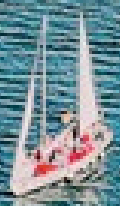
URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

In4Green

ACTION PLANNING NETWORK

FINAL REPORT



European industrial cities sailing together through the green transition

CONTENT
IN4GREEN FINAL REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION 3
2. FROM A SHARED CHALLENGE TO TEN LOCAL STRATEGIES 4
3. DESIGNING INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS 6
4. CO-PRODUCING THE IAPS AT LOCAL LEVEL 10
5. THE ADDED VALUE OF WORKING TRANSNATIONALLY 13
6. FROM BASELINE TO FINAL IAPS 19
7. KEY LESSONS AND TAKEAWAYS 22
ANNEX - OVERVIEW OF THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS 24

About this report
In4Green aimed to foster the green transition of small and medium-sized European industrial cities. It was an URBACT Action Planning Network running from June 2023 to December 2025, co-financed by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The network brought together ten European cities working collaboratively to design Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) supporting the green transformation of their local economies.

This Final Report focuses on the co-production process of the Integrated Action Plans developed within the In4Green network. Rather than summarising the content of each IAP, the report reflects on how action planning was carried out across the network, highlighting the approaches, tools, learning formats and transnational exchanges that supported cities throughout their journey. It builds on the Baseline Study, Quarterly Network Reports and other network outputs, capturing the collective learning generated over the lifetime of the project.

Author, graphic design and layout:
Jose Costero, Lead Expert of the In4Green URBACT Network.
December 2025.

Acknowledgements:
This report was developed with the active involvement of all partner cities of the In4Green network and their URBACT Local Groups, whose commitment and contributions shaped the action planning process described in this document.

Visual credits:
Most photographs, graphics and visual materials were produced by the author. Selected photographs are credited to Sara Malicka, including the cover image.

1. INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS IAP REPORT?

The In4Green network brings together ten small and medium-sized industrial cities across Europe, all facing a shared challenge: how to steer the green transition of their local economies while remaining competitive, inclusive and resilient. Within the URBACT framework, this challenge has been addressed through the co-production of Integrated Action Plans (IAPs), developed locally by each partner city with the support of their URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) and through continuous transnational exchange.

This document is the **Integrated Action Planning Report** of the In4Green network. Its purpose is not to summarise the content of the ten IAPs, nor to replace other network deliverables such as the Quarterly Network Reports or the In4Green Playbook. Instead, this report focuses on **how the IAPs were produced**, capturing the collective learning generated through the action planning process and reflecting on the methods, tools and dynamics that shaped it.

The report documents and analyses:

- how a common network challenge was translated into diverse local strategies;
- how the **integrated approach** promoted by URBACT was understood and applied in practice;
- how local co-production processes unfolded through ULGs and stakeholder engagement;
- how testing, peer learning and transnational activities contributed to more robust and implementable action plans;
- and how cities evolved from their initial baseline situation to more mature and structured IAPs.

In4Green has placed a strong emphasis on **learning by doing**. Throughout the network's lifetime, cities were encouraged to test ideas, reflect collectively on their experiences, and adapt their plans accordingly. A wide range of methodologies and tools supported this process, from participatory workshops and surveys at local level to peer reviews, thematic working groups, study visits and interactive formats at transnational level. Rather than applying a single, fixed methodology, the network relied on a combination of structured guidance and tailored support, recognising the diversity of local contexts, capacities and starting points.

This IAP Report therefore aims to serve three complementary purposes. First, it provides an **evidence-based reflection** on the action planning journey of the In4Green network, documenting key choices, challenges and turning points. Second, it offers **practical insights and lessons** for other cities and practitioners interested in co-producing integrated action plans for the green transition of local economies. Finally, it contributes to the wider URBACT knowledge base by illustrating how integrated, participatory and transnational approaches can be combined in practice within Action Planning Networks.

The following sections guide the reader through the main stages and dimensions of the In4Green action planning process, highlighting both common patterns across the network and the diversity of local approaches that emerged along the way.

2. FROM A SHARED CHALLENGE TO TEN LOCAL STRATEGIES

THEMATIC FOCUS OF THE IAPS

At the heart of the In4Green network lies a shared ambition: to support the green transition of local economies in small and medium-sized industrial cities. This common challenge provided a unifying framework for the network, while deliberately leaving room for cities to define their own priorities and pathways based on local contexts, assets and constraints.

From the outset, partners acknowledged that there could be no single model or blueprint for action planning. Industrial structures, economic specialisation, institutional capacities and stakeholder ecosystems differ significantly across the network. As a result, the Integrated Action Plans developed within In4Green reflect a **diversity of thematic focuses**, while remaining clearly aligned with the overarching network challenge.

Across the ten cities, several **recurring thematic strands** can be identified. Some IAPs place a strong emphasis on the transformation of **industrial areas and business parks**, exploring how these spaces can become greener, more energy-efficient and more attractive for sustainable investment. Others focus more explicitly on **circular economy approaches**, targeting resource efficiency, waste reduction, industrial symbiosis or local value chains. In a number of cases, the transition towards **climate neutrality and energy transition** plays a central role, including actions related to renewable energy, energy communities or decarbonisation of local economic activities. Finally, several cities highlight **innovation, digitalisation and skills** as key enablers of the green transition, linking economic transformation with innovation ecosystems, SMEs support and workforce development.

Rather than treating these themes in isolation, most IAPs combine two or more of these strands, reflecting the interconnected nature of economic, environmental and social challenges. This thematic diversity illustrates how the shared In4Green challenge was interpreted and translated locally, allowing each city to anchor its action plan in concrete and relevant priorities while contributing to a broader collective narrative.

Importantly, the thematic focus of each IAP did not emerge in a vacuum. It was shaped through an iterative process that combined initial baseline analysis, stakeholder dialogue within URBACT Local Groups, experimentation through testing activities, and continuous exposure to experiences from other partner cities. Transnational exchanges, thematic working groups and peer learning sessions played a key role in helping cities refine their focus, identify complementarities with other local policies, and avoid overly narrow or sectoral approaches.

As a result, the ten IAPs can be read both as **individual local strategies** and as **different expressions of a shared challenge**, each highlighting specific entry points into the green transition of local economies. Taken together, they provide a rich picture of how industrial cities across Europe are approaching this transition, balancing continuity with change and ambition with local feasibility.

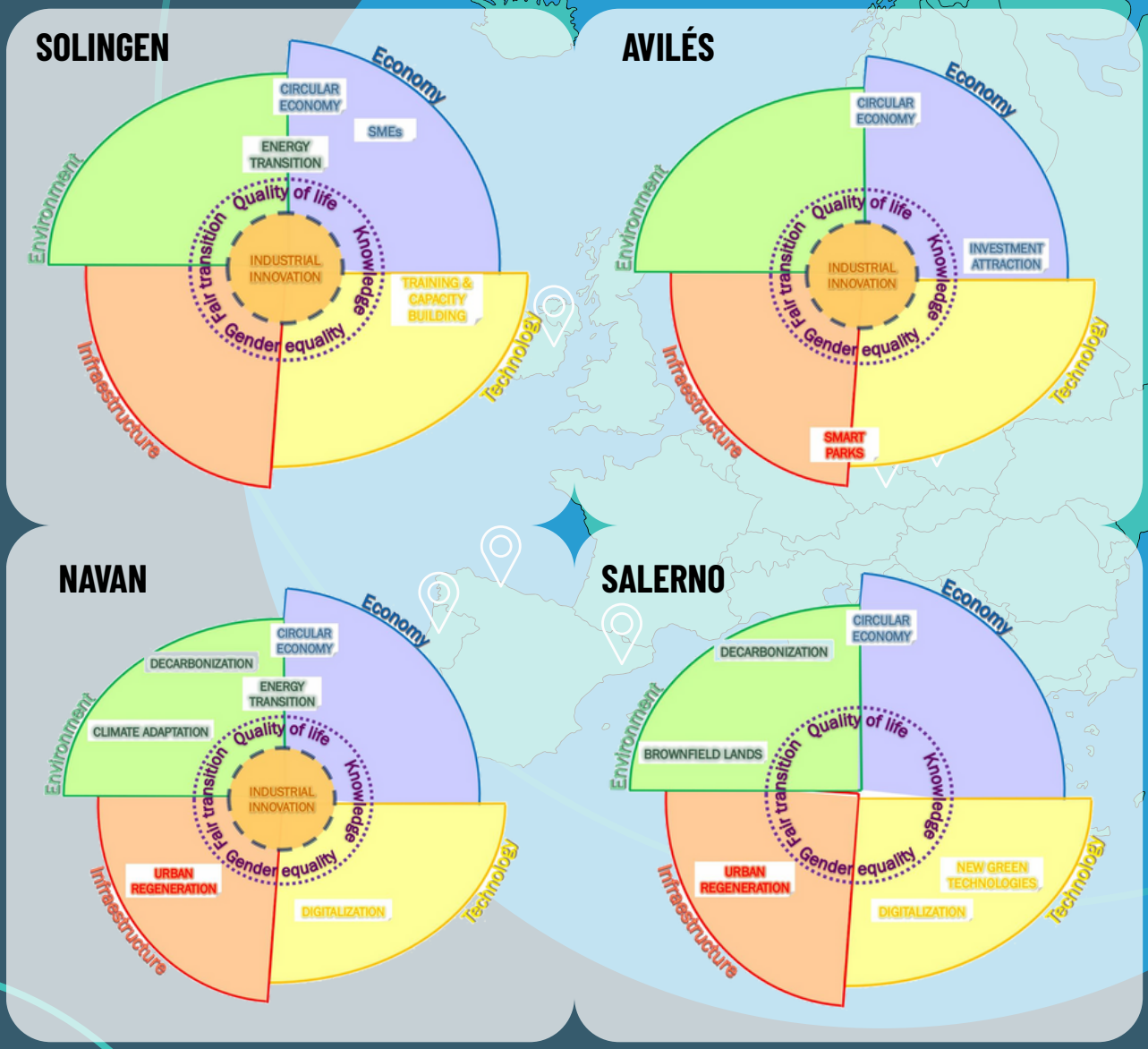
The thematic focus of the IAPs was also influenced by the **identification and discussion of existing good practices within the network**, which helped cities position their strategies within a broader collective knowledge base.

The next sections of this report explore in more detail how these thematic focuses were translated into integrated approaches, co-produced with local stakeholders, tested and refined over time, and strengthened through transnational cooperation within the In4Green network.

FROM ONE CHALLENGE TO MULTIPLE LOCAL ENTRY POINTS

While In4Green cities share a common challenge—greening local economies in industrial contexts—their Integrated Action Plans reflect diverse local entry points. Cities prioritised different combinations of industrial transformation, circular economy, energy transition, innovation and skills, depending on their assets and needs. This diversity was not seen as a weakness, but as a strength: it allowed cities to anchor their strategies in realistic local priorities while contributing to a coherent network-wide narrative on the green transition.

Local entry points of IAPs - Four examples



3. DESIGNING INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS

HOW INTEGRATION WAS ADDRESSED IN IN4GREEN

Delivering an integrated approach to sustainable urban development is a core principle of the URBACT programme and a central requirement of Action Planning Networks. In In4Green, this principle was not treated as an abstract concept, but as a **practical challenge**: how to design action plans for the green transition of local economies that effectively connect economic, environmental, social, spatial and governance dimensions.

From the early stages of the network, partners were encouraged to reflect on integration in a broad sense. This included not only the integration of policy sectors, but also the alignment of different levels of governance, the involvement of diverse stakeholders, and the coherence between short-term actions and long-term strategic objectives. The aim was to move beyond sectoral or project-based approaches and to support cities in developing IAPs that could realistically influence wider local development trajectories.

To support this process, In4Green combined **conceptual guidance** with **hands-on tools** that helped cities translate the idea of integration into concrete planning choices. A key reference point throughout the network was the shared understanding of integration promoted by URBACT, structured around multiple dimensions such as thematic, spatial, institutional, stakeholder and temporal integration. Rather than asking cities to address all dimensions in the same way, the network emphasised informed choices, encouraging partners to make explicit which integration aspects were most relevant and feasible in their local context.

One of the most distinctive tools used in this process was the Integrated Approach Mandala, developed and applied within the network as a visual and reflective instrument. The mandala brought together the main dimensions of integration and invited cities to assess, in a structured and visual manner, how each aspect was already considered, planned for, or deemed less relevant in their IAP. This exercise helped partners to identify blind spots, clarify priorities and facilitate discussions within ULGs and transnational workshops. Importantly, it also highlighted that integration is not a fixed state, but a **dynamic process** that can evolve over time as plans mature and capacities grow.

3. DESIGNING INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS

HOW INTEGRATION WAS ADDRESSED IN IN4GREEN

Integration was also addressed through the **structuring of actions** within the IAPs. Tools such as action tables, impact/effort matrices and prioritisation exercises were used to support collective decision-making and to ensure coherence between objectives, actions, resources and expected results. These tools helped cities to:

- break down complex strategies into implementable actions;
- assess the relative ambition and feasibility of proposed actions;
- clarify responsibilities and dependencies across departments and stakeholders;
- and link actions to monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

A transversal dimension of integration in In4Green was the consideration of **gender equality and inclusiveness**. Dedicated Gender Equality Sessions encouraged partners to reflect on how the green transition of local economies may affect different groups differently, and how IAPs could avoid reinforcing existing inequalities. Rather than introducing gender as a separate policy field, the network promoted its integration across actions, governance arrangements and participation processes, reinforcing the idea that inclusive planning is a condition for sustainable and legitimate transitions.

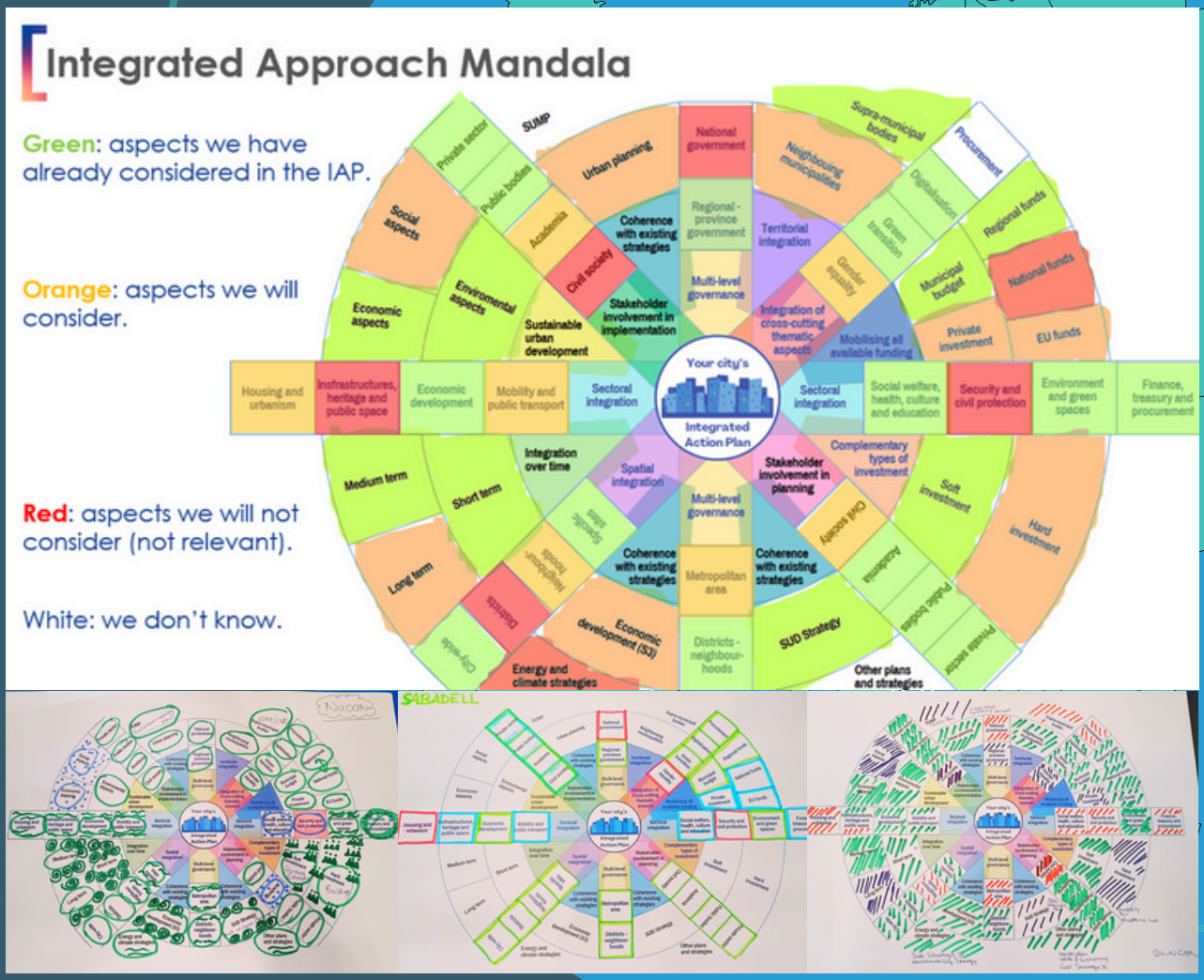
Overall, the experience of In4Green shows that designing integrated action plans requires a balance between ambition and pragmatism. While not all cities were able to address every integration dimension to the same extent, the use of shared concepts, visual tools and structured planning instruments enabled partners to **make integration explicit**, discuss it collectively and embed it more systematically into their IAPs. This approach laid a stronger foundation for implementation, helping cities to anticipate coordination challenges and to position their action plans within broader local policy frameworks.

The following section explores how these integrated approaches were co-produced at local level, focusing on the role of URBACT Local Groups, participatory processes and tailored support mechanisms.

TOOL IN FOCUS: INTEGRATED APPROACH MANDALA

The Integrated Approach Mandala designed by the Lead Expert was used as a visual and reflective tool to support cities in designing more integrated action plans. It helped local teams and ULGs explore how different dimensions—policy sectors, governance levels, stakeholders, spatial focus and timeframes—were addressed in their IAPs. Rather than aiming for full coverage of all dimensions, the mandala encouraged informed choices, helping cities identify gaps, manage trade-offs and progressively strengthen integration where it mattered most.

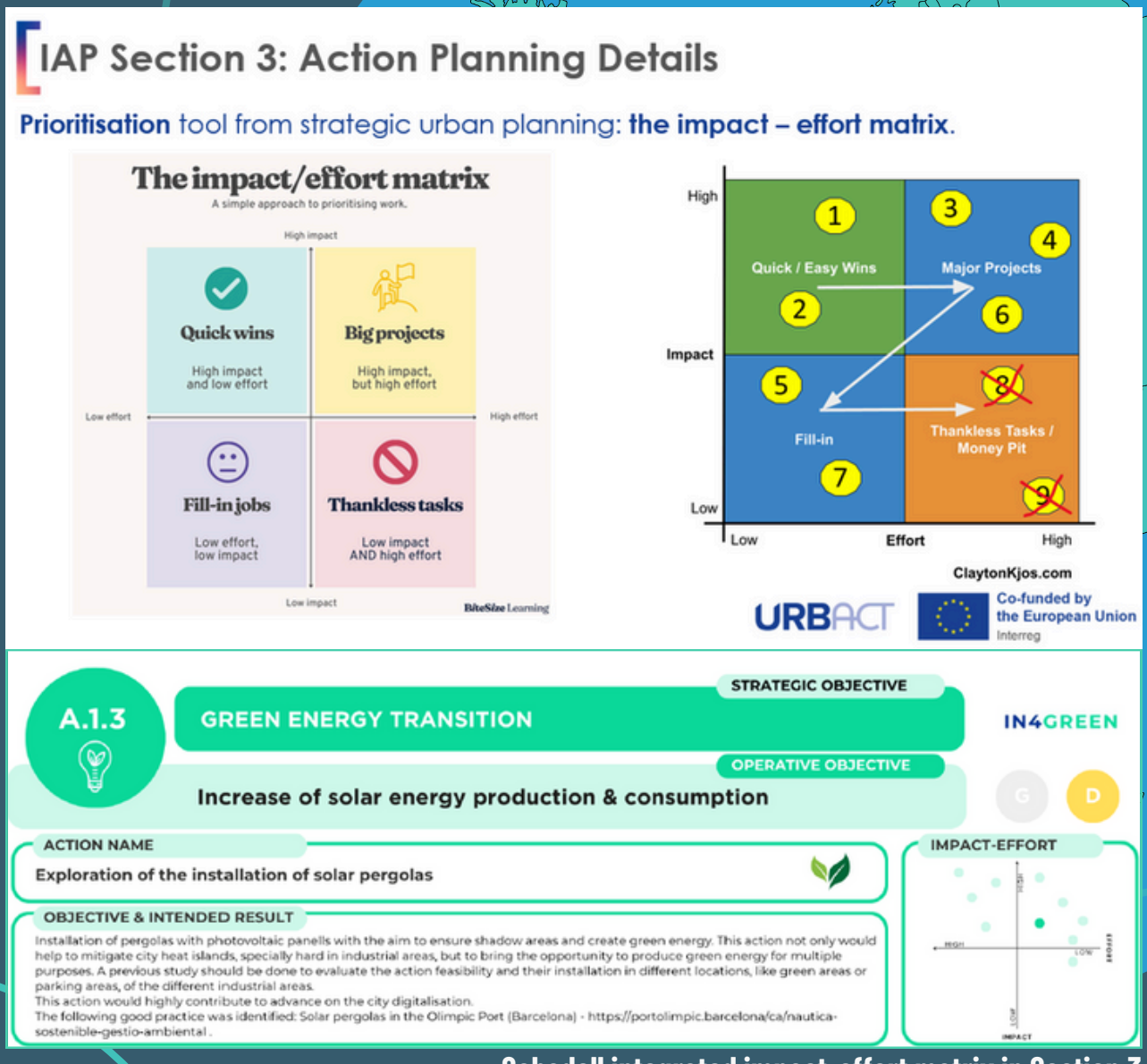
A visual tool for integrated approach in action planning



STRUCTURING AND PRIORITISING ACTIONS

To move from ideas to implementable actions, cities used structured tools such as action tables and impact/effort matrices. These instruments supported collective decision-making by clarifying objectives, responsibilities, feasibility and expected impact. By visualising trade-offs between ambition and effort, stakeholders were able to prioritise actions more transparently and realistically. This process strengthened the internal coherence of the IAPs and improved their credibility as strategic documents for implementation.

Impact-Effort Matrix for actions prioritization



Sabadell integrated impact-effort matrix in Section 3

4. CO-PRODUCING THE IAPS AT LOCAL LEVEL

PARTICIPATION, TOOLS AND TAILORED SUPPORT

A central pillar of the In4Green Action Planning Network was the co-production of Integrated Action Plans at local level. In line with URBACT principles, the development of each IAP was not conceived as a technical exercise led solely by municipal administrations, but as a **collective process involving a wide range of local stakeholders** through structured participation, experimentation and iterative feedback.

Across the ten partner cities, this co-production process was primarily anchored in the work of **URBACT Local Groups (ULGs)**. While the size, composition and intensity of ULGs varied depending on local contexts, all partners engaged stakeholders from different spheres, typically combining representatives from municipal departments, local businesses and industry, business support organisations, civil society organisations, educational or research institutions, and in some cases citizens' groups. This diversity allowed cities to bring together multiple perspectives on the green transition of local economies and to test assumptions against real local needs and constraints.

Rather than following a single, standardised participation model, In4Green promoted a **flexible and adaptive approach** to co-production. Cities were encouraged to design their local processes in ways that matched their institutional culture, stakeholder ecosystems and previous experience with participatory planning. As a result, ULG activities ranged from regular structured meetings and thematic workshops to more informal working sessions, bilateral meetings with key actors and targeted consultations around specific actions.

To support meaningful participation and avoid tokenistic engagement, the network placed strong emphasis on the **use of practical tools and facilitation methods**. A wide range of URBACT-inspired and tailor-made tools were used across the network to structure discussions, support collective decision-making and translate dialogue into concrete planning outputs. These included, among others:

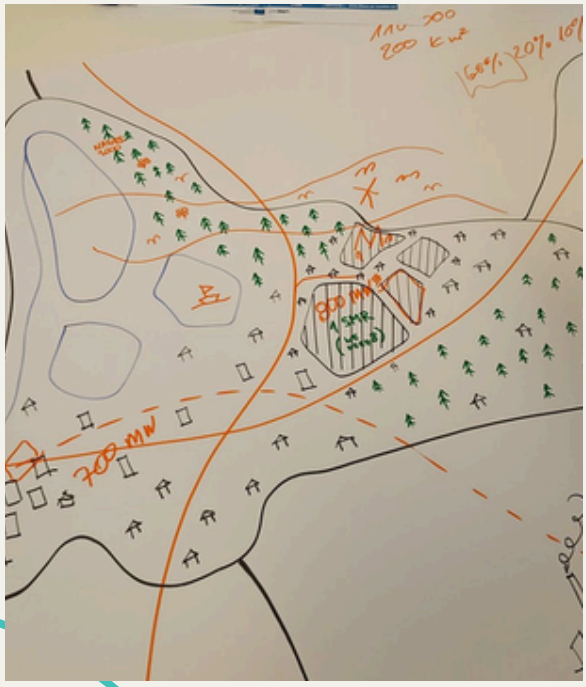
- **Action tables and intervention logic templates**, used to structure proposed actions and clarify objectives, responsibilities and expected results.
- **Impact/Effort matrices**, supporting prioritisation by helping stakeholders assess ambition versus feasibility.
- **Integrated Approach Mandala**, enabling local groups to reflect on different dimensions of integration and identify gaps or tensions.
- **Testing Activities Canvas**, used to design and reflect on small-scale testing actions before scaling them up.
- **Evidence Boards and Key Learning Tables**, helping cities capture insights, lessons learned and emerging consensus throughout the process.

4. CO-PRODUCING THE IAPS AT LOCAL LEVEL

PARTICIPATION, TOOLS AND TAILORED SUPPORT

Digital tools also played an important role in facilitating participation and feedback, particularly in contexts where time constraints or geographical dispersion made face-to-face engagement more challenging. Cities made use of Microsoft Forms for surveys and structured feedback, as well as **interactive presentation tools such as AhaSlides**, which enabled real-time polling, prioritisation exercises and anonymous input during workshops and transnational meetings. These tools helped to broaden participation and create more inclusive and dynamic discussion spaces.

All partners complemented their ULG work with **testing actions and pilot activities**, which proved particularly valuable for grounding discussions in practice. These testing actions allowed cities to explore new approaches, engage stakeholders around concrete initiatives and generate evidence to refine or adjust proposed actions. In many cases, the insights gained through testing activities directly informed the final design of IAP actions, strengthening their realism and local ownership.



Beyond standard ULG activities, In4Green also placed strong emphasis on **tailored support mechanisms**. Bilateral meetings, bespoke support sessions and targeted feedback loops between experts and city teams allowed partners to address specific challenges, clarify methodological questions and adapt tools to their local realities. This personalised support was particularly important for cities with less prior experience in integrated action planning or participatory processes, helping to level capacities across the network.

Overall, the co-production processes developed within In4Green highlight the importance of **combining structure with flexibility**. While shared principles, tools and milestones provided a common framework, cities retained ownership over how participation was organised locally. This balance enabled partners to build trust with stakeholders, progressively deepen engagement and move from broad discussions to more focused and implementable action plans.

The following section explores how these locally co-produced processes were reinforced through transnational exchange, peer learning and collective reflection at network level, and how this added value contributed to shaping the final Integrated Action Plans.

CO-PRODUCTION IN PRACTICE: TOOLS AND FORMATS

Co-producing the IAPs required a combination of facilitation methods and participation formats. Cities used workshops, bilateral meetings, surveys and interactive digital tools to engage stakeholders at different levels. Tools such as Evidence Boards, real-time polling and online feedback forms helped structure discussions and capture inputs. This flexible mix of formats allowed cities to adapt participation to local contexts, time constraints and stakeholder profiles, while maintaining continuity throughout the action planning process.

Evidence Board: visualising connections and shared challenges

5. THE ADDED VALUE OF WORKING TRANSNATIONALLY

BUILDING A SHARED KNOWLEDGE BASE: IDENTIFYING AND LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICES

A distinctive feature of the In4Green action planning process was the **systematic identification, analysis and use of existing good practices** from partner cities as a core learning resource. Rather than treating good practices as inspirational examples detached from local realities, the network embedded their collection and discussion directly into the action planning methodology.

The process started at an early stage of the network. Already during the **Baseline Study and the development of Partner Profiles in the Activation Stage**, cities were invited to identify relevant local initiatives, policies or projects related to the green transition of industrial economies. This initial mapping helped reveal the diversity of experiences within the network and highlighted areas of shared interest, complementary expertise and potential peer learning.

Building on this first step, the network developed a **common template for the structured collection of good practices**. This template went beyond basic descriptive information and placed a strong emphasis on capturing **lessons learned**, including success factors, challenges encountered, governance arrangements and conditions for transferability. This approach encouraged cities to reflect critically on their own experiences and to articulate knowledge that could be useful for others, rather than simply showcasing achievements.

The resulting pool of good practices became a **strategic resource for transnational learning activities**. It informed the design of **study visits** within Transnational Meetings, helping partners collectively decide which local experiences to explore in depth and why. In parallel, the good practices formed the backbone of the **Peer Learning Sessions** organised during the network, where cities presented and discussed concrete experiences in a structured and comparative way.

In total, **nine Peer Learning Sessions** were organised, each focusing on specific thematic dimensions of the In4Green challenge. Each session typically featured between **two and four good practices**, presented by partner cities and discussed collectively with peers and experts. These sessions allowed cities to test assumptions, explore transferability and draw practical insights that could feed directly into their own action planning processes.

5. THE ADDED VALUE OF WORKING TRANSNATIONALLY

BUILDING A SHARED KNOWLEDGE BASE: IDENTIFYING AND LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICES

Over the lifetime of the network, a total of **49 good practices** were identified, analysed and discussed. These practices did not remain isolated learning moments, but were progressively consolidated and capitalised. They ultimately provided the empirical foundation for the **In4Green Playbook**, which translates the network's collective experience into pathways, lessons and starter moves for implementation.

By integrating good practice identification into all stages of the network—from diagnosis and peer learning to final capitalisation—In4Green strengthened the link between experience and action. This approach ensured that learning was cumulative, grounded in real cases and continuously connected to the development of Integrated Action Plans.

FROM LOCAL EXPERIENCES TO A SHARED POOL OF GOOD PRACTICES

Good practice identification was embedded throughout the In4Green process. Starting from the Baseline Study and Partner Profiles, cities mapped existing experiences and later documented them using a shared template focused on lessons learned. These practices informed study visits and peer learning sessions, enabling structured comparison and reflection. In total, 49 good practices were identified and discussed, forming the empirical foundation of the In4Green Playbook and strengthening the link between experience, learning and action planning.

In4Green Good Practice Sheet

In4Green URBACT NETWORK

GOOD PRACTICE SHEET

Public-Private Cooperation Agreements: Avilés Acuerda (2008-2011) Avilés Avanza (2011-2017) AVILÉS INNOVA (2017-2021)	
GENERAL DATA OF THE GOOD PRACTICE (GP)	
City:	Avilés
Entity responsible of the GP:	Avilés City Council
Other stakeholders involved in the GP:	Social Agents (Labour unions and business associations)
Date/s of the GP (beginning and end):	2017-2021
Budget of GP	119.358.390,62 €[1]
INFORMATION ABOUT THE GP	
1. General objective of the GP.	
The general objective of the Public-Private Social Agreement (GP) called AVILÉS INNOVA is to promote economic development, sustainability, job creation and social cohesion in the period from 2017 to 2021. This agreement is the third formalised pact in this direction and focuses on promoting the current urban model that characterises Avilés. Specific objectives include the rejuvenation of the demographic structure, the	

5. THE ADDED VALUE OF WORKING TRANSNATIONALLY

FROM SHARED KNOWLEDGE TO PEER LEARNING AND TRANSFER

Building on this shared knowledge base, transnational activities focused on peer learning, transfer and collective reflection.

While Integrated Action Plans are developed and implemented at local level, one of the defining features of the In4Green network was the way **transnational cooperation actively shaped and strengthened local action planning processes**. Rather than functioning as a parallel layer of activity, transnational exchanges were deliberately designed to feed into local reflection, decision-making and co-production.

Throughout the lifetime of the network, transnational activities provided cities with a **safe and structured learning space** to compare approaches, challenge assumptions and progressively refine their IAPs. This added value emerged not from the replication of good practices, but from a process of collective intelligence, where cities learned as much from similarities as from differences in context, ambition and capacity.

A key role was played by the **Transnational Meetings (TMs)**, which combined plenary discussions, thematic workshops and hands-on working sessions. These meetings allowed partners to step back from their local realities, reflect on common challenges and situate their action planning efforts within a wider European perspective. Importantly, each TM was designed around specific moments of the IAP journey, ensuring that discussions were directly relevant to the stage cities were at, whether exploring challenges, testing ideas or consolidating actions.

Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) further deepened this learning process by offering more focused spaces for exchange around key dimensions of the green transition of local economies. Within these smaller groups, cities were able to explore specific topics in greater depth, share emerging ideas and receive targeted feedback from peers and experts. This thematic focus helped cities to sharpen their priorities, avoid overly generic approaches and identify concrete entry points for action.

Transnational learning was also reinforced through **Study Visits**, which provided opportunities to observe how policies, projects and governance arrangements operate in practice in other cities. These visits helped translate abstract concepts into tangible experiences, allowing participants to critically assess what might be transferable to their own context and what would require adaptation. Rather than promoting direct copying, study visits supported a more nuanced understanding of conditions for success, risks and limitations.

5. THE ADDED VALUE OF WORKING TRANSNATIONALLY

FROM SHARED KNOWLEDGE TO PEER LEARNING AND TRANSFER

To encourage concise knowledge sharing and peer feedback, In4Green made systematic use of **interactive and dynamic formats**, such as PechaKucha-style presentations and action-focused pitching sessions. These formats pushed cities to articulate the core logic of their proposed actions clearly and succinctly, making it easier for peers to engage, ask critical questions and offer constructive suggestions. This process often revealed blind spots or assumptions that had gone unnoticed at local level, contributing to more robust action design.

Peer learning was further supported through **structured peer review moments**, where cities presented draft elements of their IAPs and received feedback from other partners. These exchanges fostered a culture of openness and mutual support, reinforcing trust within the network and encouraging cities to reflect honestly on both strengths and weaknesses. In many cases, insights gained through peer review led to adjustments in governance arrangements, action prioritisation or stakeholder engagement strategies.

Digital tools and interactive methodologies also played an important role in enhancing transnational exchange. Tools such as **AhaSlides**, shared learning tables and collective reflection exercises enabled real-time feedback and collective sense-making during meetings. This helped ensure that learning was captured, shared and translated into actionable insights, rather than remaining at the level of informal discussion.

Overall, the transnational dimension of In4Green acted as a **catalyst for local action planning**, accelerating learning cycles and supporting cities in moving from exploration to more mature and implementable IAPs. By combining structured exchange, thematic focus, experiential learning and peer feedback, the network created conditions for cities to collectively navigate the complexity of the green transition, while retaining full ownership of their local strategies.

The next section looks at how these local and transnational dynamics unfolded over time, tracing the journey from the initial baseline situation to the final Integrated Action Plans developed by the ten partner cities.

LEARNING FORMATS AT NETWORK LEVEL

In4Green used a variety of learning formats to support transnational exchange, including study visits, thematic working groups, peer reviews and PechaKucha-style presentations. These formats encouraged concise knowledge sharing, constructive feedback and critical reflection. Interactive tools and facilitated discussions helped capture insights and translate them into actionable lessons. By aligning learning formats with different stages of the IAP journey, transnational activities directly contributed to strengthening local action planning processes.

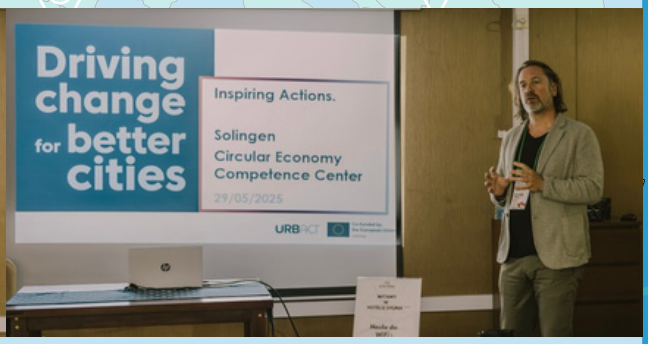
PechaKucha-style presentations of inspiring actions

FAMALICAO

AVILÉS

LARISSA

SOLINGEN



6. FROM BASELINE TO FINAL IAPS

AN EVOLVING ACTION PLANNING JOURNEY

This evolution was supported not only by local co-production and testing, but also by the progressive accumulation of shared knowledge through good practice identification and peer learning.

The action planning process within the In4Green network unfolded as a **progressive learning journey**, shaped by reflection, experimentation and continuous adjustment over time. Rather than following a linear path, cities moved back and forth between analysis, dialogue and action, gradually refining their Integrated Action Plans as their understanding of challenges, opportunities and constraints deepened.

At the **starting point**, the Baseline Study and the initial IAP Roadmaps provided a shared diagnostic framework. They highlighted both common patterns across the network—such as industrial legacy, environmental pressures, skills gaps and investment constraints—and significant differences in local contexts, institutional capacities and previous experience with integrated planning. For many cities, this phase was crucial in clarifying the scope of their IAPs, identifying relevant stakeholders and acknowledging the limits of what could realistically be addressed within the timeframe of the network.

The baseline phase also revealed that cities were starting from **very different positions**. Some partners already had strong strategic frameworks and participatory cultures in place, while others were engaging for the first time in a structured, integrated action planning exercise. Recognising this diversity early on helped the network adopt a flexible approach, allowing cities to progress at different speeds while maintaining a common direction.

6. FROM BASELINE TO FINAL IAPS
AN EVOLVING ACTION PLANNING JOURNEY

The **mid-point of the network** marked a significant shift from exploration to consolidation. By this stage, cities had tested initial ideas, engaged more deeply with stakeholders through ULGs, and begun to translate broad ambitions into more concrete action proposals. The Mid-Term Review and State of Actions reflections played a key role in this transition, encouraging partners to take stock of what was working, what was proving more difficult, and where adjustments were needed.

Testing activities and pilot actions were particularly influential during this phase. They provided tangible feedback on feasibility, stakeholder interest and implementation challenges, often leading cities to rethink priorities, scale ambitions up or down, or reframe actions in more realistic terms. At the same time, transnational peer learning helped cities to benchmark their progress against others, offering reassurance in some cases and constructive challenge in others.

By the **final stage**, the Integrated Action Plans had evolved into more coherent and structured documents. Compared to initial drafts, the final IAPs generally show:

- Clearer strategic focus and prioritisation.
- Stronger links between objectives, actions and expected results.
- More explicit consideration of governance, resources and monitoring.
- And a better articulation of how actions fit within existing local strategies and policy frameworks.

Importantly, this maturation did not necessarily mean that all actions were fully detailed or ready for immediate implementation. In line with URBACT principles, cities made deliberate choices about which actions to prioritise and develop in greater depth, while leaving others at a more conceptual level. What distinguishes the final IAPs is not completeness, but **strategic clarity and credibility**, supported by a shared understanding among key local actors.

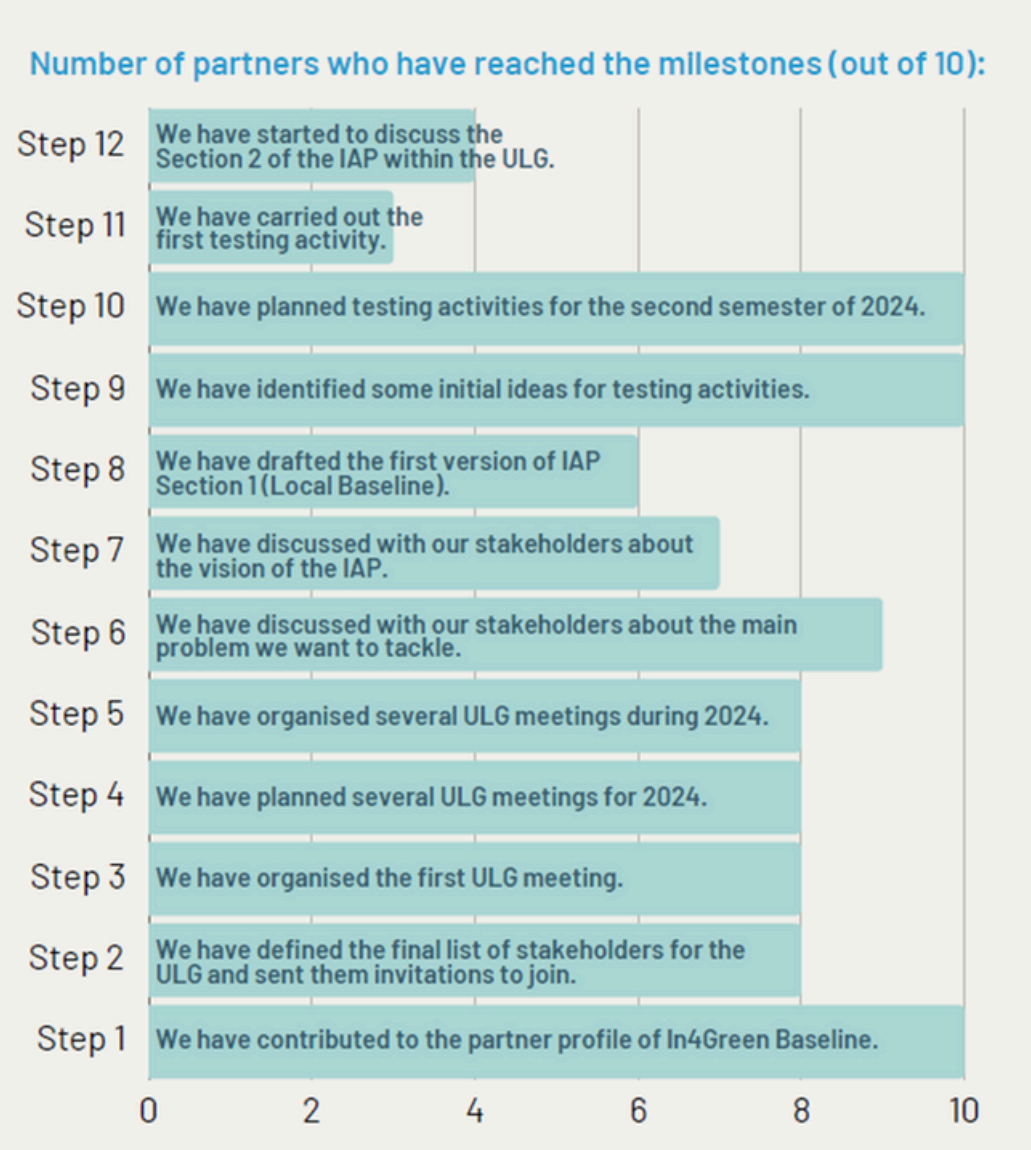
Looking across the network, the journey from baseline to final IAPs illustrates how **time, iteration and collective learning** are essential ingredients of integrated action planning. The combination of local co-production, testing, tailored support and transnational exchange enabled cities to move beyond initial ideas towards more robust and context-sensitive strategies. Rather than producing static plans, In4Green supported cities in developing IAPs as **living frameworks**, capable of guiding implementation and adaptation beyond the lifetime of the network.

The final section of this report draws together the main lessons from this journey, highlighting key takeaways that may be relevant for other cities and practitioners engaged in the green transition of local economies.

THE IAP JOURNEY OVER TIME

The development of the Integrated Action Plans followed an iterative journey over time. Starting from a shared baseline analysis, cities progressively explored ideas, tested actions, reflected on progress and refined their strategies. Mid-term reviews marked a key transition from exploration to consolidation. By the final stage, IAPs had evolved into more focused and coherent frameworks, reflecting learning accumulated through co-production, testing and transnational exchange. The plans are intended as living documents, adaptable during implementation.

Pausing at mid-term to reflect and adjust course



7. KEY LESSONS AND TAKEAWAYS

WHAT OTHER CITIES CAN LEARN FROM IN4GREEN

The In4Green experience highlights a number of lessons that may be relevant for other cities seeking to design and co-produce Integrated Action Plans for the green transition of local economies. While each local context is unique, the action planning journey of the network points to several **transferable principles** that can support more effective and credible strategies.

1. Start from a shared challenge, but allow multiple local entry points.
A common thematic focus provides coherence and direction, but meaningful action planning requires flexibility. In In4Green, cities were able to translate the shared challenge of greening local economies into diverse strategies rooted in their specific industrial structures, governance cultures and capacities. This balance between unity and diversity proved essential to ensure ownership and relevance.

2. Treat integration as a practical design task, not as an abstract concept.
The integrated approach becomes tangible when supported by concrete tools and structured reflection. Visual and hands-on instruments such as the Integrated Approach Mandala, action tables and prioritisation matrices helped cities make integration explicit, identify gaps and manage trade-offs. Integration was most effective when cities focused on a limited number of dimensions and addressed them coherently, rather than attempting to cover everything at once.

3. Invest in co-production as a process, not as a one-off consultation.
ULGs were most effective where they evolved over time, building trust and progressively deepening engagement. Combining structured workshops, targeted consultations, digital tools and bilateral exchanges allowed cities to adapt participation to different stakeholder needs and levels of involvement. Tailored support and facilitation were particularly important to maintain momentum and ensure meaningful contributions.

4. Use testing and experimentation to strengthen action planning.
Small-scale testing activities provided valuable insights into feasibility, stakeholder interest and implementation challenges. By experimenting before finalising actions, cities were able to refine their proposals, adjust ambition levels and increase realism. Testing helped bridge the gap between ideas and implementable actions, reinforcing the credibility of the IAPs.

7. KEY LESSONS AND TAKEAWAYS

WHAT OTHER CITIES CAN LEARN FROM IN4GREEN

5. Build and use a shared knowledge base of good practices.
Systematic identification and analysis of existing practices within the network enriched local action planning and supported peer learning. Focusing on lessons learned and transferability—rather than on showcasing success—enabled cities to critically assess what could work in their own context. Embedding good practices into study visits, peer learning sessions and capitalisation outputs ensured cumulative learning over time.

6. Design transnational exchange as a learning process that feeds local action.
The added value of working transnationally was greatest when exchanges were clearly linked to the stages of the IAP journey. Thematic working groups, peer reviews, study visits and interactive formats created spaces for collective reflection and constructive challenge. This helped cities accelerate learning cycles, validate choices and gain confidence in their strategies.

7. Accept that Integrated Action Plans are living documents.
In4Green showed that the strength of an IAP lies not in exhaustiveness, but in strategic clarity and shared ownership. Cities made conscious choices about which actions to develop in depth, recognising that plans would continue to evolve during implementation. Viewing IAPs as living frameworks, rather than fixed blueprints, helped cities position them as tools for long-term transformation.

Together, these lessons underline the importance of combining structure with flexibility, ambition with realism, and local ownership with transnational learning. The In4Green experience demonstrates that integrated action planning, when grounded in participation, experimentation and shared learning, can support industrial cities in navigating the complexity of the green transition in a credible and context-sensitive way.

ANNEX
OVERVIEW OF THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS

The ten Integrated Action Plans developed within In4Green reflect diverse local strategies addressing the green transition of industrial economies. This annex provides a concise overview of each IAP, focusing on the main types of actions proposed, rather than on detailed descriptions. Together, these summaries illustrate the variety of approaches adopted by partner cities while highlighting common action areas across the network.

Avilés (ES)
The IAP focuses on the transformation of industrial areas towards greener and more competitive models. Actions include energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions for industrial sites, circular economy initiatives linked to industrial symbiosis, and support measures for SMEs to adopt cleaner production processes.

Bijelo Polje (ME)
Bijelo Polje's IAP prioritises sustainable industrial development and local economic diversification. Proposed actions focus on improving resource efficiency in industrial activities, supporting green entrepreneurship, strengthening cooperation between public authorities and businesses, and raising awareness and skills related to the green transition.

Dąbrowa Górnicza (PL)
The IAP addresses the green transformation of a post-industrial city through actions targeting brownfield regeneration, renewable energy deployment, and circular economy solutions. It also includes measures to support innovation, attract sustainable investment and strengthen collaboration between industry, research and local authorities.

Larissa (GR)
The IAP combines actions for greening industrial activities with broader climate and energy objectives. It includes measures to promote renewable energy and energy communities, support circular economy practices among local businesses, and strengthen governance and coordination mechanisms for the green transition.

Navan (IE)
Navan's IAP focuses on creating enabling conditions for a greener local economy. Proposed actions include support for low-carbon business practices, development of sustainable industrial and logistics solutions, promotion of innovation and skills, and improved coordination between economic development, climate and spatial planning policies.

ANNEX
OVERVIEW OF THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS

Salerno (IT)
The IAP addresses the regeneration of industrial and port-related areas through sustainability-driven actions. These include energy transition measures, circular economy initiatives, innovation support for SMEs, and improved governance frameworks to align economic development with environmental and social objectives.

Sabadell (ES)
Sabadell's IAP focuses on the green transformation of consolidated industrial areas. Actions include energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions for businesses, circular economy and waste reduction initiatives, support services for SMEs, and measures to foster innovation, collaboration and sustainable investment.

Solingen (DE)
The IAP centres on strengthening a sustainable and innovation-driven industrial economy. Proposed actions target energy efficiency, circular economy practices, digitalisation and innovation in manufacturing, as well as skills development and stronger cooperation between businesses, research institutions and the municipality.

Vila Nova de Famalicão (PT)
Famalicão's IAP focuses on reinforcing a circular and innovative local economy. Actions include support for industrial symbiosis, resource efficiency in business parks, promotion of sustainable products and processes, and initiatives to strengthen skills, innovation and collaboration within the local industrial ecosystem.

Žďár nad Sázavou (CZ)
The IAP focuses on supporting the green transition of local industry through targeted actions. These include energy and resource efficiency measures, support for sustainable production, development of local value chains, and initiatives to improve skills, awareness and cooperation among key local stakeholders.

Taken together, these Integrated Action Plans illustrate how a shared European challenge can give rise to diverse yet complementary local responses. While the proposed actions reflect different starting points, priorities and capacities, common patterns clearly emerge across the network, particularly around energy transition, circular economy, innovation, skills and improved governance. This overview highlights both the richness of local strategies and the added value of a collective action planning framework, showing how In4Green has supported industrial cities in shaping context-specific, credible and forward-looking pathways for the green transition of their economies.