



Quarterly Network Report #8

October - December 2025

By Lead Expert, Stine Skot

COPE

– Coherent, place-based, citizen
centered climate action



URBACT



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This report is made using material and input from the network activities and material and input provided by the 8 COPE municipalities.

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1. COPE in short

COPE is an URBACT APN IV network. The network consists of 8 European municipalities, with the City of Copenhagen as lead partner. The seven partners are the cities of A Coruña in Spain, the two Greek cities of Kavala and Korydallos, the Romanian city of Bistrița, the French city of Saint-Quentin, the Portuguese city of Pombal and the Lithuanian capital Vilnius.

The COPE Network is about changing mindsets. As an URBACT Action Planning Network, the focus is on testing smaller initiatives to develop meaningful integrated action plans for urban development. To succeed in the green transition, change is needed in our political institutions, in the way we govern and plan our cities, and in civil society. Through co-created actions, deliberative dialogue, and the testing and evaluation of activities and governance structures, cities in the COPE network are working on developing and adjusting municipal policies, strategies and structures to become coherent and integrated and to push their cities for a green and just transition. In practice, this means that the municipality must be able to facilitate citizens' green actions in balance with the need for equity and a just transition.

In October - December 2025 the COPE network activities focused on delivering the final products, finishing the Integrated Action Plans and presenting them at the final conference in Copenhagen.

2. Core Network Meeting #8 in Copenhagen

On November 4th – 6th the COPE network finished the COPE network activities through a final core network meeting split up on November 4th and 6th by the COPE final conference entitled « *Citizen driven Climate Solutions – empowerment, democracy and local communities* ». The core network meeting was a 1½ day programme with an optional site visit on the afternoon on the 6th. The agenda was focused on reflecting on the COPE activities through the COPE journey and to flip it around pointing at the future trying to pin point learnings and future praxis and local developments.

As always we start with a Meet & Greet exercise on the floor. This time the **Zip, Zap, SPOING !** game.



How to disseminate the COPE final product

In this final core network meeting we spend some time focusing on how to communicate on the COPE final product and the IAPs. To do this the COPE partners worked on identifying their local target groups as well as brainstorming and discussing how to disseminate. The COPE communication officer from Copenhagen has produced these templates for the purpose.



Step 1: Identify your local target audience.

Consider both primary and secondary target audience:

- Primary: Those who will actively use the final product (urban planners, local politicians, NGO's, etc.).
- Secondary: Those who will help disseminate the final product (networks, organisations, media, etc.)

Target Audience	Motivation to Use/Disseminate Final Product
Climate officers in the Urban Renewal departments	Get practical ideas for local climate initiatives

Step 2: Discuss how to disseminate the final product to your identified target audience.

Target Audience	Key Message	Communication Channel	Responsible	Timing
Climate officers in the Urban Renewal departments	Emphasize how the final product can support climate officers in identifying and implementing locally relevant climate initiatives through citizen collaboration	Email, follow-up workshop	Name of person	Week 51

Evaluating the COPE network activities

Evaluation is a mandatory part of a process if you want to learn from it and improve your work in the future and if you want to take part in playing other parts of the process better. A process of going through the activities of an URBACT Action Planning Network is quite complex with many needs and dreams to fulfill.

In this last core network meeting we prioritised to make time to have an evaluation that both gave time to reflect on the activities we have been through as a network and not least the learnings they gave us.

The evaluation was planned as a process that would give time and space to reflect alone and in groups. Giving space for the individual to reflect before anyone is given the floor should give everyone as good an opportunity as possible to define and pin point their own experience and opinion before being coloured by other people's experiences.

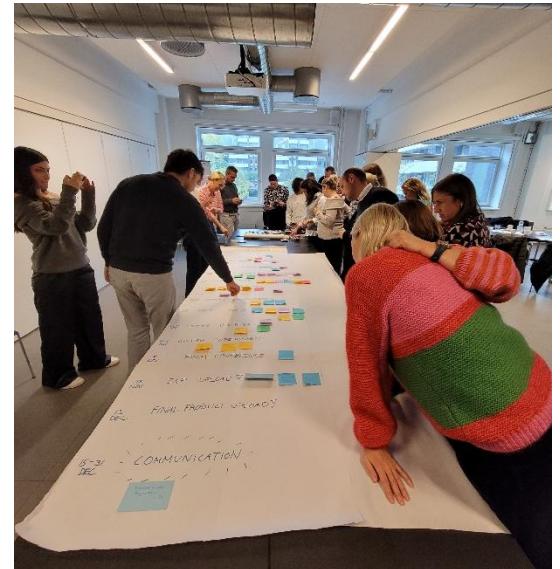
Looking back at COPE

Step 1 was an invitation to reflect on the questions:

- What have we been through?
- What was useful?
- What made you happy?
- What was difficult?
- What did you learn as a person, as a public officer, in your governance processes?

The task was to choose specific activities where there was a clear learning and write the learnings on post-it notes. And then to find a partner from another city to discuss the activities and learnings and to add activities if more were identified. After the discussion the activities should be placed on a large premade timeline.

Having time to discuss activities and learnings with a person that is not your closest partner can make you find more clear arguments since the person is not already onboard in your mind-set and your internal processes and therefore tend to ask different questions than someone you know very well.



In **Step 2** we had a plenary session where everyone presented the most important activities for them on the timeline. This gave us a round where we as a network could share learnings and insights from a personal point of view but giving each other a more holistic idea of the very different kind of insights and learnings represented in the network and also opening our understanding of more learnings that the first self-reflections managed to identify.

In **Step 3** the partners were given a space were more informal reflections and discussions about learnings and activities could be shared. Through an exercise using other competencies than speech and writing everyone was told to choose the most important activity and to illustrate it in the timeline.



Step 4 finalised the evaluation exercise. Here everyone was given two tea lights and were asked to light it and place it by their two favourite illustrations of activities. At the end we again had a quick round in plenum where everyone could share why they placed their lights as they did:

- **Why are the lights positioned as they are?**
- **What will we take with us from COPE into our work on engaging citizens in taking green action?**
- **What will we leave behind?**

Having been through this thorough round of reflections looking at COPE retrospectively, we then wanted to look forward defining and articulating some of the main learnings that the partners could either put in their toolbox or work more strategically on developing and implementing in the future and maybe even pass on some learnings or guidelines for others to benefit from.

Here the partner cities were put in groups together to with each a "City poster" with the task to discuss and write down answers as concrete as possible using examples if possible:

Consider your local work in COPE and the network learnings on facilitating participatory processes through citizen and stakeholder engagement.

- Did COPE change your work on engaging citizens in taking green action?
 - Why?
 - Why not?
 - What made a difference for you?
- What is needed to be able to change your PROCESSES and GOVERNANCE?



In next step the cities found together in bigger groups to present their poster to each other with the purpose to look for similarities and patterns in order to define more general perspectives. Similarities and shared experiences were then transferred into the **COPE Guidelines** poster.

As a wrap up for the day we took a round in plenary to present and discuss if the COPE Guidelines would be relevant for others and could be shared. But this is not an easy task and since the COPE Guidelines are a mix of both super concrete and more abstract learnings and in scale from individual learnings to organisational learnings these are very difficult to share in a simple way. Here you can read the list:

COPE Guidelines

-) Give ordinary citizens the extraordinary experience to meet peers in Europe.
-) To give citizens a voice. Listen to the citizens. Involving all citizens (APP social categories)
-) Speak in an everyday language and be clear.
-) Place meetings with the citizens when they are available (after work – the end of the day)
-) Do not forget to invite Academia as stakeholders (even though it is not easy)
-) Political back-up. Bring politicians to the Core Network Meetings
-) Strong connection between different municipality services. Represent municipality with more voice/functions
-) Implement the proposals of the ULG. Make an anchoring strategy for your ULG to carry the torch.
-) Communicate results
-) Use the IAP and the road towards it as prototype for similar community engaging initiative
-) Sustainability is not the only the end goal – it is part of the process
-) More budget for small scale action. Small Scale Actions makes the intangible tangible
-) Make everything place-relevant (place is the vehicle for relevance locally)

Copenhagen: Lead partner and local partner

The Copenhagen climate taskforce and the area renewal set the organisational frame for the Copenhagen COPE neighbourhood Sønderbro. This is a structure develop over several years forming an innovative, place-based and citizen oriented urban development.¹

And they are all feeding into the current development of the Copenhagen Climate Strategy 2035 with the aims:

-) Climate Positivity by 2035: The city will focus on achieving climate positivity for its direct, territorial CO2 emissions.
-) Halve Consumption-Based Emissions: The global climate footprint associated with Copenhageners' consumption should be halved by 2035, compared to 2019 levels.
-) Reduce Municipal Procurement Emissions: Emissions from the city's own purchases will be cut by 50% by 2035.

Copenhagen city: 654,000 inhabitants (2023).

The metropolitan Area: Over 1.9 million people (2024).

Age: The largest age group is 20-29 years old.

Foreign-Born Population: Approximately 20% of the city's population are foreign-born.

Gender: Women make up a slight majority of the population.

GDP: The city has an estimated GDP of around \$61.9 billion.

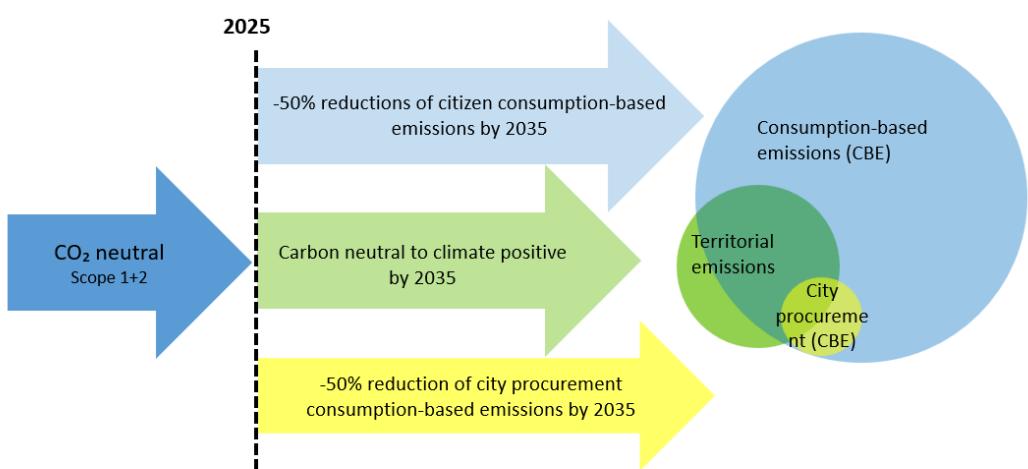
Employment: Copenhagen has a high proportion of skilled workers, with 98% of the population having digital skills.

Transportation: Copenhagen Airport is the busiest in the Nordic region, serving about 2.5 million passengers monthly.

Copenhagen works on finding ways to reach new targets related to scope 1 + 2 focusing on consumption. Defining boundaries as:

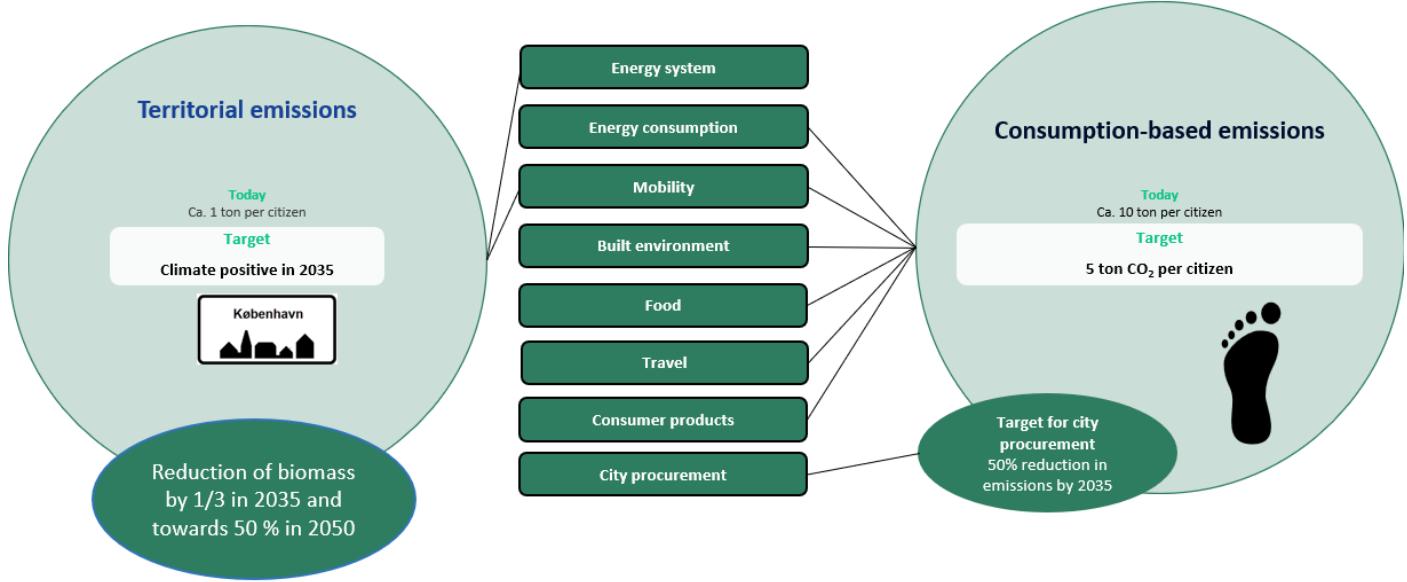
- Territorial (or geographic) covers all emissions in the geographical city boundary, similar to country reporting to the UNFCCC, no matter who emitted
- Consumption-based: tied to Copenhagener's consumption, no matter where they are, or where the products come from
- Overlap where local consumption is based on local production – but due to differences in data and method, may be hard to quantify and if possible, figures may not match
- Different approach than scope-based used today
- RE-crediting is not considered in Climate Strategy 2035 methodology

New targets



¹ The following is taken from the presentation done by Lead partner Øystein Leonardsen, Head of programme, Climate task force, Copenhagen Municipality.

The strategy contains sub-targets within:

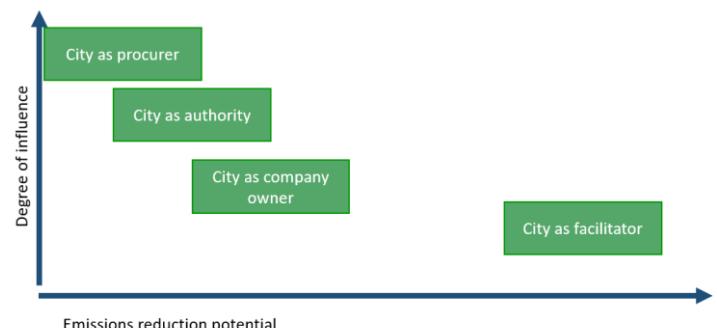


The strategy's approach for dealing with consumption-based emissions is based on, among others, *social tipping point theory* (as described in IPCC 2022).

The City's powers and roles

The municipality as

-) A company: setting requirements in purchases and own actions
-) as an authority: setting requirements in various authority tasks
-) a company owner: Setting requirements for the companies' actions
-) a facilitator: Helping Copenhageners with green neighbourhoods, changing consumption patterns, etc.



Our opportunities for influence decrease in the upcoming climate plan, when we move towards targeting behaviour.

Social tipping point theory (IPCC 2022)

-) Refers to the situation where a series of unrelated changes together accelerate a transition that triggers major changes, even at the societal level.
-) Working with tipping points as a tool involves trying to identify the changes that are taking place in a system and trying to find the groups or actors that can influence and spread the transition.
-) The City's work with social tipping points is based on existing changes, wishes and needs among the city's actors, which we can support.

Thank you Øystein for the excellent presentation!



Site visits in Copenhagen

The site-visits in Copenhagen where partly showing different sites in Copenhagen working with different governance models.

Where **Christiania – the free town** is an example of how a citizen driven part of the city was established in the 1971 and how it now is an example of how citizens and the municipality co-create innovative governance models accommodating the free town and at the same time incorporates legal standards pushing out organised crime.

And in **Skjolds Plads** showing how close collaborations with the local citizens helped solving a waste management challenge due to the upscaling of the number of waste bins. Here they collaborated on a solution of sharing the waste bins in a functional solution.

We also saw parts of the COPE neighbourhood Sønderbro.

How the **playground in Øselsgade** already has a food community with the children who come to the playground. Every Thursday evening, they cook together, often over a campfire.

Together with the Area Renewal programme, they want to grow vegetables and herbs for communal meals with the children. And they would like to invite more of the adult neighbours to become part of a garden community where they can grow vegetables for their own use.



And the **Community Garden Hørgårdens Byhave**

with the overall objective of developing communities around climate-friendly food culture towards 2029. The idea is to support *Hørgårdens Byhave* by holding a series of free workshops focusing on cultivation, cooking, composting, seed collection, food waste, etc., thereby strengthening the green community around the urban garden. Each teaching session focuses on practical knowledge and ends with everyone eating the crops together. The project can ensure that more people can use the site, that there are more activities that create security and community around growing green and avoiding food waste, that responsibility is taken for the garden, and that there is positive participation from the neighbours. This strengthens both their connection to nature, their experiences with green food and the playground as a meeting place in the neighbourhood.





And the old barn in the middle of the area offering a place for neighbourhood activities. The place is now in a stage where activities will be tested, and architect students have been invited to develop and pitch ideas for how the construction can support different purposes and uses of the building.

3. COPE final conference

The COPE final conference was entitled « *Citizen driven Climate Solutions – empowerment, democracy and local communities* » and it was a day with fast and focused presentations followed by slow and plentiful time for small group reflections.

The 8 COPE partners were paired and presented a very selected taste of their work and Integrated Action Plans. The presentations were all very well performed and the 100 conference participants representing both local administrations, climate science and climate activists were thankful for the very tangible examples of how to engage citizens locally in climate action.

During the day we also heard from climate scientists and activists, we had time to reflect at the tables and not least we had artists performing in the room underlining the presentations and giving another language to support the translation from new knowledge into our work.



The COPE partners used their presentation skills from both the pecha kucha presentations in the core network meeting #3 in Kavala as well as the storytelling of ME – US – NOW from core network meeting #7 in Bistrița.



4. COPE and Teofil Gherca

On the last day of the COPE network we had the pleasure of a special guest start; namely the director of the URBACT programme Mr. Teofil Gherca.

Mr. Teofil Gherca participated in the planned agenda starting with site-visit in Christiania – the Freetown. Next we had an hour where we wanted to draw a line connecting the evaluation and guideline exercises we did on the first day of the meeting.

Building on that we formed a small debate forum with two panels giving the 8 COPE partners an opportunity to reflect on the URBACT programme with the programme director.

We asked the four questions based in the interview made with Teofil when he started as director in URBACT. You can find the interview here: [Meet URBACT's new Secretariat Director | urbact.eu](https://urbact.eu/meet-urbacts-new-secretariat-director)

Questions used in the panel discussion:

Q1: What will it take to make URBACT an even more responsive bottom-up facilitator of sustainable urban development?

Q2: What ideas can we collectively generate to enhance the image of the broad EU offer to support sustainable development?

Q3: What does it take from URBACT to be even more agile and innovative – and what experiments and actions could we dream of?

Q4: what kind of concrete support do we need to effectively turn URBACT projects into activities and investments – and open up the programme to a wide variety actors of change?



The location OPERAEN in Christiania provided this amazing stage for our discussions making it obvious that we could dream and be bold.

Some of the key responses from the COPE partners was:

- › less writing and planning and more DOING
- › more focus on involving the ULG (Urbact Local Group)
- › less funding for traditional communication and more funding to test actions
- › more FUNDING guidance and innovation

5. European activities in COPE



GREEN LEAF – SAINT-QUENTIN IN THE FINAL

September was a final run towards the Green Leaf Awards Ceremony in Vilnius for our partner from Saint-Quentin. They did not win the award but as Romain Prevot from Saint-Quentin Municipality says « We are Happy to be finalist ! Only French city in final ! It means already a lot for us 🌱🌱 ».

Congratulations to award winners Assen and Siena in the Green Leaf competition and European Green Capital 2027 winner Hielbronn !



interregRomania



Our Cristina from Bistrița presented their COPE experiences at InterregRomania. Presenting wearing a bicycle helmet and sunglasses underlined their efforts in shifting from hard mobility into soft mobility – out of the cars and up on the bike. Well done!



Greening Urban Economy



On November 13th COPE participated in a knowledge webinar on Green Urban Economy as a case presented by Lead Partner Øystein Leonardsen.

[Watch the webinar here](#)

Smart City Expo in Barcelona



On November 5th COPE participated in the Smart City Expo in Barcelona as part of the Greening Urban Economy Knowledge Hub. Here Erik Hagelskær from Copenhagen Municipality made the presentation

European Regions week



Our Ausra presenting Vilnius Good Practise just as Øystein presents Copenhagen Good Practise at European Regions Week. Not a COPE activity, but we are proud of our partners

6. Coming up

COPE

2026: Sharing our work. Developing and implementing the COPE IAPs

URBACT

March 2026: Final City Festival only for the participants in this round of networking

April-June 2026: Call for the next APN round (to be launched at City Festival 2026 New City Labs TBD by URBACT.

