, entrepreneurship support (training, workspace and mentoring).
- Launching a Green Business Accelerator to help start-ups scale circular, digital and low-carbon solutions.
- Creating a regional Accelerator Network connecting Ormož with neighbouring municipalities, universities and investors.
- Providing targeted support for SMEs transitioning to green business models and adopting sustainable practices.
- Developing training programmes aligned with digital skills, green technologies and circular economy methods.

02 Sustainable Mobility and Reduced Car Dependency

- Expanding cycling infrastructure to connect residential areas, business zones and public services.
- Increasing the number of EV charging stations across the municipality.
- Preparing a Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) platform integrating public transport, cycling and shared mobility options.
- Developing campaigns and incentives to shift commuting from private cars to sustainable modes.
- Coordinating mobility planning with regional stakeholders to support multi-modal travel.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03   Community Engagement and Behavioural Change

- Hosting three annual sustainability workshops focused on energy, circularity, waste and mobility.
- Organising quarterly Green Living Days involving demonstrations, peer-learning and community challenges.
- Providing targeted outreach to schools, senior groups and local associations.
- Building a shared narrative about the benefits of green transition for community wellbeing.
- Establishing feedback loops where residents can continuously shape and evaluate IAP actions.
- Expected impact: increased resident engagement in sustainability initiatives, increased awareness and behavioural change around energy use, waste reduction and active mobility, stronger community ownership of the transition process.

Main beneficiaries

Residents (awareness, mobility options, skills), SMEs and start-ups (innovation support, new facilities), and the wider local economy (more diverse jobs, investment attraction).

Next steps

The IAP will guide investment into green business zone development, strengthen cross-municipal cooperation, expand the green entrepreneurship support system, and embed community engagement activities into local governance structures. A permanent ULG will monitor progress and steer implementation.

EcoCore added value

Before   Fragmented efforts to support entrepreneurship and sustainability, low business awareness of green transition, and limited coordinated action on mobility and skills.

After   A coherent strategy integrating business-zone development, circular economy, mobility improvements and community engagement—supported by a structured governance model and defined actions for a green, resilient local economy by 2030.

Dubrovnik

Main local challenge

Dubrovnik faces structural pressures including dependence on seasonal tourism, high living costs, limited development space, congestion, and under-used industrial/brownfield zones. These issues constrain economic resilience and mobility across the urban area. The IAP aims to transform entrepreneurial and industrial sites into green, circular, digitally enabled business zones.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

01 Entrepreneurial infrastructure & skills development

- Skill-gap analysis and targeted training in green tech, IT and sustainable sectors;
- Retraining programmes for workers shifting from tourism;
- Stronger university–industry partnerships and new academic programmes.
- This will equip residents with future-oriented skills and support new economic activities.

02 Sustainable mobility connecting business zones

- Modernising the bus fleet with electric/hybrid models and digitalising services;
- Expanding cycling, pedestrian and micromobility networks;
- Introducing green infrastructure such as stormwater systems and solar-integrated roofs.
- These measures reduce congestion, improve accessibility and lower emissions.

Key Actions & Expected Impact

03 Green and circular redevelopment of entrepreneurial zones

- GIS analysis and modernisation of zones;
- Introduction of green and circular solutions (green roofs, rain gardens, efficient lighting, low-energy buildings);
- Support for SMEs adopting circular models and non-tourism business growth.
- This will create modern, sustainable business environments promoting economic diversification.

Main beneficiaries

Residents (jobs, quality of life), SMEs and start-ups (improved infrastructure and support), and the wider port-city economy (reduced reliance on tourism).

Next steps

The IAP will guide investment prioritisation, integration into EU funding programmes, and deeper cooperation with the university, port, mobility providers, and business stakeholders to advance green skills, innovation and the green port agenda.

EcoCore added value

Before
Fragmented, tourism-centric efforts with limited strategic focus on brownfields, skills or economic diversification.

After
A coordinated, multi-municipality strategy using entrepreneurial and industrial zones as engines for a greener, more diversified local economy, supported by clear actions on skills, mobility and circular business-zone regeneration

Added Value of Transnational Learning

Transnational learning became the backbone of EcoCore.

Through site visits, discussions and reflective exercises, cities inspired one another to broaden perspectives and reimagine possibilities.

EcoCore is a powerful demonstration of how small cities, when connected through meaningful collaboration, can accelerate their green transition journeys far beyond what they could achieve alone. The cooperation enabled through URBACT has generated impact at two levels: across the network as a whole and within each partner city.

At network level
Added value of transnational learning

Throughout the EcoCore journey, the cities collectively produced valuable, practical, and replicable actions that any small or mid-sized municipality can take to accelerate a green industrial transition. By working through common subtopics—green industrial planning, circular economy, innovation ecosystems, skills, mobility, procurement, and leadership— partners co-created a toolkit of real-world approaches, backed by tested examples, that now stand as a shared knowledge asset for small cities across Europe.

The EcoCore network has also raised the visibility and ambition of small cities within the broader European conversation on the green transition. Through exchange and learning, partners demonstrated that small cities are not passive followers but can play a proactive, strategic, and catalytic role in shaping greener local economies. EcoCore has helped place small cities on the map as credible leaders capable of piloting ideas, mobilising local actors, and driving change across industrial areas and wider communities.

Importantly, cooperation fostered a deep culture of trust and mutual support. Partners became critical friends for each other, sharing what worked and what didn't, asking challenging questions, and giving constructive feedback. Peer learning was not abstract: it was tangible, grounded, and directly transferable. The network also enabled the development of a shared identity, reinforced by the EcoCore Podcast, which captures the voices, experiences and aspirations of the partners and will continue to inspire others beyond the project's lifetime.

At local level
Added value of transnational learning

At the local level, the effects of the cooperation have been equally transformative.

Partners consistently reported that EcoCore has elevated the profile of green transition issues within their municipalities—politically, strategically, and operationally. Participation in the network encouraged partners to raise their planning ambitions, bring new issues onto political agendas, and strengthen multi-departmental collaboration.

The structured exchange process helped cities to gain confidence, both professionally and personally. Stakeholders—from staff to elected officials—grew more assured in championing the green transition and advocating for bolder actions within their municipalities. Partners repeatedly emphasised that the network has been a major learning journey, reshaping their thinking and broadening their understanding of what is possible in small-city contexts.

Partners successfully implemented test actions and learned the value of small scale testing, using them as a practical mechanism to learn-by-doing. These included mobility experiments, data gathering exercises, stakeholder workshops, and participatory activities. Importantly, the test actions generated valuable, evidence-based data that informed planning decisions, master planning exercises, and emerging strategies. For example, some cities used test actions to better understand mobility behaviour as well as business needs and challenges within their industrial zones.

Cities also benefitted from improved stakeholder engagement capacity. ULG coordinators became more skilled, more knowledgeable, and more confident in applying URBACT's action planning methodologies. Many partners succeeded in expanding their stakeholder networks, strengthening local alliances with businesses, universities, civil society and regional actors.

Additionally, cooperation helped partners to encourage behavioural change, particularly around mobility, energy use, and sustainability mindsets. Through awareness-raising, public engagement and visible test actions, cities activated residents, workers, political leaders and businesses in new ways.

In summary, EcoCore created both a network-wide transformation and a profound local transformation. Cities are now better equipped, more confident, more connected and more ambitious in guiding their green industrial transition—qualities that will endure far beyond the formal project period.

From Baseline to Final Action Plans - The Evolution

The development of the EcoCore Integrated Action Plans was not a linear process, but a progressive deepening of understanding, confidence and ambition.

What began as a set of loosely connected local challenges evolved into a coherent, network-wide learning journey. Over two years, cities shifted from diagnosing problems to testing solutions, and finally to designing integrated, investment-ready plans capable of guiding real transformation.

Evolution of the plans

A key message from this evolution is that integrated planning capacity grows through practice. The more cities experimented, reflected and collaborated, the more strategic and confident they became. The EcoCore trajectory therefore illustrates not only the production of nine IAPs, but also the development of a new planning culture among small and medium-sized cities —one that is more participatory, more cross-sectoral and more outward-looking.

The journey unfolded across three major phases:

Baseline - Understanding the starting point (2023)

Cities undertook a SWOT analysis and mapped their industrial areas, mobility flows, skills landscapes, environmental pressures and governance frameworks. This stage revealed fragmentation, gaps in data and the need for multi-sector coordination.

Mid-Term Review – Learning From Action (2024)

Test actions provided tangible evidence. ULGs matured. Cities gained clarity on which actions and investments were feasible and politically supported. The network began to articulate a shared sense of direction.

Final IAPs – Articulating a Shared Future (2025)

The final IAPs include SMART objectives, integrated action tables, governance mechanisms, funding considerations and monitoring frameworks. They reflect the combined effect of experimentation, analysis and transnational learning.

Tools & Methods used by EcoCore

EcoCore generated and tested a set of transferable planning tools and co-development, each shaped by real-world application and helping to plan and shape action on the ground. Here follows a summary of some of the tools used during the EcoCore action planning process.

Facilitator's Toolbox

A number of tools and methods were introduced and used by the network in throughout its two years to aid the participation and co-creation in the action planning process. Some of these tools and methods are shared here below.

## The City Canvas

What is it?

A strategic planning template , designed by the EcoCore LE. Provides a n easily adaptable, visual chart to summarise and showcase the key strategic aims and elements steering the integrated action planning process locally.

How did we use it?

Each EcoCore partner city completed the canvas by adding sticky notes and/or The completed canvas was presented by each partner during a series of speed pitches at the first EcoCore Core Network Meeting in Balbriggan in November 2023.

The Attractiveness Map
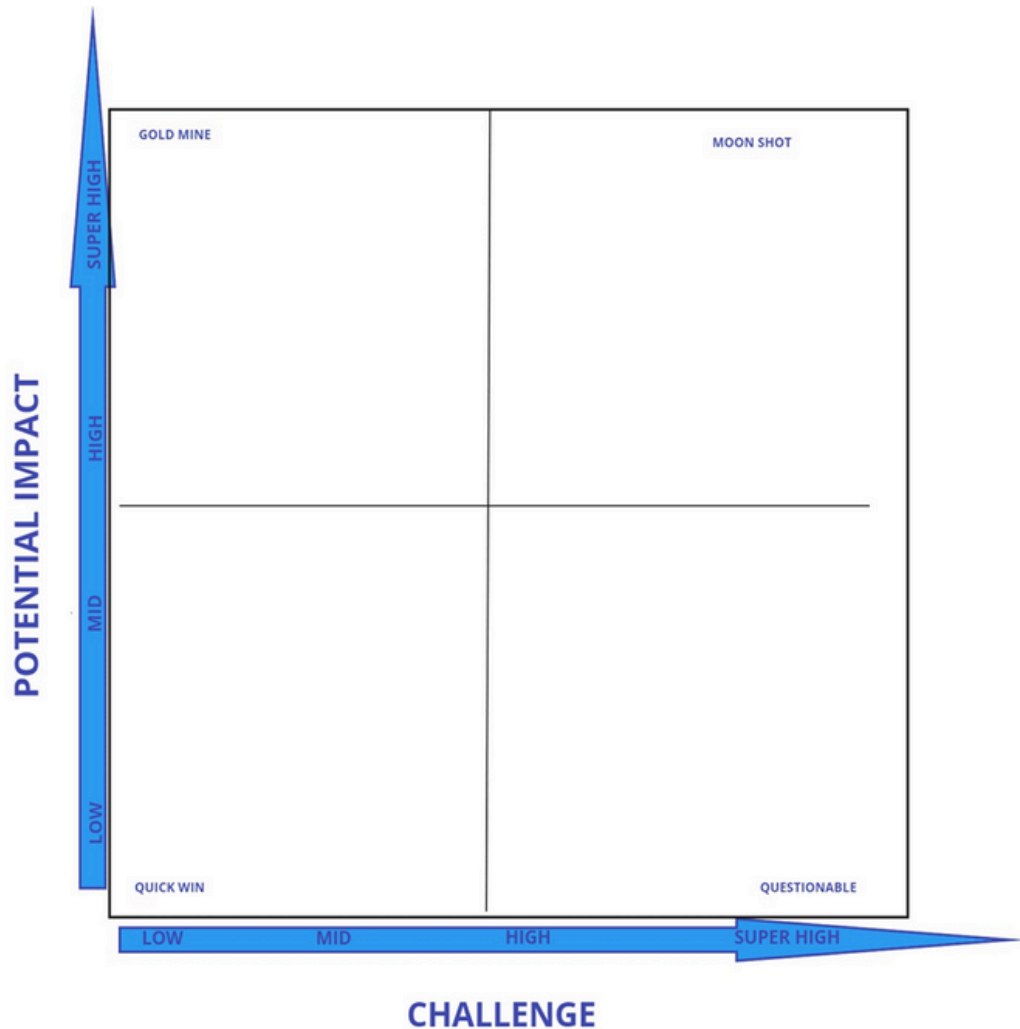
What is it?

A axis based tool to support the analysis and categorisation of ideas based on impact potential and the degree to which they might be challenging to implement. The tool helps with the prioritisation of ideas and aids users to decide on which ideas to progress and when.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during the online session on test actions. Partners will use this tool to map and analyse action ideas with their teams and ULG members locally.

The Brainstorming Board

What is it?

A tool (based on the test card developed Strategyzer) to aid the co-design of test actions by helping users to focus and flesh out key critical elements such as their assumptions, what exactly they will test and how they will measure success.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during the online session on test actions. Working in city teams, participants were asked to try out the tool on Miro by fleshing out their test action idea. Partners will use this tool to co-create test actions with their ULG members locally.

The Integrated Action Planning Grid

EcoCore Integrated Action Planning Grid

Type of Integration	Why is it important?	What are you currently doing to ensure this aspect in your action planning process?	What challenges are you experiencing with this aspect?	Things you plan to do in the future to improve on this aspect
Policy/Sector: Integrating social, economic & environmental challenges in order to join up solutions & minimize effects of negative externalities				
Horizontal: Developing partnerships locally, bringing together all the main actors relating to a specific challenge (public, private, academia, civil society)				
Vertical: Multi-level governance – aligning policies, interventions & funding upwards through the vertical chain of governance				
Territorial: Ensuring cooperation takes places between adjacent municipalities to ensure negative externalities are not passed on				
Hard & Soft Investments: Integrating hard (physical) & soft investments – often expressed as integrating ERDF & ESF funds in projects				

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What is it?

A grid based tool to support participants to reflect on the key elements of the integrated approach to action planning, to share approaches, discuss common challenges and identify and share areas and ideas for improvement.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during CNM 2 in Santo Tirso. Participants worked in small mixed city groups of 4-6 people. They filled in the grid, which aided discussion and promoted exchange and before reporting back key learnings and reflections to the group at the end.

Start, Stop, Continue, Improve

What is it?

A tool to promote structured reflection on a process. It aims to empower teams and individuals to continuously and proactively improve their work and processes. It can be used for self-reflection or as a peer review tool.
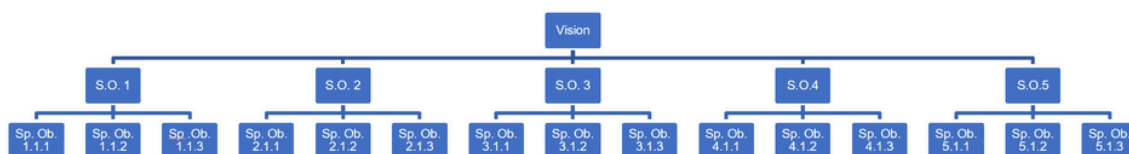
How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during CNM 1 in Balbriggan. At the end of the 2 day meeting, participants working in small groups agreed on peer feedback to be provided to the host city under the four headings - start, stop, continue, improve. Each group summarised their feedback to the host city at the end. EcoCore undertakes this activity at each CNM.

IAP Section 2 Co-Development Guide

Showing the Intervention Logic

2. Now you can start to map out your intervention logic, showing how you move from vision to results (SO) and outputs before moving on to actions and resources in the next steps

BUILDING THE INTERVENTION LOGIC

What is it?

A practical, step by step workshop plan created in PowerPoint to guide ULG co-ordinators in co-developing IAP section 2, together with their ULG stakeholders.

How did we use it?

The tool was shared with partners via email and feedback was invited. The tool will also be demonstrated and discussed during the ULG coordinator meet up in October.

The Test Action Canvas

The Challenge	What if...	We want to test if...
Write your specific challenge here	Formulate the question, the assumption you want to answer with, through your testing action	What exactly will you be able to test? Interest? Opinions? Feasibility? Availability? Be specific

Our IDEA	Measurement
Describe the precise format you will use. Be specific.	What are the elements you will be able to measure? Number of people, suddisfaction (through a survey), unpredicted reactions..

When	Roles	Target group
What is the best time for your testing action? How long will it last?	Who will be responsible for what?	Who will test it?

Actions	Documentation
List the sub-actions you are going to do in order to hold the testing actions	How will you guarantee the documentation of the activities?

What is it?

A framework produced by Liat Rogel, for summarising key information points regarding the planning and development of test actions.

How did we use it?

Partners were requested to complete this template in order to present and summarise their test actions during the partner meeting in Tuusula.

Timeout Method for Constructive Dialogue

1. Welcoming words and getting to know each other
2. Ground rules for a constructive discussion
3. Introduction for the theme
4. Buzzing in pairs and/or self reflection
5. Joint dialogue
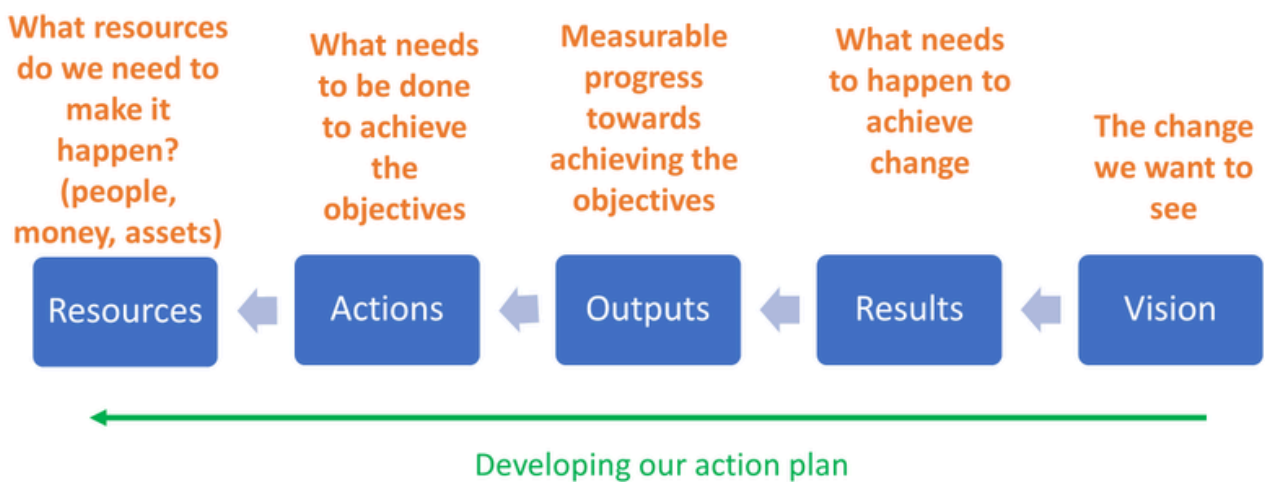6. Themes to be discussed further

What is it?

A method to generate and have constructive discussions between people from different backgrounds. It's useful whenever a deeper understanding of the topic or an equal encounter is required – for instance, as a part of preparations, decision-making or bringing different people together.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced briefly during a presentation by Heidi Hagman, Development Manager at Tuusula municipality. She explained how it was a method regularly employed by them with very satisfying results particularly amongst groups with diverging opinions and for sensitive topics. More info by clicking the image above.

The Intervention Logic Model

Intervention Logic Model - Transforming Vision To Action

What resources do we need to make it happen? (people, money, assets) — Resources

What needs to be done to achieve the objectives — Actions

Measurable progress towards achieving the objectives — Outputs

What needs to happen to achieve change — Results

The change we want to see — Vision

Developing our action plan

What is it?

A way of showcasing the logic of our thought process. It is read from left to right in its final version. But developed from right to left in the development phase. It should explain the logic of how an intervention contributes to the intended results.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during the ULG co-ordinator meet-up. It was further demonstrated using worked examples relevant to the EcoCore theme. Partners then had the opportunity to develop their own worked example in a group exercise.

The Test Action Table

TEST ACTION IDEA	INSERT TEST ACTION TITLE HERE
MAIN OBJECTIVE	
BACKGROUND & INSPIRATION	Is this an idea you saw in another city? Do you have a link to a similar initiative that inspired this action?
LEAD ORGANISATION	Who is coordinating and managing the action?
KEY PARTNERS	Who are the others involved?
MONITORING INDICATORS	What will you measure? In the following table remember to list the steps to show how you will measure these things, when and who will do it.
RESOURCES & BUDGET	How much will it cost? How will you pay for it? Plan also non financial resources e.g. (space, land, time donations)
DURATION	
RISKS & MITIGATION MEASURES	This is a low level risk This is a medium level risk

What is it?

A framework for defining and developing key information points regarding the planning and development of test actions.

How did we use it?

Introduced during the test actions support session, it was shared via Google Docs. Partners are requested to use the table to flesh out their test action ideas for review by the lead expert.

The IAP Peer Review Tool

1. Clarity and Presentation:

Is the overall theme being addressed clearly stated and presented effectively?	
Is the EcoCore topic and overarching challenges well-defined and understandable?	
Are there any areas where clarity could be improved?	

2. Current Situation/Data:

Are population statistics, demography, and other relevant data presented accurately and comprehensively?	
Is the data presented relevant (e.g. information on industrial/economic composition, employment statistics, air quality etc.)? Is it clear?	
Is there any additional data or context that could enhance understanding?	

3. Existing Strategies and Policies:

Are relevant local, regional, national, and European strategies and policies adequately presented?	

What is it?

A template designed to support partners to review and assess the IAP section 1 of their assigned peer partners. The template provides guiding assessment questions under the headings of clarity and presentation, current situation/data, existing strategies & policies , problem identification & integrated approach , vision/overarching objective and first test action ideas.

How did we use it?

The tool was shared with partners in advance of the Parnu meeting with clear instructions. Partners prefilled the template in advance, reviewing the IAPs of two assigned peers. The pre prepared feedback was shared in small groups of three during the meeting.

4 Cs Review

The 4 Cs method which is available in the URBACT toolbox was introduced to partners and used to support and facilitate the peer review of the IAPs during the core network meeting in Ormoz. Partners were provided with an Excel sheet with guiding questions on coherence and completeness to fill in before the meeting in Ormoz. Each partner reviewed the IAP of two other partners.

COHERENCE

Checking the plan stacks up
Does it all seem plausible and realistic?
Is it likely that completing all the actions will lead to the desired results?
Does the budget and resource for each action seem appropriate?
Are the actions linked to the overall strategy and the objectives?
Is there a clear & logical path showing how each action contributes to a result?

COMPLETENESS

Checking that all the parts have been considered
Are there one or more specific objectives clearly defined?
Do the results all include suitable measures/metrics?
Is the plan completed to a suitable level of detail?
Is there detail attached to each action e.g. specific activities, timings, ownership etc.?

CONCERNS

Listing the things that still need some attention
These include questions, doubts, or issues you need to focus on.

CONTINUATION

Finding ways to address the Concerns
The next steps for the city. These can be in response to the Concerns, or in response to other things identified during the review process
Activities identified here should have a timescale for completion and a responsible person allocated as a minimum.

What is it?

The 4Cs Review sheet helps assessing the coherence, completeness, concerns and continuation of an action plan, in order to make sure that it doesn't omit any crucial information.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced and used to guide the peer review of partner IAPs during the core network meeting in Ormoz. Partners were provided a guiding Excel template to be completed before the meeting and a reflection sheet to complete during the meeting.

Later in the network partners were introduced to tools and methods which could support with the development of their IAP section 4. These included the funding mix matrix which helps assess the most advantageous and feasible funding mix when considering a variety of funding sources from public, private and third sectors.

Funding Mix Matrix

What is it?

The funding mix matrix helps assess the most advantageous and feasible funding mix when considering a variety of funding sources from public, private and third sectors.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced briefly during the ULG coordinator's meet-up focussed on the guiding partners through the development of IAP section 4.

Tools for Impact: Supporting Partners to Communicate, Plan, and Inspire

Throughout the final months of the network, partners received tailored support to communicate their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) with clarity and confidence. In Dubrovnik, a suite of hands-on tools was introduced to help cities shape powerful narratives and engaging events:

- The Event Canvas: A framework for designing local IAP launch events with purpose, ensuring alignment between audience, objectives, format, and follow-up.
- Value Proposition Canvas: A tool to distil the IAP's unique value into a compelling one-liner -ideal for pitching to funders, decision-makers, or stakeholders.
- The Story Spine: Adapted from Pixar's storytelling model, this narrative tool helped partners craft emotionally resonant stories of their city's transformation- perfect for speeches, pitches, videos, and podcasts.

These tools (available on request) aren't just about communications - they're about building confidence, amplifying impact, and preparing partners to lead their IAPs into the next chapter.

Conclusions

EcoCore demonstrates a simple but important truth: Small cities are not small in their potential.

During this journey, nine small European cities:

- Became more confident in their capacity to lead industrial transition
- Strengthened relationships with stakeholders across sectors
- Developed new planning cultures rooted in participation and evidence
- Reimagined industrial areas as engines of economic, spatial and environmental transformation
- Created IAPs that are grounded, credible and forward-looking

The IAPs signal the formal end of EcoCore and the launchpad of implementation on the ground. Thanks to URBACT, EcoCore cities now carry the tools, relationships and ambition required to implement their visions — and to inspire other small cities across Europe.

Credit: Luminous Media - Photo & video production

Acknowledgements

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