

LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Paving the way for a circular transition of cities

FINAL INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN REPORT



LET'S GO CIRCULAR! URBACT IV network

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URBACT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LET'S GO CIRCULAR! is an URBACT IV Action Planning Network bringing together ten cities from nine countries to accelerate their transition towards circular, regenerative and resource-efficient urban systems.

The project followed URBACT principles of integrated urban development, local co-production, transnational exchange and peer learning, while grounding circular economy concepts within real local contexts, governance structures and communities. The network generated Integrated Action Plans (IAPs), tested pilot actions, built new governance mechanisms and strengthened stakeholder ecosystems.

This report synthesises the processes, achievements, methodologies and lessons from over 2.5 years of collaborative work across Munich, Granada, Guimarães, Riga, Lisbon, Cluj-Napoca, Corfu, Malmö, Tirana, and Oulu. It also includes proposed next steps to keep the momentum and testimonies provided in the form of short interviews in the frame of the network final event in Granada, in December 2025.

TESTIMONIES BY PARTNERS

*I would characterize the LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Journey in five words: Fun, support, Inspiration, Growth and Knowledge. **We gained a lot.*** Ieva Kalnina, project coordinator, Riga.

*It was really beneficial for us, as we are looking at problems, like circular constructions, procurement for city administration and then **we are working also together on solutions and to find projects together.*** Vanesa Tschapke, ULG coordinator, Munich.

*Our organization journey was quite an experience for us, because we started from a low level of knowledge, but we had this opportunity to have a lot of transnational exchanges and to learn from our peers and also we were assisted by a URBACT expert and we also contracted a local expert and the journey came to a beautiful end, because **with the help of all people involved we developed a very comprehensive plan of actions for circular economy that will be forwarded to the city hall, hoping that it will become reality as soon as possible.*** Bogdan Stanciu, Cluj metropolitan area, communication expert.

*This project is very important for the city of Oulu. **We have got new ideas and perspectives for circular economy.** Also, this network is very important for us in the future.* Miina Anniina Heiskanen, the city of Oulu, chair of the urban and environmental sciences committee.

*The experience has been amazing. It has been truly inspiring to see how other cities are developing circular economy initiatives in their own cultures, in their own countries. It has been interesting to see real life examples and actions that are been developed in each city. And even within our own city **it has been useful to use URBACT methodologies, to put in practice the stakeholder group in this very participatory way of hearing the people from our city to develop the plan of circular economy.*** Lourenco Booth, Lisbon team.



For Guimares it was a very interesting experience because we were given the chance to develop circular economy plan, and we chose to focus on textiles which is a huge problem for us but also our heritage. So, it is important to focus on the topic and find solutions for the sector itself. Our aim was to work with the partners. It was very enriching to get their experience, their own challenges that we could bring home, because we want not only to develop circularity of the city but also we need keep the business with us, and we need to push the economic development of the city itself. So, we need to have a balance. So having different cities, with different challenges, different cultures was very enriching for us. And with the help of lead partner, lead expert and ad-hoc experts that are within the URBACT network we are given a platform to really share and ask questions. It is a more human way to do projects, because it is more about connections and people. Yes, we have outputs, but they are interlined with human needs and human connections. This will translate into more actionable action plans and solutions for each one of us in the field.URBACT offers a very different way to do projects. Mafalda Vieira, Guimaraes, project manager of LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

It has been a fun and rewarding journey but there is still a long way to go to reach full circular economy. And we in the city of Malmo will do that with continuing to build trust and knowledge with the business community. Malin Norling, project manager and climate strategist in the city of Malmo.

It feels a bit weird in the way that I am a bit sad that this is ending, because I enjoyed my 2,5 years of being part of the project. It was inspiring and very challenging sometimes to do some things and to do the best for our city. I love all the exchange journeys throughout all the cities and to take all the best of our cities we have been part. For Tirana it is our first time being part of the URBACT network and we are looking forward to be part of another project, if not linked to circular economy, to anything linked to the protection of the environment. Romina Shamku, ULG coordinator in LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Tirana

This journey in LET'S GO CIRCULAR! was very inspiring, very, very interesting. We are friends now with the other partners. Very important networking about circularity. We know each other better, we took some good practices, and we are going to try some of them in our city, hoping that all these actions that we will implement will be strengthened by the participation of ULG members. So, we will try to change the behavior of our citizens, the



mindsets, in order to be more circular in the future and to take all the advantages that this network gave to us. Konstantinos Soukakos, project coordinator, external consultant of Kapodistriaki Development Agency, Corfu.

*Let's Go Circular for us has been a journey for a circular transition in our city, with our vision of achieving a healthier and a more sustainable city. We're facing some environmental challenges in which circular economy is a lever to improve and, above all, **URBACT for us means time. It allows you time to think** and reflect about something that you wouldn't be able to in a normal and current pace of work. **It's a big opportunity, as well, to create a big family** (a circular family) and exchange with all of them your experiences and learnings with the goal of achieving a circular transition in your context.* Angel Luis Benito, project coordinator, Granada.

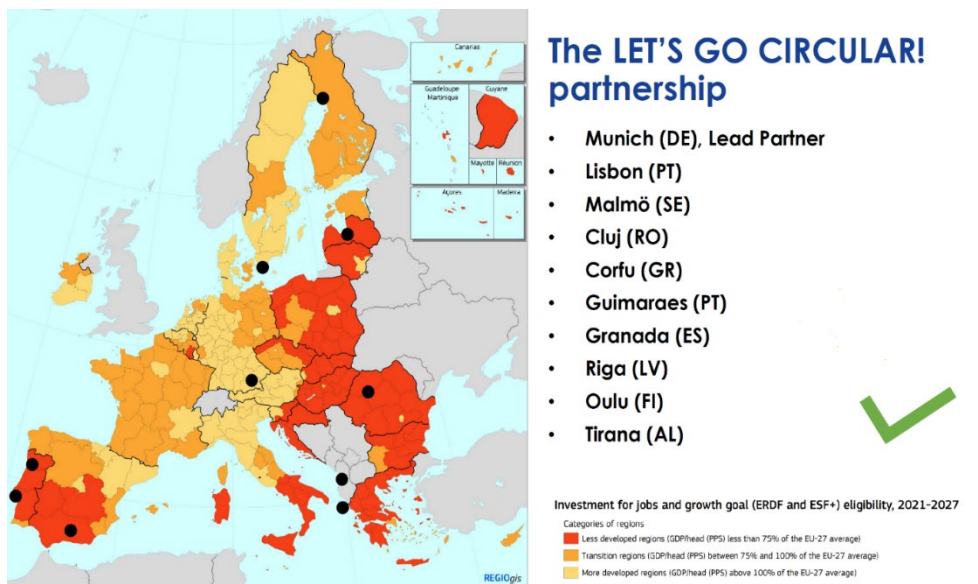
IN A NUTSHELL

01	10 Integrated Action Plans to pave the way for circular economy
02	18 testing actions implemented described in a published Compendium of Testing Actions
03	7/10 Integrated Action Plans already approved or in the process of approval
04	Policy Paper, Consultation Paper, Scientific Article and 8 Thematic Articles published
05	Participation of the network in 3 International Conferences, Summits and Smart Cities Expo
06	Support of URBACT activities: Greening Urban Economies Hub and URBACT Pioneers
07	Final network output and Quarterly Reports published
08	10 Transnational Meetings, 4 bi/trilateral meetings, 4 peer reviews
09	Online cross-network peer review with COPE, Meeting with REMOTE IT in Tirana
10	Two funded projects stemming out the actions of the IAPs, funded by Horizon Europe and EUKI

SETTING THE BASICS: NETWORK METHODOLOGY

Introduction

LET'S GO CIRCULAR!: Paving the way for a circular transition of cities was launched as an URBACT Action Planning Network dedicated to helping European cities establish credible, actionable and integrated circular economy strategies. The network brought together ten partner cities: Munich, Granada, Guimarães, Riga, Lisbon, Cluj-Napoca, Malmö, Tirana, Oulu and Corfu, each with distinct socio-economic profiles, governance structures, and degrees of maturity in circular transition.



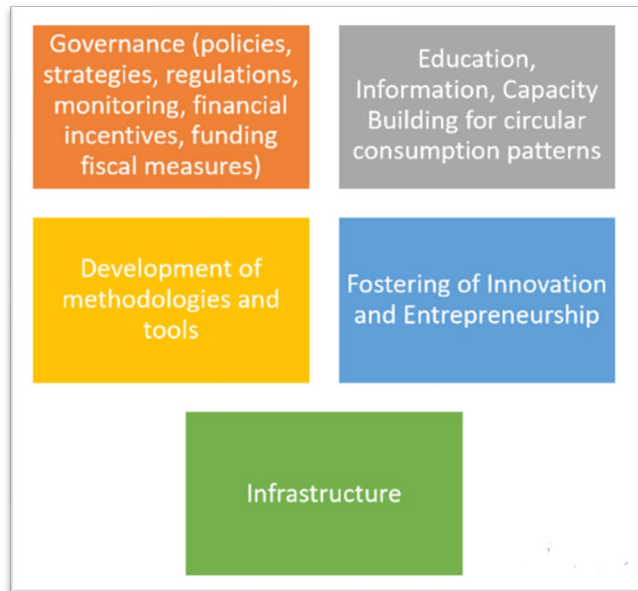
Circularity provided a unifying vision for cities facing shared challenges: pressures on resources, climate ambition, spatial growth, consumption-driven waste, the need for social cohesion, and the urgency to rethink value chains across their urban territory.

From the beginning, the network made a clear commitment: to transform circular economy from a theoretical ambition into a place-based, participatory, and implementable strategic agenda. This required robust methodology, governance innovation, cross-sector engagement, and a shared understanding of circularity as a systemic transformation.

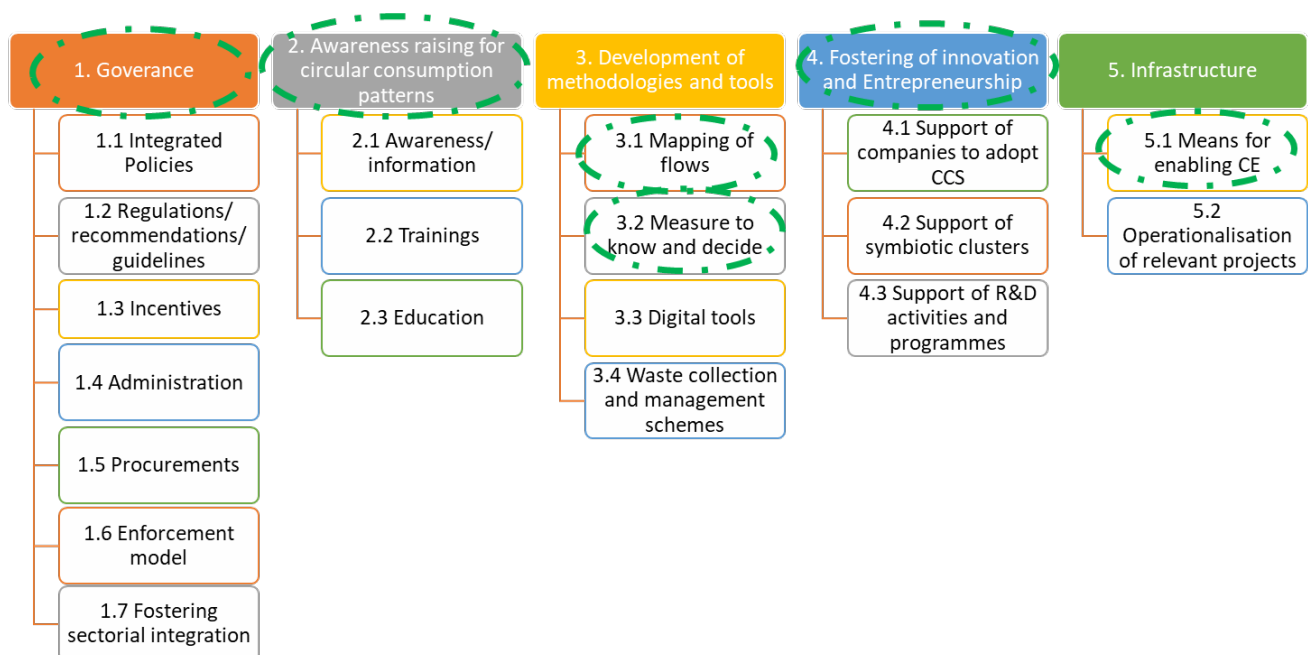
Baseline Study and Setting of the Network's Thematic Focus

The categories that evolved as the overarching themes, on which URBACT LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

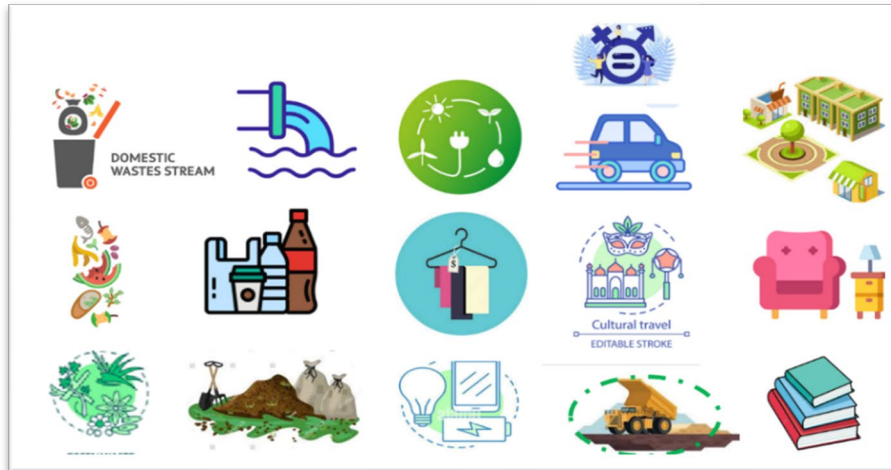
network focused throughout the next of the project, are depicted in the following infographic.



The lines of intervention that reflect each theme of focus are presented in the following infographic. The themes and lines that are of particular interest commonly by all partners, are indicated in green dots.



The value chains that emerged in the discussions during the city visits are illustrated in the following infographic and listed below.

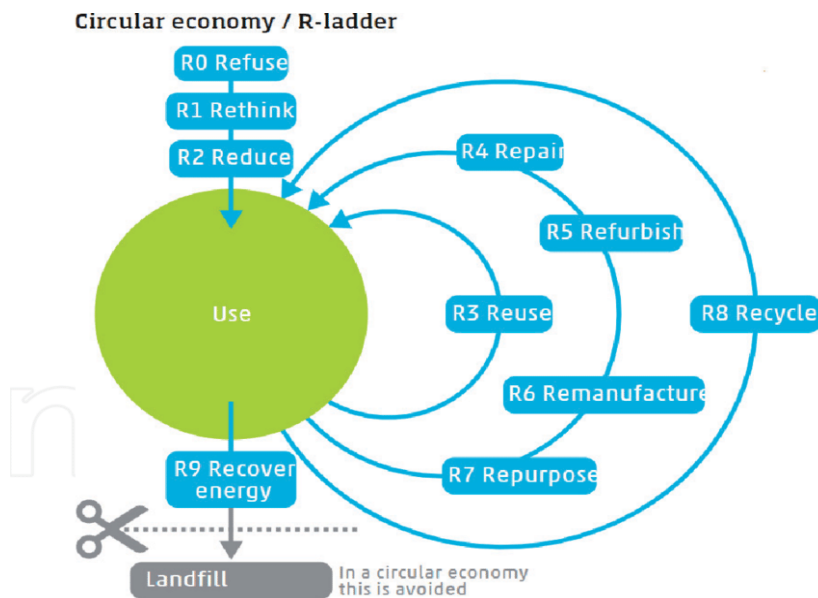


- Household stream
- Electronic and electric equipment stream
- Books
- Furniture
- Municipal assets and public space
- Agri sector and green from public open spaces streams
- Packaging stream
- Tourism and Culture events
- Construction and demolitions streams
- Food stream
- Textile
- Green waste
- Biodiversity
- Energy
- Water
- Mobility

Among these, the common streams of focus for the partners are textile, food, household, green waste, water and energy.

Another outcome of the synthesis of the city visits discussion, reflects the R-strategies that the cities raised as more important. The concept is schematically depicted in the following

infographic.



In terms of the 10-R approach the R-strategies that are of most interest for the partners are the following:

- Repair
- Reuse
- Recycling
- Rethink (also relevant to sharing economy)
- Redesign
- Renew

Exchange and learning methodology based on participatory approach

Circular transition requires cultural, organisational and behavioural change. The network embraced a participatory, co-creative methodology, rooted in URBACT principles and strengthened with tailored tools developed specifically for **LET'S GO CIRCULAR!.**

The methodology combined three complementary pillars:

1. Co-creation at the local level through URBACT Local Groups (ULGs)

Each city mobilised a cross-sector, multi-stakeholder group with representatives from:

- Municipal departments (environment, planning, mobility, economic development, procurement),
- Businesses and SMEs in relevant value chains,
- Universities, research centres and innovation ecosystems,
- NGOs, civil society groups, cultural actors,
- Social enterprises, repair activists, youth organisations,
- Utilities and public agencies.

ULGs became learning laboratories, using tools such as flow mapping, i-PESTLE, value chain

scans, stakeholder mapping, and co-design workshops.

2. Transnational learning as accelerator

Ten transnational meetings (TEXs) were designed, following the schedule:

- TEX 1: Activation meeting in Munich, September 2023
- TEX 2: Workshop week in Guimaraes and Lisbon February 2024,
- TEX 3: Riga, April 2024,
- TEX 4: Oulu, 17-21 June 2024,
- TEX 5: Malmo, October 2024,
- TEX 6: Tirana, March 2025,
- TEX 7: Cluj- Napoca, May 2025,
- TEX 8: Corfu, September 2025,
- TEX 9: Final festival in Granada, December 2025.

The TEX meetings provided intense, real-life exposure to challenges and solutions in each host city. They triggered:

- Concrete inspiration through site visits (e.g., waste sorting labs, reuse centres, textile hubs, , neighbourhood and volunteer initiatives),
- Peer-to-peer troubleshooting sessions,
- Thematic deep dives (governance, monitoring, financing, food systems, construction, textiles, water, behavioural change).

This transnational layer was essential for expanding cities' horizons, encouraging risk-taking, and validating approaches.

3. Testing actions as practical experimentation

Rather than waiting for the final IAPs, cities tested small-scale circular interventions early in the process.

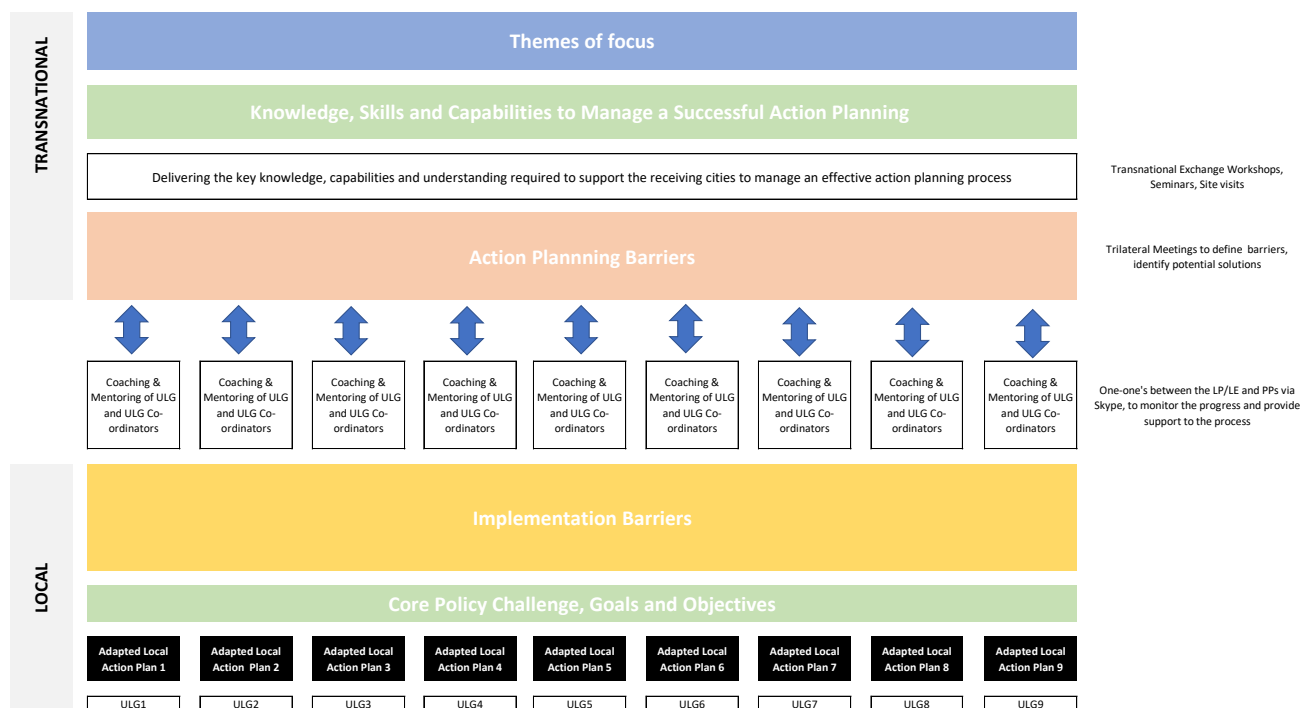
This hands-on approach allowed cities to:

- Assess feasibility,

- Identify risks,
- Collect real feedback,
- Engage stakeholders,
- Increase political confidence,
- Build evidence for scaling.

Testing actions became one of the strongest pillars of the network.

The interaction between local and transnational exchange is depicted in the following infographic.



Transnational dimension of the network methodology

The transnational methodology was designed as a **circular learning loop**, not a linear series of meetings.

Core features of the transnational method

Thematic progression:

The concept behind the network methodology is schematically presented in Infographic 6. It is composed of the transnational and the local dimension. From a bottom-up point of view, core policy challenges, goals and objectives have been set at local level, implementation barriers are also known (as result of the city visits). During the URBACT LETS' GO CIRCULAR! network, these barriers will be subjected to discussion during the ULGs, in order to be "treated" using the knowledge available in the network. From a top-down point of view, the themes of focus and the knowledge, and the specific lines of interest will be discussed at transnational level in order to transmit knowledge to the ULGs, feed the new/ updated policies and the IAPs. In any case, in the core of the network methodology, lays the interaction with the ULGs, aiming to facilitate the co-production of IAPs, using transnational knowledge and solutions. Smaller, focused group meetings will be formulated to address particular needs. Moreover, 1-1 sessions will be held, between ULG coordinators and lead expert to monitor progress regularly and accommodate any emerging needs, not identified before.

Comparative learning:

Cities benchmarked themselves against others using structured reflection tools (traffic-light assessment, peer feedback cards, SWOT circles).

Peer Review Methodology:

Each city received structured, facilitated peer feedback on its draft IAP, focusing on:

- Strategic coherence,
- Feasibility,
- Governance,
- Integration,
- Monitoring,
- Ensuring actions fit into a systems approach.

Policy transfer & adaptation:



Cities did not copy solutions; they adapted them. For example:

- Guimarães textile governance inspired Malmö and Riga.
- Munich's procurement pilots informed Lisbon and Cluj.
- Oulu's digital platforms inspired Riga's material matching ambitions.

The Local Dimension

At local level, the methodology focused on **activation, ownership, and alignment**.

Activation

ULGs were supported to move beyond consultation into **co-creation**, testing tools such as:

- Problem trees,
- Vision setting with Newspaper of tomorrow,
- Open ideation on actions through brainstorming sprints,
- Circularity gap reports (in the case of Munich),
- Material flow mapping (in the case of Lisbon),
- Territory-based diagnostics (in the case of Cluj Napoca and Guimaraes),
- Quick prototype labs through initiation of testing actions (in some cases).

Ownership

Cities were encouraged to show participants **how their input shaped the IAP**, increasing credibility and continuity.

Alignment

Cities embedded circularity into local realities:

- Spatial strategies,



- Climate contracts,
- Environmental plans,
- Mobility plans,
- Innovation strategies.

The local work ensured IAPs were not theoretical but grounded.

Emphasis on the integrated approach

Circular economy is inherently systemic. LET'S GO CIRCULAR! reinforced this by applying the URBACT Integrated Approach across all phases.

Dimensions of integration strengthened through the network

1. Horizontal integration across municipal departments

Circularity requires planning, waste, environment, economic development, mobility, procurement, and education to work together.

Cities reported that URBACT tools helped break silos - for example:

- Munich linked circular action planning with procurement,
- Cluj Napoca aligned circularity with climate neutrality governance,
- Malmo connected SMEs with municipal planning and environmental departments,
- Oulu connected circularity in education.

2. Vertical integration with regional and national frameworks

Cities aligned their work with:

- National climate laws,
- Regional waste strategies,

- Mission Cities and CCRI frameworks,
- Multi-municipality governance models.

3. Territorial integration

Circularity does not stop at administrative borders.

- Cluj (functional area of 15 municipalities) integrated peri-urban resources.
- Oulu coordinated circular actions with its innovation ecosystem,
- Guimarães linked rural and urban actors through repair and textile flows.

4. Cross-sector integration

Circular actions connected:

- Education & labour market,
- Mobility & consumption patterns,
- Tourism,
- Bioeconomy,
- Textile,
- Electric and electronic waste,
- Culture & heritage,
- Social inclusion & repair culture.

5. Time integration (strategic + short-term)

Cities combined long-term vision with quick wins and testing actions.

Phases for the delivery of the IAPs

The LGC! roadmap guided cities from exploration to action planning, organised into four major



phases.

Phase 1 - Diagnosis & Activation (Months 1-6)

Activities included:

- Local diagnostics,
- Preliminary value chain analysis,
- Baseline study,
- Stakeholder mapping,
- URBACT Local Groups establishment,
- Pathway/ roadmap-building on circularity.

Phase 2 - Action Planning phase (Months 7-19)

Cities developed:

- Problem definition,
- Vision and objectives,
- Thematic focus areas,
- Testing actions.

This phase produced genuine learning-by-doing outcomes.

Phase 3 - Preparing Implementation phase (Months 20-26)

Cities consolidated their IAPs:

- Aligned governance,
- Action portfolios,

- Received structured peer reviews during TEX meetings,
- Adjusted plans after feedback,
- Monitoring framework,
- Financing planning,
- Risk identification.

Phase 4 - Communication (Months 27-30)

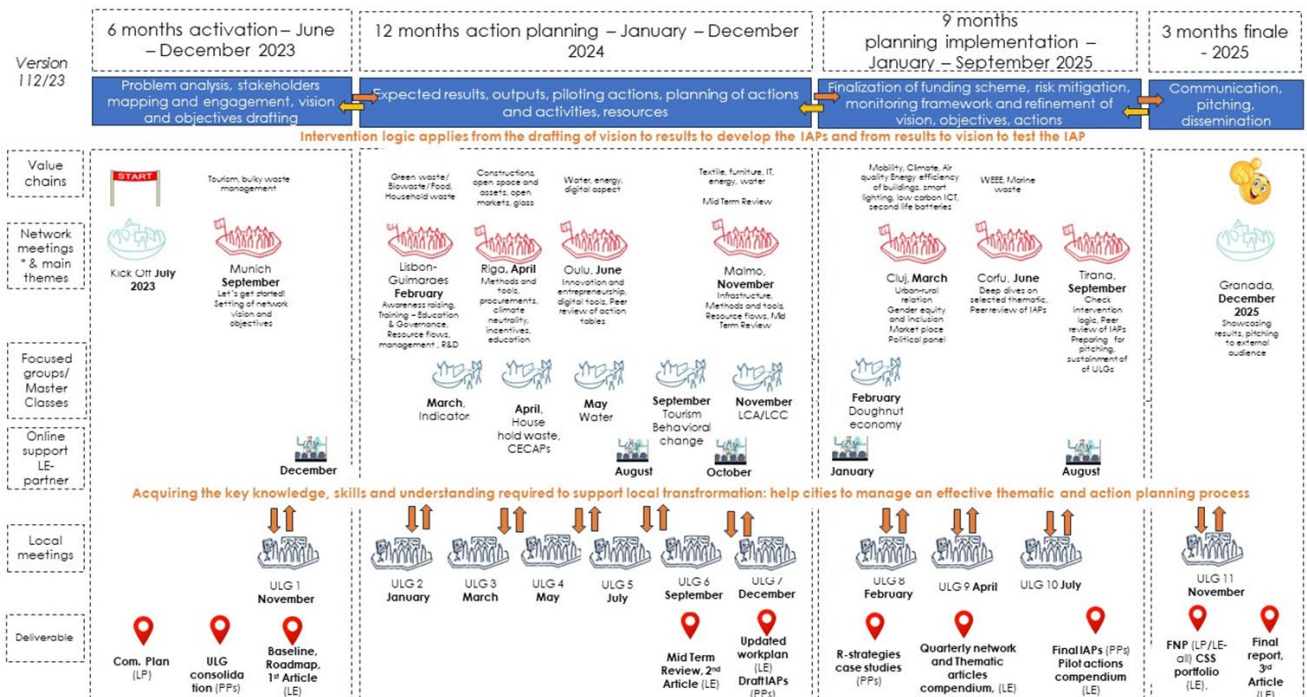
The final stage focused on:

- Political validation,
- Integration into existing city strategies,
- Communication of the IAPs at local level,
- Preparing for the continuation of circular initiatives beyond URBACT.

The design of the IAPs

The roadmap

Matching the learning needs, the transnational and local needs, as well as the overall framework for the delivery of the IAPs following its phases as described in the URBACT guidelines, the following roadmap has been built and followed throughout the project implementation.



*Network meetings include at least study visits, technical presentations, focused smaller group meetings, communities of practice on CSS and indicators, action planning elements and URBACT guidance, communication /coordination sessions, social events; ULGs include: small group thematic meetings, plenaries, market places of ideas, playful sessions, workshops, visits. Focused groups and Master Classes depicted here are the minimum.

FIRST PAUSE AND LOOK BACK IN THE FRAME OF THE MID TERM REFLECTION

Introduction

The Mid-Term Reflection (MTR) represented a pivotal moment for the LET'S GO CIRCULAR! network. After more than a year of transnational exchanges, thematic deep dives, local ULG sessions, testing actions, and iterative planning, the MTR served as a structured pause - a moment to look inward, take stock of progress, and recalibrate ambitions.

Unlike a conventional progress check, the MTR in LGC! functioned as a collective intelligence exercise. It asked cities not simply to report activities, but to critically reflect on:

- how much their understanding of circularity had evolved,
- how far their governance structures had adapted,
- how their stakeholders were engaging,
- how confident they felt about their emerging IAPs,
- which obstacles were emerging,
- and what strategic adjustments were needed to ensure a successful transition into the second year of the network.

This reflection that was implemented in the TEXT in Malmo (October 2024) set the tone for the next phases of the network, influencing the design of the peer reviews, the content of the transnational meetings, and the shaping of the final IAPs.

An overview of the experience till that moment is captured through the following infographic.



What the MTR revealed about cities' circular transitions

The MTR allowed each city to articulate its trajectory from “initial curiosity” to “structured circular planning”. Several patterns emerged across the network.

1. A clear increase in circular economy literacy and maturity

At the outset, circular economy was interpreted differently across cities - some associated it with waste, others with industrial ecology, some with procurement, and others with social economy.

By the MTR:

- Cities had internalised a systems-thinking approach,
- Value chains and material flows were understood as the core analytical units,
- Circularity was no longer viewed exclusively as an environmental agenda but as a multi-dimensional development strategy involving innovation, governance, social inclusion, digitalisation, and spatial development,

This conceptual consolidation was one of the most important shifts noted during the MTR.

2. Greater organisational awareness of circularity

The MTR showed that cities had made substantive progress in cross-departmental collaboration:

- Planning departments began working more closely with environmental and economic teams.
- Procurement appeared as a key enabler, connecting circular objectives to municipal operations.
- Departments previously not linked to circularity (culture, education, youth, housing) began engaging due to the relevance of LGC! themes.

3. Strengthened URBACT Local Groups

The MTR highlighted:

- Improved attendance in most cities,
- Deeper engagement with stakeholders beyond the “usual suspects”,
- Stronger co-ownership of diagnostics and actions,
- The emergence of “champions” in each city.

Cities that diversified ULG formats - walkshopsworkshops, repair cafés, design sprints, co-creation labs - reported significantly stronger results.

4. Testing actions as catalysts of progress

Across the board, the MTR confirmed that testing actions were one of the most transformative aspects of the network. They:

- Validated strategic directions,
- Helped cities understand logistical and governance challenges,
- Convinced sceptical municipal actors,



- Gathered data for future monitoring,
- Created visible, tangible momentum.

Many cities reshaped their IAP scopes based on insights from their testing actions.

Evolution of the network's thematic understanding: what cities learnt together

A key output of the MTR was the identification of shared learning breakthroughs.

Breakthrough 1: Circularity must be grounded in place

Cities realised that circularity cannot be implemented through generic, citywide plans alone. It must be:

- rooted in territories (districts, neighbourhoods, industrial zones),
- aligned with functional urban areas,
- sensitive to local value chains, cultures, and capacity levels.

Breakthrough 2: Governance is more important than technology

Cities learned that:

- Successful circular transition depends on organisation, not gadgets.
- Governance models (coordination teams, mandates, working groups) enable consistency and implementation.

Breakthrough 3: Stakeholders want action, not discussion

Testing actions and prototypes proved far more effective than theoretical workshops. Cities shifted toward hands-on engagement formats after the MTR.

Breakthrough 4: Circularity is interdependent with major EU missions

The MTR made clear that circularity is key to achieving:

- climate neutrality,
- urban resilience,
- social inclusion,

- innovation ecosystems,
- green skills for the labour market.

This pushed cities toward a more integrated cross-policy mindset.

Adjustments made to the network methodology after the MTR

The Mid-Term Reflection did not simply assess progress - it reshaped the second phase of the network.

Based on the findings, the Lead Expert and partners refined the methodology with four strategic adjustments:

1. Stronger focus on “value chain thinking”

Additional focus on:

- Eco-design and marking
- ICT, battery and electric/ electronic waste
- Soil and water

2. Enhanced peer-learning structure

The transnational events after the MTR incorporated:

- More peer reviews,
- Structured feedback rounds,
- Thematic workshops at bi/trilateral level,
- More space for co-creation,
- Targeted learning on governance, skills, and financing.

3. Increased emphasis on monitoring

Cities received:

- A monitoring methodology,

- Indicator examples,
- Guidance on measurable objectives,
- Support to align monitoring with their IAP logic framework through thematic workshop.

4. Stronger political engagement

Cities were encouraged to:

- Involve elected officials in political panels,
- Schedule presentations to municipal boards,

How the MTR Strengthened the Quality and Feasibility of the IAPs

By the end of the MTR process, cities demonstrated significantly stronger capacity to design feasible, integrated, implementable action plans.

1. Clearer strategic focus

Cities refined their priorities, shifting from long lists to coherent and realistic portfolios of actions.

2. Improved governance configurations

Indicatively, cities formalised:

- Coordination units,
- Cross-department teams,
- Stakeholder engagement procedures,
- Monitoring frameworks.

1. Enhances their co-creation activities

- Design and implementation of bi/trilateral thematic exchanges
- Peer reviews
- Speed dating in the frame of TEXs

4. Testing actions matured into IAP actions

Many pilots became core components of the IAPs, backed by evidence and stakeholder buy-in.

5. Strengthened political readiness

Political actors were better informed and more aligned toward implementation.

Conclusion: The MTR as a bridge between vision and delivery

The Mid-Term Reflection ensured that the second year of the network was not a continuation of the first, but a meaningful shift toward consolidation, governance strengthening, and implementation-readiness.

It provided:

- A reality check,
- A confidence boost,
- A shared sense of direction,
- And a deeper collective ownership of the circular transition.

The MTR served as the bridge between:

vision → evidence → co-creation → testing → governance → IAP consolidation → implementation readiness.

Cities emerged from the MTR not only with clearer plans, but with a stronger, more resilient foundation to embed circularity structurally within their municipal future.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Integrated action plans

All cities delivered Integrated Action Plans, which will be available on the URBACT website.

Cities followed the URBACT IAP guidelines while adapting them to local needs. Despite different contexts, most IAPs shared:

Common elements

- A clear circular vision,
- A place-based diagnostic,
- A small number of priority areas,
- An action portfolio grounded in testing actions,
- governance arrangements,
- Monitoring and evaluation framework,
- early implementation pathways.

Actions



Granada

- 1 Reduction of single-use items in events and public spaces
- 2 Reverse vending machine
- 3 PAYT tariff system
- 4 Reduction in urban license fee
- 5 Reduction of emissions
- 6 Citizen participation and engagement in environmental initiatives
- 7 Incentives for Circular Businesses
- 8 Improvement of Specific Waste Fractions Collection
- 9 Citizen Information and Awareness
- 10 Digitalization and Transparency
- 11 Community composting system

Tirana

- 1 Support for Farmers: Provide standardized, recyclable and reusable packaging boxes to local farmers for transporting and selling their products, reducing single-use packaging and enhancing product visibility in markets.
- 2 Consumer Engagement: Launch an annual “Buy Local, Waste Less” campaign that promotes local goods in supermarkets and markets, integrated with the existing digital platform to offer eco-rewards for purchasing locally produced, low-packaging items
- 3 Establish a Circular Economy Hub to offer training, resources, and networking opportunities for businesses transitioning to circular models.
- 4 Organize Green Events: Host workshops, conferences, and networking events that focus on sustainability topics, allowing entrepreneurs to showcase their innovations, learn best practices, and connect with potential partners and investors
- 5 Develop certification programs that recognize and reward businesses for their sustainable efforts, helping them gain market advantage and consumer trust.

- 6 Launch city-wide campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of the circular economy and sustainable consumption.
- 7 Develop a Digital Platform that:
 - 7.1 Hosts monthly webinars and workshops featuring industry leaders like Maccaferri (on resilient infrastructure and green construction) and ProGena (on sustainable urban planning and innovation in bio-design).
 - 7.2 Contains a repository of tools, reports, funding opportunities, and case studies from local and international contexts.
 - 7.3 Includes a feature for companies to post real-world sustainability challenges, inviting startups, researchers, and NGOs to collaborate on solutions
- 8 Organize Biannual Conferences:
 - 8.1 Led by Future One, Maccaferri, and other innovation-oriented businesses, to showcase best practices, attract foreign green investments, and foster matchmaking between solution-seekers and providers.
 - 8.2 Include pitch sessions for startups and SMEs to attract green funds and potential partners.
- 9 Foster Multidisciplinary Collaboration:
 - 9.1 Create an “Innovation Needs & Offers Board” on the platform, allowing companies to share specific needs (e.g., waste valorization, smart irrigation, energy optimization) and receive proposals from academia, civil society, and other businesses.
 - 9.2 Provide structured networking tools and thematic discussion forums.
- 10 Issue Digital Certificates:
 - 10.1 Launch an annual Circular Design Challenge focused on sustainable packaging and product design, open to students from Tirana’s educational institutions
 - 10.2 Showcase winning solutions during the Green Growth Conference and offer winners fast-track access to the Green Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Platform

Guimaraes

- 1 Implement a Training Programme for Textile Sector Circularity;

- 2 Establish a Municipal Circular Economy Task-Force;
- 3 Promote Use of Databases for Textile Waste and Surplus Materials;
- 4 Consumer Communication Campaign on Local Textile Consumption;
- 5 R&D of new equipment, processes and tools for Textile Waste Recovery;
- 6 Simplify certification processes & unlock circularity incentives;
- 7 Development of a Circular Textile Hub;
- 8 Sustainable Public Procurement Plan for Textiles;
- 9 Promote Multidisciplinary Cooperation for Circular Systemic Solutions;
- 10 Textile Industrial Symbiosis Plan

Cluj Napoca

- 1 Integrating CE principles into the value chain
- 2 Sustainable procurement in public institutions
- 3 Re-use of food through donations to children's homes, nursing homes, animal shelters
- 4 Creation of an urban center for reusable resources
- 5 Repair and reconversion of existing buildings
- 6 Introduce a circularity challenge at Innovation Camp
- 7 Inform and educate citizens about the circular economy
- 8 Creating a data space for circularity
- 9 Introduce circular economy themes in the educational extra-curriculum plan
- 10 Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through water management

Lisbon

- 1 Develop the circular economy strategy for Lisbon
- 2 Integrate the Fabcity Network (self-sufficient cities):
- 3 Introduce a circularity component in the Priority Intervention Neighborhoods (BIP/ZIP Program)

- 4 Create a Circular Economy Acceleration Program
- 5 Develop an app/platform to facilitate neighborhood circular business
- 6 Develop the business model for the implementation of a Circular Tourism Pass
- 7 Develop a toolkit with technical specifications to be included in tenders
- 8 Develop business model and implementation of reusable construction materials bank
- 9 Creation of a One Stop Shop to promote energy and water efficiency in households
- 10 Implement the municipal biowaste management strategy
- 11 Promote low-carbon, local food systems by connecting producers with consumers and reducing the environmental footprint of public meals served in municipal facilities
- 12 Introduce circular economy indicators in the Lisbon Observatories Tool

Oulu

- 1 Circular economy criteria for procurement
- 2 Annual circular economy event in the city.
- 3 Create an operating model that develops the city to act as a platform for experiments and new circular economy business.
- 4 Increasing the circular economy competence of Oulu residents.
- 5 In master and detailed planning work, examine the possibilities of implementing circular economy goals and, if necessary, include circular economy considerations in the planning work
- 6 Introduce planning markings and building guidelines that promote and enable the circular economy and mass balance assessment
- 7 Introduce plot transfer conditions and contract terms that promote the circular economy
- 8 Develop regional monitoring of waste and material flows and their recycling rates
- 9 Develop and implement a material bank and a management and utilization plan for material flows.

- 10 Create an operating model for the use of biochar in stormwater purification and growing media.
- 11 Construction and demolition according to the principles of the circular economy
- 12 Promoting reuse in renovation and new construction as well as in demolition.
- 13 Implement circular economy-based infrastructure construction pilots and zero-emission construction sites
- 14 Consider longevity and energy efficiency in buildings

Munich

- 1 Urban Mining for secondary building materials
- 2 Development of a circular construction hub in the CirCoFin project
- 3 Digital platform for the marketing & procurement of regional food
- 4 Cooperation with food rescue and mediation platforms
- 5 Industrial Symbioses / Eco Park
- 6 Raising awareness in textile procurement
- 7 Introduction of a take-back concept for reusable tableware
- 8 Notice systems for reporting violations of the reusable packaging obligation
- 9 Carrying out market surveys / market dialogues for sustainability market identification
- 10 Establishment of a digital competence center for sustainable procurement

Riga

- 1 Inclusion of circular economy principles in public procurements
- 2 Ensure the functioning of the Sadarbnica space, its further development, and awareness-raising among the public
- 3 Public awareness campaigns to improve sorting quality
- 4 Development and implementation of guidelines for sustainable public events
- 5 Sustainable construction and development of the urban environment
- 6 Assessment of heat recovery potential and the implementation of solutions
- 7 Promotion of the processing and recycling of sewage sludge
- 8 Increasing the use of milled asphalt in road construction

Malmo

- 1 Establish a Resource Hub in Malmö and test the concept (pilot)
- 2 Investigate possibilities/development of circular jobs
- 3 Develop measurement, key figures and indicators for circular economy
- 4 Conduct Advocacy Work regarding Circular Economy needs
- 5 Mapping of Plastics, Food and Textiles in/out/circulated in Malmö (geographical area)
- 6 Find ways to support actors that want to create more circular plastic, food or textile systems in Malmö
- 7 Plastics: Increase and improve the sorting as well as the reuse/recycling
- 8 Food: Take action for improving the conditions for a circular food system, both in the short and long run
- 9 Textiles: Increase the collection and the take backs as well as the circulation of sorted textiles. Establish local sorting of collected textiles.

Corfu

- 1 Operation of separate biowaste collection network and ensure that at least 25% of the amounts gathered will be used as soil conditioner at municipal gardens.
- 2 Reduction of municipal taxes in households and companies that apply the principles of the circular economy
- 3 Develop and Deliver a Comprehensive Circular Economy Curriculum for Schools and Universities
- 4 Install solar panels in municipal buildings using modular systems that can be easily repaired or upgraded and ensure panels are sourced from manufacturers with take-back programs.
- 5 Conduct energy audits of municipal buildings and implement retrofitting programs using recycled or repurposed materials.
- 6 Organize Community-Based Awareness Campaigns and Workshops
- 7 Design and Develop a User-Friendly Digital Platform with Business Listings and Interactive Features
- 8 Execute a Multi-Channel Marketing and Engagement Campaign focused on sustainability to Attract 10,000+ Users Annually
- 9 Partner with local fisheries, shipping companies and urban farmers to develop programs for the collection and recycling of used nets, ropes, marine debris and agricultural tools.
- 10 Support start-ups and businesses in creating products from marine waste, such as recycled plastic furniture, apparel, or building materials by introducing financial incentives and launching certification programs.

Testing Actions: What the network learned through practice

Testing actions were a defining feature of LET'S GO CIRCULAR!, functioning as early prototypes of future IAP measures and as real-life experiments to understand feasibility, stakeholder engagement, and governance requirements.

Across the network, testing actions delivered four kinds of value:

1. They turned circularity from theory into practice



Even small interventions - repair cafés, textile reuse pilots, community composting, material exchange points, made circularity visible and understandable for residents, municipal teams, SMEs, and politicians.

2. They built confidence inside municipal structures

Testing actions demonstrated:

- Circular solutions can work,
- They need not be expensive,
- They deliver tangible community value.

3. They revealed governance and logistical barriers early

Testing actions exposed issues that later influenced the design of IAP actions:

- Need for clearer roles between departments,
- Regulatory obstacles (especially for construction and food waste),
- Gaps in collaboration with private operators,
- Capacity constraints.

4. They generated evidence for the IAPs

Cities used results from testing actions to refine priorities, decide which interventions to scale, and articulate monitoring indicators.

Testing actions became a central mechanism for co-creation, strengthening local ownership and demonstrating the practical value of circularity.

Each partner city developed a portfolio of actions aligned with its diagnostic, testing actions, and stakeholder engagement dynamics. Below is a concise overview.

Munich

Munich focused on construction and demolition waste, one of the city's largest circularity

leverage points.

Testing action explored:

- New procurement models integrating circular requirements,

Impact on the IAP:

The pilot action at Villa Stuck will serve as a reference model for circular gastronomy procurement. The insights gained can be scaled up to inform other municipal canteens and restaurants, ensuring that circular criteria become embedded in future tenders.

Granada

Granada's actions centered on environmental matters, civic engagement, and behavioural change.

Testing actions included:



- “Bike Hospital” for repairing bicycles and encouraging sustainable mobility,
- Open - Air Festival.

Impact on the IAP

The Bike Hospital will be integrated into the city's sustainable mobility strategy as a concrete action linking education with circular and climate goals. Partnerships with VET schools, NGOs, and private sponsors will be formalized to ensure the project's continuity. Looking ahead, the model will be explored for replication in other Andalusian cities, positioning it as a transferable example of how circular economy principles can be combined with mobility and education.



Guimarães

A frontrunner in circularity, Guimarães leveraged its innovation ecosystem and textile heritage.

Testing actions focused on:

- Textile waste management

Impact on the IAP:

The next steps will focus on integrating the pilot activities into a broader action plan. Efforts will be made for securing additional funding sources to expand the project, strengthening partnerships with schools and community organizations, refining data collection and monitoring methods, and planning for a wider rollout based on the pilot's outcomes and lessons learned.

Riga

Riga prioritised construction material reuse and citizen participation.

Testing actions involved:

- Sorting furniture workshops,

Impact on the IAP:

The activity demonstrates that the Integrated Action Plan's goals on citizen involvement in circular practices are realistic and achievable when supported by practical, well-framed interventions. The pilot will be expanded through partnerships with schools, youth centres, and community hubs. These collaborations will diversify the reach of the initiative and embed circular thinking at an early stage, ensuring that circularity habits extend across different parts of the community.

Lisbon

Lisbon focused on behavioural change, circular education, and resource centres.

Testing actions included:

- Circular shift for tourists,
- Circular construction talk,

- Textile fashion day,
- Circular neighbourhoods.

Results:

The initial survey in the frame of the circular shift action revealed a promising level of interest from local businesses in joining the Circular Pass initiative. Approximately, 50 potential partners expressed their willingness to participate. In the frame of the circular construction talks, the discussions between speakers and participants highlighted several areas with strong potential to be scaled up in order to generate impact. Continuing with the textile fashion day, around 10 people took part in the two practical workshops focused on repair and upcycling, while approximately 40 attendees joined the two public talks organized. With regards to the circular neighborhoods, a strong interest among local traders in contributing to the development of the tool was revealed.

Retail Businesses				
Waste Management	Always / Yes	Sometimes / No	Never / No	Points
Recycled paper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Recycled paper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Recycled metal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Recycled glass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Trucks waste generated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Recycled waste used or donated inventory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Packaging	Always / Yes	Sometimes / No	Never / No	Points
Use of plastic packaging	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
Use of paper packaging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0
Use of other biodegradable packaging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Use of second hand packaging	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Energy	Always / Yes	Sometimes / No	Never / No	Points
Use of energy efficient lights (LED)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Active monitors and reduce energy consumption through smart or energy audits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0
Product	Always / Yes	Sometimes / No	Never / No	Points
Stock second hand or organic products	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Products sourced locally	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Prioritize selling products with certifications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Use packaging with certificate of sustainability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Workforce and community	Yes	Sometimes	No	Points
Employees have a employment contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	0
Site locally to support the local economy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
A diverse representation of gender, age, and backgrounds within the workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
Total points available	38	+50%	Needs improvement	
Points achieved	25	65-75%	Bronze	
Grade	B	75-85%	Silver	
		85-100%	Gold	



Cluj-Napoca

Cluj's work targeted entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystems, and circular business development.

Testing actions explored:

- Metropolitan caravan,
- Vegetarian menu,

Key results:

In terms of the metropolitan caravan, the results were gathered through the Menti questionnaire; post-training surveys revealed a 40% increase in self-declared understanding of circular economy principles. This feedback serves as the first indicator of the Caravan's impact on raising awareness and strengthening knowledge across the metropolitan communes. Concerning the vegetarian menu, the pilot achieved full engagement, with 100% of the prepared vegetarian meals sold early in the day. All respondents expressed willingness to replace at least one meat-based meal per week, indicating strong openness to dietary change. In terms of satisfaction, 54.5% of participants rated the meal as very tasty and 36.4% as good, while 27.3% noted a lack of variety in the menu.

Malmö

Malmö emphasised textile circularity and behavioural nudging.

Testing actions included:

- Malmö Resource Hub

Key results:

The Resource Hub was first launched in beginning of March 2024. Interested project partners were found - RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden) and MINC (Malmö Incubator). Two separate project applications regarding development of a Resource Hub - ERDF and Horizon. The Resource Hub is up and running as a project until 2027.

Tirana

Tirana prioritised food waste, composting, and community-based circularity.

Testing actions included:

- Financial support for business focused on reuse,
- Green events & material flow analysis.

Key results:

In terms of financial support for business focused on reuse the Green Grants scheme provided

funding and visibility to dozens of businesses, enabling them to strengthen their operations and expand their impact. Several tangible reuse solutions were successfully introduced to the market as a direct outcome of the support. In addition, the beneficiaries were showcased in international circular economy initiatives, giving them wider recognition and positioning them as part of the global movement towards reuse and resource efficiency. Regarding the green events, the pilot produced clear data on the amount of waste prevented by replacing single-use items with reusable alternatives, which is tangible evidence of the environmental benefits that can be achieved through such measures. Feedback was, also, gathered from citizens and organizers, so the overall feasibility of hosting green events can be highlighted.

Oulu

Oulu positioned circularity within its strong digital and innovation ecosystem. Testing actions included:

- Circular economy arena,
- Biochar day.

Key results:

- In the frame of the circular economy arena, all organizations invited to join accepted the offer, and the available slots were quickly filled. During the summit, participating presenters reported satisfaction, noting that the event had enabled them to establish new partnerships and engage in meaningful conversations. The Biochar Day generated a wide range of new ideas, including the potential to collect fertilizers from stormwater using biochar and later reuse them in growing soil. Participant feedback confirmed the relevance and value of the event. Comments gathered through the Lyyti survey reflected strong satisfaction, with ratings of two times 4 points and eleven times 5 points on a five-point scale, highlighting the quality of discussions and the usefulness of the knowledge shared

Corfu

Testing actions included:

- Circular economy questionnaire.

Key results:

The testing action engaged 20 classes from five primary schools, reaching almost 360 students in total. Remarkably, 100% of the questionnaires were fully completed and valid for analysis, providing a reliable dataset. Using a five-point scale (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, 5 = very high), the average total score across all participating classes was 4, indicating a high level of understanding of circular economy principles among pupils.

Beyond the scores, the results also revealed strong enthusiasm, as students expressed a genuine willingness to participate. They, also, showed eagerness to involve their parents in adopting circular economy practices.

Peer Reviews of the IAPs

Four rounds of peer reviews have been implemented, in the frame of the LET'S CO CIRCULAR! TEXs. The peer reviews were structured, following the URBACT methodology and tools. Partners were grouped beforehand and had joined the process well prepared, having reviewed their peer's IAP and filled in the peer review form.

The peer-review process was repeatedly identified as one of the most useful components of the network.

What Peer Reviews Delivered

- Constructive, honest, and practical feedback,
- Clarity on strengths and weaknesses,
- Improved consistency between goals and actions,
- Stronger prioritisation (avoiding overly broad IAPs),
- Refinement of governance models,
- Integration of financial and monitoring considerations.

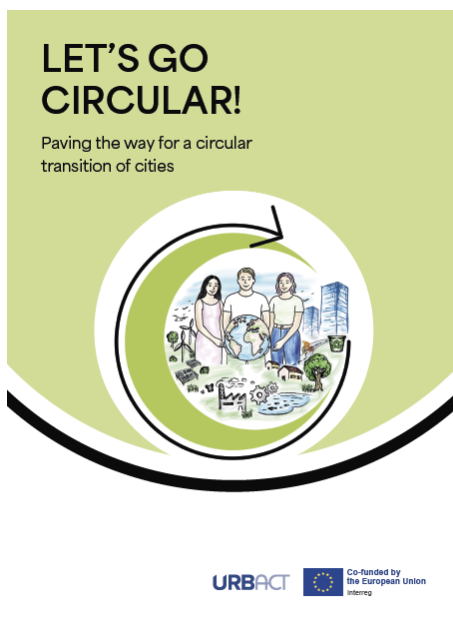
Cities valued the “safe space” created for sharing challenges without fear of judgement.

Final network output

The final network output consists of a flipbook that collects:

- Let's get started Quiz
- Quotes and lessons learnt
- City snapshots and videos of the ULG coordinators
- Modules for cities to pave their way to circularity
- Information and tips to climb the 10R ladder

Our final network product is available on the URBACT webpage.



Modules: You can go circular, too!

The following pages are designed as a modular set, allowing readers to employ specific modules based on their individual needs. One of the reasons for setting up the LET'S GO CIRCULAR! action planning network was the realisation that many European cities have already started taking actions to support circularity in their local urban ecosystem, but mostly in a fragmented way and with limited focal points, e.g. waste reduction. However, a holistic strategy is needed, that creates a framework for progressive evolution and provides the information and direction needed to guide local stakeholders, both within and beyond the municipal administration. It also helps stakeholders align their work with the achievement of the city's circular targets.

Our modules are based on these open access key articles from our Lead Expert Dr. Eleni Felski, linked or available on <https://urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular>:

Transforming Urban Landscapes:
Circular Economy Practices in European Cities. (2025)

Mainstreaming circular economy criteria in public procurements.
The successful case of Lisbon (2024)

From waste to wonder The Successful Case of Guimarães in Shaping a Circular City. (2024)

Mainstreaming circular economy criteria in unused buildings.
The successful case of Riga. (2024)

Oulu' alliance serving digitalization and circular economy. (2024)

Driving circular economy awareness and education across European cities. (2024)

LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Report Circular Malmö. (2024)

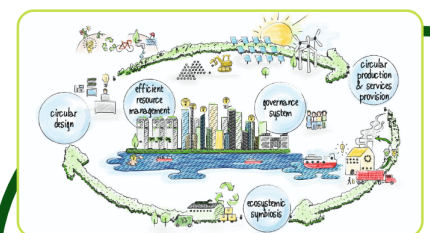
Testing Action Compendium (2025)

Module 1: Circular cities – our definition

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the circular economy is an imperative to deliver on the green transition and to mitigate the growing risks and negative impacts of climate change whilst boosting economic resilience and energy security.

In our understanding, a circular city has embedded the principles of the circular economy across the entire urban area and the important sectors and value chains. It operates within an interconnected network of systems that are designed to enable maximal use of resources, regenerate nature and decrease pollution.

In a circular city, collaboration between citizens, authorities, research facilities, and businesses is achieved. Products, services, infrastructure, buildings, and vehicles are designed to be durable, adaptable, modular, easy to maintain, share and repurpose, and locally sourced and serving consumption. A circular city is powered by renewable energy, everything can be composted, reused, or recycled while nature is flourishing, abundant, and used as design inspiration.



The Circular City model, as illustrated by LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Lead Expert Dr. Eleni Felski

Thematic articles

The following thematic articles have been produced by the lead expert as a result of knowledge and experience exchanged in the frame of the TEXs:

- Transforming Urban Landscapes: Circular Economy Practices in European Cities. (2025)

- Mainstreaming circular economy criteria in public procurements. The successful case of Lisbon (2024)
- From waste to wonder The Successful Case of Guimarães in Shaping a Circular City. (2024)
- Mainstreaming circular economy criteria in unused buildings. The successful case of Riga. (2024)
- Oulu' alliance serving digitalization and circular economy. (2024)
- Driving circular economy awareness and education across European cities. (2024)
- From vision to measurement: Building SMART Circular Economy objectives and indicators for cities.

Two additional articles have been produced by the ad hoc experts:

- CE and digital
- CE vs doughnut economy

All thematic articles are upload on the URBACT webpage.

Masterclasses and webinars

The following masterclasses and webinars have been implemented in the frame of the project:

- Thematic exchange and learning on indicators, held by the lead expert, 8 April 2024
- Software (& other) technologies for circular (& green) cities held by Prof. Chatzigeorgiou, 25 June 2024
- How can doughnut economics help your circular city? Held online by ad hoc expert Willem van Winden, 22 November 2024
- Risks and rewards of digitalisation, held online by ad hoc expert Ian Graham, 2 December 2024
- Consumer Behaviour understanding, influencing and changing held in physical presence in the

frame of the TEX in Tirana 5 March 2025, by ad hoc expert Richar Laing

- Monitoring of action plans held by ad hoc expert Igor Kos in physical presence in the frame of the TEX in Cluj Napoca 21 May 2025

Articles prepared by ad hoc experts, Ian Graham and Willem van Winden are hosted in the URBACT webpage.

Quarterly reports

Six quarterly reports have been produced by the lead expert, summarizing the progress of the network every three months. The quarterly reports included highlights, good practices shared in the frame of the TEXs, tools and methodologies developed and used by the project partners serving the action planning process. They served communication at European but also at local level, as the project partners used them to disseminate the progress of the network at the local level as well.

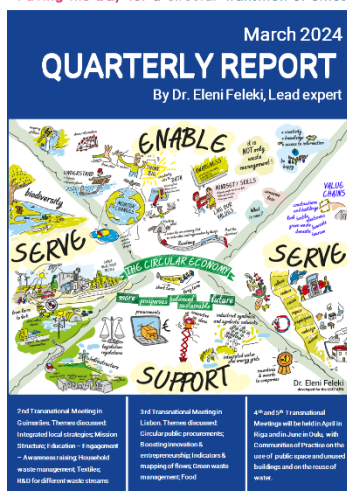
All the quarterly reports are available at the URBACT webpage.

Smaller group meetings

A series of smaller group meetings has been put forward as a result of a matchmaking exercise, held in the Oulu TEX. Results of the exercise are depicted below.

Indicatively, the following online meetings have been implemented.

LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Paving the way for a circular transition of cities



LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Paving the way for a circular transition of cities

Table of contents
1. The Let's Go Circular network in a nutshell
2. Looking back at the activation stage: 1st transnational meeting
3. 2nd transnational meeting in Guimarães
Highlights
... Governance structure to operationalise the multidisciplinary work
... A step by step approach for a five-helix governance system
... Collaboration with citizens
... Municipal waste management strategy axis
Inspiring examples
... Passing clear messages to citizens
... Community gardens
... Reuse of cigarette butts and chewing gums
... Reusable caps in public events
... Collection and recycling of disposable medical masks
... Social inclusion serving circular economy through re-store NGO
... Digitalisation serving circular economy: TO BE GREEN NGO
... Household waste management - Pay As you Throw
4. 3rd transnational meeting in Lisbon
Highlights
... Procurements
... Mapping of flows
... Food action plan
... Visit to the Hub Criativo do Beato
... Águas do Tejo e Atlântico Company (The "water factory")
Inspiring examples
... Sustainable School Food Programme
... Food waste collection
... Green waste collection and management
... Save As you Throw piloting
... Clean Future acceleration programme to boost entrepreneurship
... Zero km production
... Circular procurements in the construction sector in Riga
... Circular procurements in Malmö
5. Brief presentation of tools developed and/or used demonstrating integrated and participatory approaches
6. Partners' local activities and progress made in relation to the IAP co-production process
7. Start/Stop-Continue doing at local level: Partners' view points
8. Next steps

Bilateral groups	City 1	City 2	GIVERS
Calculation of GHG emissions in public events	Guimaraes	Tirana	Riga
CE Hub	Munich	Lisbon	Malmo
PAYT, SAYT	Granada	Corfu	Guimaraes & Lisbon
Integration of sustainability policies and strategies	Granada	Cluj	Guimaraes

Trilateral	City 1	City 2	City 3	GIVERS
Reuse of open spaces & buildings	Malmo	Lisbon	Granada	Riga
Water circularity	Munich	Guimaraes	Corfu	Granada, Oulu, Lisbon
School education	Granada	Riga	Corfu	Oulu
Clean tech events	Guimaraes	Granada	Tirana	Lisbon

Bigger groups	City 1	City 2	City 3	City 4	City 5	GIVERS
Mapping of flows	Guimaraes	Riga	Cluj	Corfu	Oulu	Malmo & Lisbon
Indicators	Malmo	Guimaraes	Lisbon	Cluj	Tirana	Munich
Procurements	Munich	Guimaraes	Granada	Cluj	Corfu	Riga, Malmo, Lisbon
Digital platform to match supply and demand	Malmo	Guimaraes	Lisbon	Granada	Tirana	Riga, Oulu

- CE Indicators Monitoring, organized by Minich online (30.10.2024)
- Digital platforms: Lietovelreiz.lv - one-stop information source, organised by Riga online (16.12.2024)
- IMPETUS project: Brief intro, outcomes, lessons learnt, next steps...organized by Riga online (10.12.2024) in the frame of the reuse of open spaces and buildings topic

Communities of practice

Four communities of practice have been implemented in the frame of the TEXs. The Communities of Practice results were captured using the following format:

Which ideas you find suitable and replicable in your city?	Which needs in terms of CE does it serve ?	Do you see barriers that you will need to overcome?	Take aways

Results of communities of practice are included in the TEX minutes.

- Create youth assemblies or councils to involve young people
- Develop engaging and fun educational initiatives

- Address challenges in engaging specific groups (e.g., university students)

Addressing Implementation Challenges

- Focus on realistic and financeable actions
- Improve monitoring and evaluation processes
- Enhance citizen and stakeholder engagement throughout the process

An analytic report has been prepared and shared with the partners of both networks after the meeting.

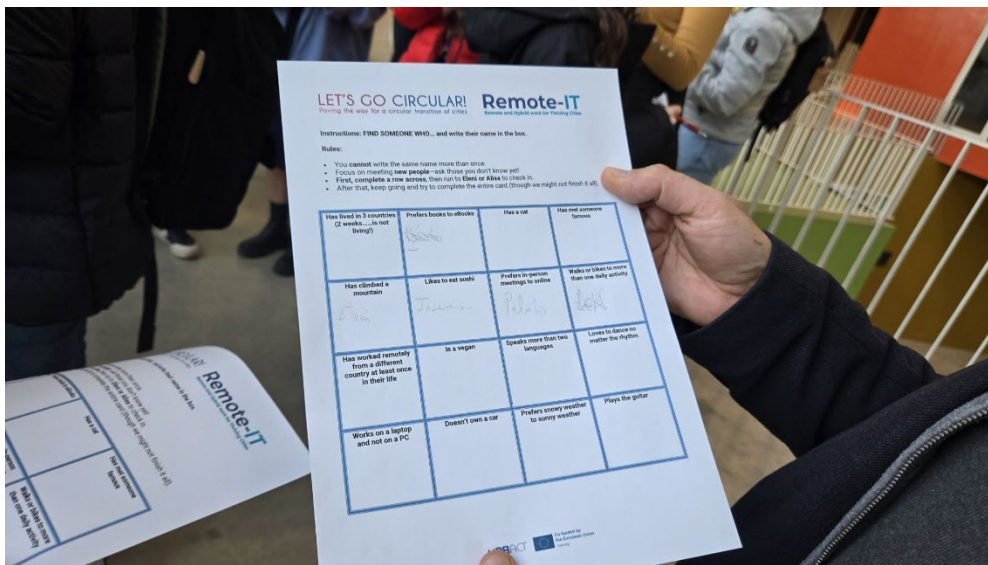
Study visit in Copenhagen

A study visit has been implemented in Copenhagen, in collaboration with the COPE network, back to back with the TEX in Malmo in October 2024. The topic of the meeting was touched upon the topics of citizens' engagement, inclusion and circular constructions.



Meeting with REMOTE IT

In the frame of the TEX in Tirana, in March 2025, a nice activity has been organised by the lead experts of the two networks that held the transnational meetings simultaneously. The partners of both networks met in the Pyramid and held an ice break activity to meet and greet each other and exploit common opportunities.



Policy Paper & Consultation Paper

The following papers have been created: the Policy Paper that has been signed in the frame of the political panel that took place in Malmo and the consultation paper that has been submitted to support the EU's ambition establish a Single Market for secondary raw materials, increase the supply of high-quality recycled materials and stimulate demand for these materials in the EU.

LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Paving the way for a circular transition of cities

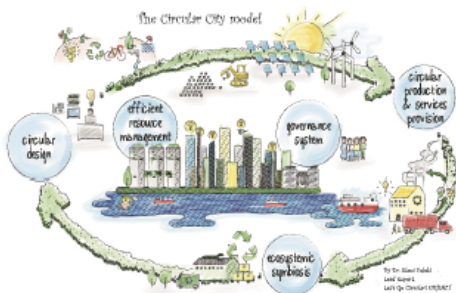
CIRCULAR CITIES CALL FOR MORE SUPPORT FROM THE EU

We address this position paper to the European Parliament and Commission. The paper depicts policy recommendations on circular economy, resulting from the discussions among ten European local authorities that participate under the lead of the City of Munich in the Action Planning Network 'LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Paving the way for a circular transition of cities', funded by the URBACT IV programme. We particularly call for appropriate legal frameworks and standardization, support through investment and funding, and the promotion of Europe-wide cooperation. The importance of a circular transition and the role of cities should be taken into consideration in the post 2027 funding period and highlighted in the next Multi Annual Financial Framework of the European Union.

THE ROLE OF CITIES IN A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

According to the International Resource Panel (IRP), the main cause of global climate change is the increase in the consumption of raw materials. This necessitates a shift towards resource efficiency, getting the most value out of the materials that we use and reducing waste. Resource efficiency is an important component of the European Commission's climate strategy, as highlighted in publications on the European Green Deal and legislative documents of the current EU funding period 2021 to 2027.

The declared goal is a so-called circular economy – in the best case a holistic ecosystem, based on reduced consumption and working in closed cycles. According to Worldbank, cities generate up to 80% of all economic growth (2020), while pursuing ambitious climate goals. Therefore, municipalities have the transformation task of boosting circular economy and being a role model. However, municipalities reach limits when installing and financing circular economy measures – and call for support.



LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Position Paper 09/24

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union

The URBACT Action Planning Network LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Paving the way for a circular transition of cities – funded by the URBACT IV programme – strongly supports the EU's ambition establish a Single Market for secondary raw materials, increase the supply of high-quality recycled materials and stimulate demand for these materials in the EU.

The circular economy should always serve as the foundation for policy and practice. Currently, there is an extensive focus on waste management, while addressing consumption patterns is equally, if not more, critical. As cities are pivotal in shaping economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability, they play an essential role in advancing circularity. More precisely, from the perspective of LET'S GO CIRCULAR! project partners, municipalities from across nine European countries, the following key points are of utmost importance to be considered:

Data:

- Enhance data transparency for cities regarding business waste to support circular practices.
- Highlight the vital role of cities in the circular transition with accessible data.
- Ensure visibility of material, energy, and water inputs and outputs for effective circularity.
- Establish common indicators for monitoring circular economy progress.
- Standardize data collection on material flows across all countries.
- Develop indicators and goals for realized, reused, and recycled materials.

Regulations:

- Increase the value and standardization of second-hand raw materials with EU-wide certifications and establish regulations for the flow of secondary materials.
- Acknowledge the significant impact of construction and infrastructure on material use and emissions and implement regulations for materials sourced from deconstruction.
- Differentiate between dry raw materials, recycled materials, and virgin materials in the European NC Nomenclature.
- Create unified definitions for waste types to simplify transboundary movements and treatment options.
- Develop a clear DPP definition and methodologies for Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs).
- Introduce a product passport for secondary materials.
- Establish end-of-waste criteria for packaging and construction.
- Link CO₂ emissions to specific standards or laws, with monetization.

Sustainable Practices and Circular Economy Initiatives:

- Repair and Repurposing: Promote repair and repurposing of electronics to address e-waste
- Waste sorting, plastic ban and material restrictions: Mandate waste sorting for businesses, ban of single-use plastics in the CE framework and composite mixed materials due to recycling difficulties.
- Raw material usage and secondary materials market: Reward proper use of raw materials and harmonize open markets for secondary materials.
- Public procurement and long-lasting projects: Include circular criteria in public procurement to activate markets and encourage long-lasting projects supported by the EU to promote sustainable practices.
- Food Waste Management: Develop business models for managing food waste that support vulnerable groups.

In a position paper published in 2024, the cities also emphasize how important the sustainable use of resources is to achieve Europe's climate targets. European cities bear a special responsibility in this regard. Their development must not only be environmentally friendly but also socially acceptable. To meet these challenges, the cities are calling for EU directives and regulations that reflect real-world conditions and enable realistic standards, for example, in the construction or textile industries. [LGC Policy Paper Feb 2025_0.pdf](#)

The Policy Paper is available on the URBACT website.

Engagement with politicians

There have been two rounds of engagement with politicians in the frame of the project.

The first round has been conducted in Malmo, in the frame of the MTR process, in October 2024. The panel session lasted for one hour and was moderated by Ed Adams, ad hoc expert. The format of the Panel was based on an interactive format which initially gauged the audience's key perspectives. This was followed by a detailed set of exchanges with the panelists who identified some of the key challenges from their perspectives, as well as some of the effective practices that can provide a source of inspiration for others.

Panelists:

- Viesturs Zeps, City Councillor, City of Riga

- Henna Määttä, City Councilor, City of Oulu
- Victor Vieira, Technical Office, Lisboa E-Nova, Energy and Environment Energy
- Cecilia Tall, RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden)

The second political panel has been implemented in the frame of the final meeting, in Granada, in December 2025. The purpose of the panel was to reflect, from a political and strategic perspective, on how cities move from Integrated Action Plans to integrated transformation, building on the insights and concrete experiences shared by the 10 partner cities.

The panel deepens the discussion through three lenses:

What we change - turning IAP projects and pilots into citywide policy (projects & procurement)

How we pay - making circular economy actions financially viable (funding & finance)

How we learn - institutionalising circular thinking for long-term change (KPIs & scaling)

Panelists:

- Bogdan Pivariu, Mayor of the Floresti commune
- Dr. Evelyne Menges, City councilor, Munich
- Miina Anniina Heiskanen, Chairperson of the Urban Environment Board of the City of Oulu
- Vito Episcopo, City Councilor, Granada

IAPs approved by City Councils

The City of Munich has recently had the circular economy strategy, developed in parallel and in the frame of LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Approved by the City Council.

Other cities of the network that have already had their IAPs approved by their Councils are: Riga



and Oulu, while this is on the way for the cases of Lisbon, Guimaraes as well.

Communication of the network in Conferences

Participation in International Conference in Chania, Greece

- Paving the way for circular transition in cities. Presentation in the Circular economy: The pathway towards a sustainable development Conference, 12-13 September 2024, Chania, Crete (by the lead expert)



The participation in the Conference was backed by the preparation and submission of a short communication, published in the Journal, titled: Transforming Urban Landscapes: Circular Economy Practices in European Cities, Eleni Feleki, Vanessa Tschapke, Wibke Borngesser, Larissa Kiesel.

The short communication is available here:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43615-025-00674-5> (Springer Nature)

Participation in Climate Climate Neutrality Summit in Cluj Napoca, Romania

The network was represented in the Climate Neutrality Summit 2025 that took place in Cluj Napoca in May. Cities presented their testing actions and their achievements in the frame of the network. A panel was organized and hosted by the network lead expert. Cities that were represented were: Cluj Napoca, Malmo, Riga and Munich.



Participation in Smart Cities Expo in Barcelona, Spain

- HOW TO CREATE A GREENER URBAN ECONOMY? STORIES FROM URBACT CITIES?
Participation and presentation in Smart cities expo, 5 November 2025, Barcelona, Spain
(by the lead partner)

The participation in the Smart city Expo was framed by the Greening Urban Economies Knowledge Hub.



Support of the network in other URBACT activities

Greening Urban Economies Knowledge Hub

Five URBACT networks (LET'S GO CIRCULAR!, COPE, EcoCore, In4Green and Greenplace) have been grouped together to formulate the Greening Urban Economy Knowledge Hub. Common tasks are being held, listed below:

- Participation in the Community of Practice in the Smart Cities Expo
- Webinar: What is a thriving urban economy?
- Basecamp space for exchange of resources, knowledge and materials
- Collection of good practices and studies under the URBACT webpage

Hosting of URBACT Pioneers in Munich

At the end of October, the City of Munich, had the pleasure to host a group of cities from the Western Balkans. They are part of the newly established URBACT learning programme designed exclusively for cities from accession countries, which is called URBACT Pioneers Accelerator. In 18 months, the programme supports 27 municipalities from the Western Balkans in transforming

local governance by drawing on URBACT's expertise and real-life experiences from EU cities.

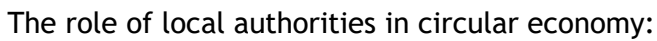


Additional outputs

For guidance of cities in the action planning process

- 1 x Template for the integrated approach (table where ULG coordinators depict the stakeholders, per integration type and revisions)
- 1x IAP structure template with guiding notes and revisions as needed to accommodate URBACT guidelines and partners' needs
- 1x Template for action tables
- 1x Template for detailing the action tables/ activity tables
- 1x Template for reporting ULG meetings
- 1 x Template for ULG progress presentation in the TEXs
- 1 x Template for stakeholders engagement: Certificate of Excellent Collaboration
- 1x Template for the development of the monitoring plan with guiding notes and revisions as needed to accommodate URBACT guidelines

- 1x Template for risk mitigation plan
 - 1 x set of tables for the funding mix and revisions as needed to accommodate URBACT guidelines and partners' needs
 - 1 x Template for IAP peer to peer review following the URBACT guidelines (ie 4c, excel addressing i) progress of the integrated action plan ii) content of the integrated action plan iii) integrated approach iv) finance and planning implementation v) URBACT and EU added value
 - 1x Guiding document for the ULG implementation for the action planning stage
 - 1 x Guiding document for the ULG implementation for the planning implementation stage
 - 1 x Guiding presentation of vision and objectives
 - 1 x Guiding presentation on action planning
 - 1 Guiding presentation on action detailing and prioritising
 - 1x Guiding presentation for the funding mix
 - 1x Guiding presentation about how to communicate and pitch the IAP
 - 1 x Guiding presentation on ideation on actions
 - 1 x Guiding presentation on integration
 - 1 x Guiding presentation on peer review of IAPs
 - 2 x templates of tools to support ULG coordinators with the testing activities
 - 1 x template for the description of the pilot actions
- Additional communication outputs**
- Analytic minutes after each TEX uploaded on Basecamp
 - Infographics produced by the lead expert, depicted below:



Visual created for the final network output:



Dr. Eleni Feleki, LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Lead Expert

LESSONS LEARNT AND LOOKING AHEAD

Assessing the experience

The whole experience is illustrated in the following infographics that gathers inputs from partners, in the frame of the final meeting in Granada, in December 2025.

Wordcloud poll



How would you like to characterise your LET'S GO CIRCULAR! journey?

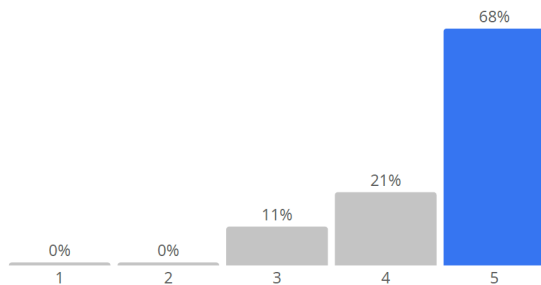
017



How useful has each of the following support at Network level been so far? (1 low - 5 high) a) Transnational meetings

019

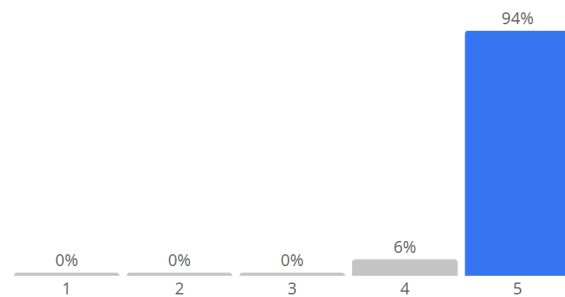
Score: 4.6



How useful has each of the following support at Network level been so far? b) Lead partner support

018

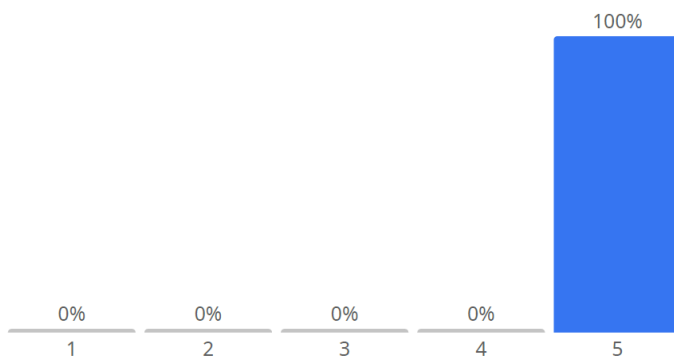
Score: 4.9



How useful has each of the following support at Network level been so far? c) Lead expert

018

Score: 5.0



What else has been useful?
(1/2)

014

- Commitment to the IAP
- Bond and advance together to other projects and applications
- Linking other cities with LGC partners
- Sauna experience in Oulu
- Share practices and pilots
- Get to know other realities and challenges
- See midnight sun
- Michelin restaurant
- Mix of countries/cities in the network, with different levels of knowledge and steps into CE.
- See and share pilots
- Seeing different initiatives in person
- Taste vegan plates
- Visiting other experiences
- Exchanging with projects at the cities
- Having the chance to see other cities plans
- See local examplea
- Visiting
- Much time to cocreate with our network partners
- Networking
- A lot of inspiration for the next steps

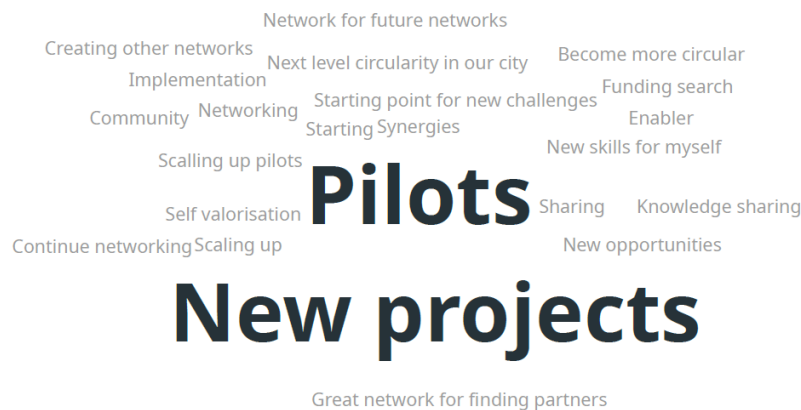
Capitalisation of participation in the network

Wordcloud poll



How will you capitalise your involvement in
LET'S GO CIRCULAR!?

0 1 7



pnel

Impact created

Multiple choice poll



Did you manage to drive circular economy
dialogue through your involvement in the
network?

0 1 4

Yes



No

☐ 0 %

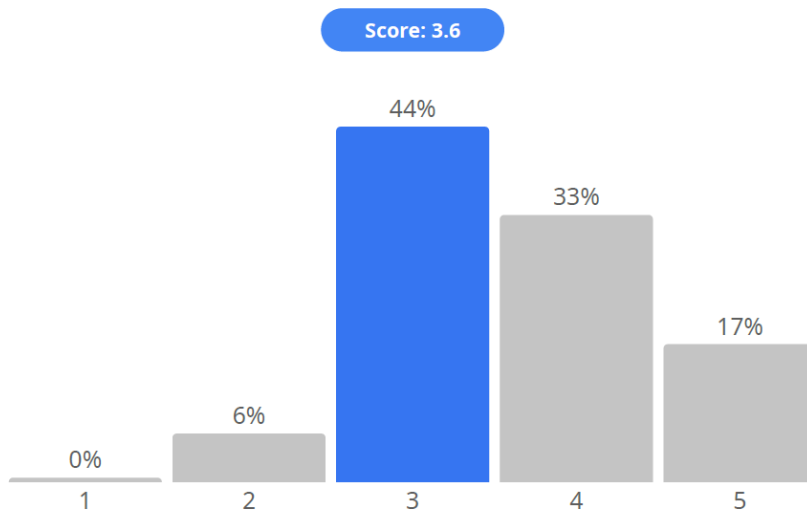
Not applicable

☐ 0 %

Assessment of integration

To what extent did you manage to include the stakeholders you had initially foreseen in the process of planning the actions in your IAP (identifying priorities, potential solutions)?

018



Which type of integration was the most difficult to address either in the design of the IAP? Select the relevant ones only
(1/2)

020

Sustainable urban development

5 %

Sectoral

5 %

Territorial

15 %

Multilevel governance

50 %

Stakeholder involvement in implementation

25 %

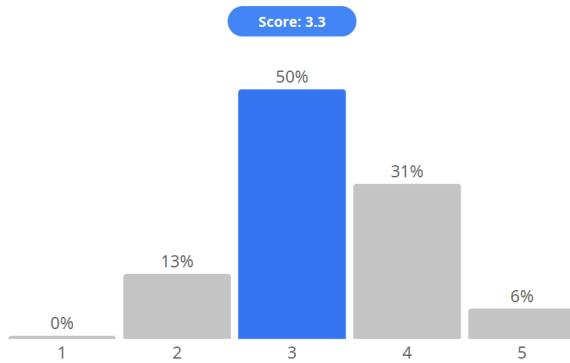
Spatial (coherence of actions at different spatial levels from site-specific, through neighbourhoods, city-wide and regional)

0 %

Challenges faced at local level

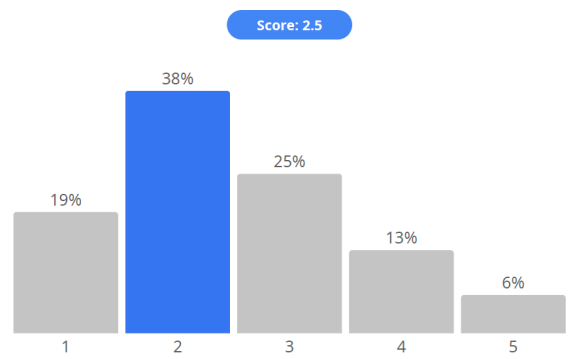
What challenges did you face at local level? a)
Stakeholder have other priorities

0 1 6



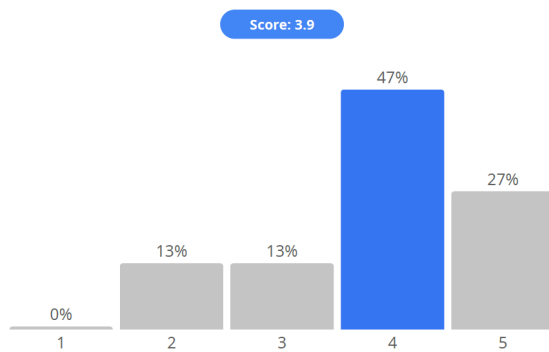
What challenges did you face at local level? b)
lack of interest

0 1 6



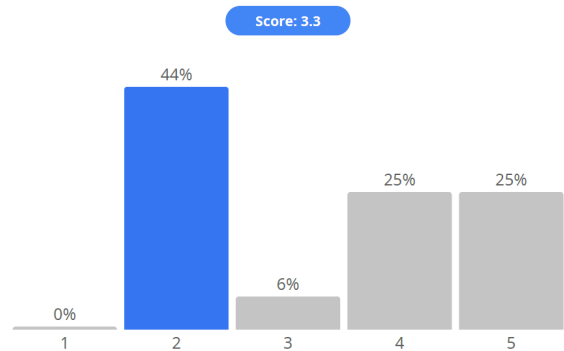
What challenges did you face at local level? c)
time

0 1 5



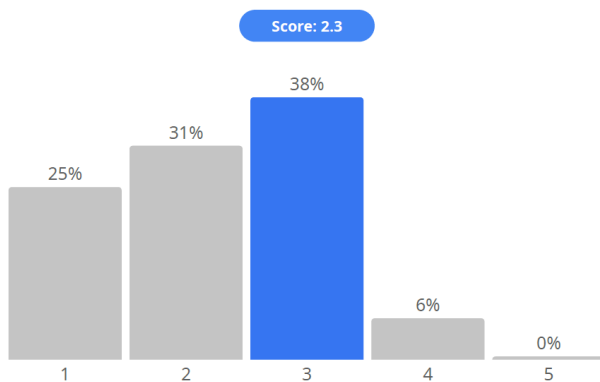
What challenges did you face at local level? d)
political support

0 1 6



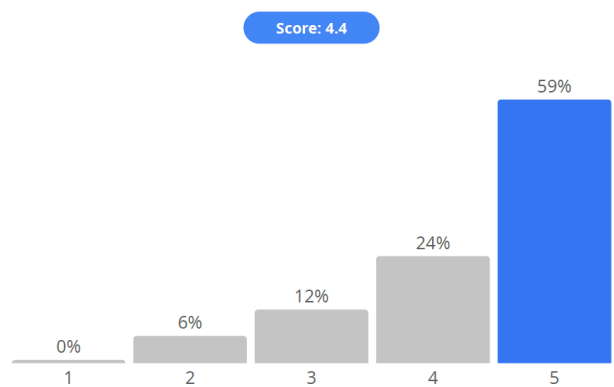
What challenges did you face at local level? e)
skills

0 1 6



What challenges did you face at local level? f)
funds

0 1 7



Overarching lessons and proposed next steps

Throughout the lifetime of LET'S GO CIRCULAR!, the network has accumulated a rich body of knowledge emerging from transnational exchanges, local experimentation, participatory co-creation, peer reviews, and testing actions.

Several overarching lessons have crystallised across the ten cities:

1. The integrated approach is essential but requires continuous discipline

Across all cities, the integrated approach proved to be one of the most valuable—yet challenging—elements. The MTR and peer-review sessions highlighted that:

- Cities frequently start with strong environmental ambitions but need support to embed social, economic, digital, governance, and financial dimensions into their IAPs.
- The URBACT integrated approach tools (vision building, R-strategies framing, i-PESTLE, stakeholders mapping) helped clarify intervention logic and align actions with strategic objectives.
- Cities participating in multiple EU frameworks (CCRI, Mission Cities, Covenant of Mayors, Green City Accord) found that integrated planning allows better alignment across these commitments and reduces overlap.

Lesson: Integrated planning is strengthened when cities combine transnational learning, local real-life testing, and methodological discipline.

2. Stakeholder engagement needs variety, continuity and creativity

From QR1, QR2, and ULG reflections:

- Successful ULGs avoided traditional meeting formats and adopted dynamic, hands-on, URBACT-style workshops.
- Tools such as problem tree, visioning (“newspaper of tomorrow”), mapping of flows, and communities of practice increased engagement.
- Several cities struggled with decreasing attendance after the first months. Cities that sustained participation (e.g. Lisbon, Oulu, Guimarães) did so by:

- rotating venues (e.g. schools, museums, hubs),
- diversifying formats (site visits, co-design labs),
- ensuring stakeholders saw their input reflected in the IAP.

Lesson: Engagement is not achieved by inviting people—it is achieved by showing progress, making meetings useful, and giving ownership.

3. Testing actions are crucial for grounding the IAPs

The testing actions across the network revealed that:

- Piloting accelerates learning and pushes cities to think beyond theoretical strategies.
- Concrete interventions help stakeholders understand circularity as *practical and beneficial*, not abstract.
- Pilots generated data, inspiration, and legitimacy for the final IAPs.
- Several cities changed the scope of their strategic objectives based on findings from their pilots (e.g. Oulu reinforcing circular entrepreneurship; Lisbon adjusting governance configuration; Cluj refining food-related actions).

Lesson: Piloting testing actions ensures IAPs stay realistic, measurable, and strongly connected to local realities. They also “force” or trigger innovation, as cities need to design them having a limited budget.

4. Transnational exchange accelerates problem-solving

The TEX meetings (Munich, Guimarães, Lisbon, Riga, Oulu, Malmö, Cluj, Tirana, Corfu, Granada) provided:

- Exposure to inspiring examples (e.g. textile cluster in Guimarães, water circularity in Oulu, circular constructions in Riga, digital solutions in Malmö/Copenhagen),
- Alignment between cities through peer feedback and “therapy sessions”,
- A sense of shared mission that helped cities feel less isolated in regulatory, financial, or

technical challenges.

Partners consistently emphasised that the network provided “knowledge they could not get elsewhere.”

Lesson: Peer feedback, international study visits, and communities of practice significantly raised the level of ambition and quality of the IAPs.

5. Monitoring and indicators remain a central challenge

From QR2 and the April masterclass on indicators:

- Cities appreciated the training on monitoring frameworks, but many struggled to translate the methodology into measurable local indicators.
- The challenge was not lack of willingness but lack of data, fragmented competencies, and human resources.
- Cities integrating Mission Cities monitoring tools or existing national systems progressed more quickly.

Lesson: Monitoring needs early planning, clear ownership, and alignment with existing national or EU data systems.

6. Governance matters—especially in multi-municipality territories

The baseline study highlighted the importance of governance models in circular economy. Cities such as Cluj (urban area with 14 municipalities), Riga (regional institutions), and Guimarães (mission-oriented governance) demonstrated that:

- Governance frameworks need to match the functional area.
- Technical experts, political leadership, and community actors must collaborate.
- Organisational innovation is as important as technological innovation.

Lesson: Circularity is a governance transformation as much as an environmental one.

Looking Ahead

As the network enters the final phase, several forward-looking avenues emerge, guiding cities beyond the completion of their IAPs.

1. From planning to implementation: financing and resource mobilisation

The IAPs will only deliver impact if cities secure financing. Based on QR5, TEX 6 and discussions during peer reviews:

- Cities expressed the need for stronger understanding of financing models (ERDF, Horizon, LIFE, national funds, private sponsorships, blended finance).
- Many partners have identified early “implementation champions” (institutions or teams ready to lead actions).
- The policy paper produced by the network advocates for expanded EU funding for municipal circular economy measures and simplified access mechanisms.

Next step: Move from “project funding” to “financing frameworks” integrated into municipal budgeting cycles.

2. Deepening circular value chains and sectoral ecosystems

The network identified sectorial value chains (textile, construction, water, food, energy, waste, biomass, plastics, IT, furniture) where circular interventions can be scaled. Cities plan to:

- strengthen urban resource centres as infrastructure for circularity (Riga, Lisbon, Munich);
- scale textile circularity (Guimarães, Malmö);
- integrate circularity into public procurement (Munich, Malmo, Lisbon);
- expand educational programmes and citizen behaviour-change initiatives.

Next step: Move from pilots to systemic value-chain interventions.

3. Advancing digitalisation for circularity

Digital tools emerged as a major enabler throughout TEX 3, TEX 4, and the digitalisation webinar.



Cities see opportunities for:

- Digital material passports.
- Matching platforms for reusable materials.
- Blockchain tools for waste management.
- Data flows for monitoring and evaluation.

Next step: Integrate digital solutions into city systems, not as add-ons but as part of the circular governance model.

4. Strengthening citizen engagement and education

Through testing actions, ULGs, and community-of-practice sessions, partners identified:

- A growing societal demand for repair, reuse, sharing systems, and sustainable local consumption.
- The important role of schools, youth, social institutions, libraries, and cultural actors.
- The need to embed behavioural shifts within long-term strategies.

Next step: Institutionalise education programmes and social innovation models that sustain behavioural change.

5. Building long-term political support

By the end of the project, most cities expect their IAPs to be:

- Formally endorsed.
- Embedded in strategic city frameworks (e.g. climate neutrality contracts, sustainable development strategies).
- Used as reference documents for funding negotiations.

Political panels planned during TEX 5 and TEX 6 further support this process.



Next step: Position circular economy as a political priority beyond individual projects.

6. Strengthening inter-city cooperation beyond the project

The strong ties built between the ten cities lay the foundation for continued cooperation. Cities expressed readiness to:

- Collaborate on future EU calls (Horizon, Interreg, LIFE, UIA, CCRI),
- Continue peer-learning,
- Develop joint pilots on shared challenges (e.g. textiles, construction, digital platforms).

Next step: Transform the network into an informal “LET’S GO CIRCULAR! Alliance”.



FURTHER READING

Visit our webpage: <https://urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular>

Follow us in linked in:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/let-s-go-circular/posts/?feedView=all>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/eleni-feleki/>



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The URBACT LET'S GO CIRCULAR! network wishes to express its gratitude to all the individuals and local stakeholders who have generously participated in the network, giving precious inputs for this report.

LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Paving the way for a circular transition of cities

FINAL INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN REPORT



LET'S GO CIRCULAR! URBACT IV network

Dr. Eleni Feleki network lead expert

URBACT



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg