

\\ Quarterly Report 06 ///

Stories and updates from U.R IMPACT Network



In this report we speak about the finalisation of the IAPs, we share our experience during our last Transnational meeting in Cinisello Balsamo and offer some tools for communicating our work

November 2025



NETWORK OVERVIEW

U.R. Impact, co-funded by the URBACT IV European program, is spearheaded by the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo. Its primary aim is to craft an Integrated Action Plan assessing the societal impact of urban revitalisation initiatives.

Emphasising the significance of social impact and community engagement, this project seeks to reconceptualise urban renewal endeavours. This entails reorienting these actions to prioritise the welfare of citizens—addressing their social, economic, and environmental well-being at the core of these transformative processes. Additionally, by fostering a greater sense of belonging and encouraging civic involvement, the initiative aims to enhance community participation in these efforts.

Three key components for impact

The network core object is to learn and implement social impact management in their cities. the methodology around this aim is divided into three main elements:

Intentionality puts impact evaluation ex-ante, allowing planning designing for impact and includes constant monitoring and replanning

Additionality Taking into account various areas and stakeholders involved in the process.

Measurability Collecting valuable data and showcasing the impact.

City identity and key themes

Across the ten diverse cities engaged in this transformational journey, several key themes emerge, reflecting common challenges, innovative approaches, and distinctive characteristics intrinsic to each location.

Crafting a unique identity and safeguarding local heritage hold utmost significance for all U.R IMPACT cities. While some aim to establish a distinct identity and allure to draw in new permanent residents, others prioritise enhancing the sense of place for current inhabitants.

Social Inclusion	Sustainable Tourism
Brain drain and youth policy	Heritage and innovation
Governance models	Local commerce and proximity economy

- IAP -

Finalising our IAPs with an Integrated Approach

Online meeting with Ed Thorpe



During the past months, the network took part in a masterclass led by Ed Thorpe on strengthening and finalizing Integrated Action Plans (IAPs). Drawing on his experience reviewing plans across Europe, Ed highlighted that the real value of an IAP lies in the development process and the engagement it generates, rather than in the final document. He reviewed common challenges—such as unclear logic, inconsistency, and excessive complexity—and stressed the importance of simplicity, clear communication of the integrated approach, and distinguishing between actions and activities.

The session also explored success factors for implementation, including maintaining a clear vision, ensuring stakeholder involvement, and identifying funding opportunities; examples from Longford, Kesh, and Turin illustrated how flexible, well-communicated plans can lead to long-term impact. Ed encouraged participants to prioritize the most relevant elements of integration, focus on clarity and brevity, and use visual tools to strengthen the plan's logic.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **A clearer impact logic strengthens the plan**
SMART impact goals under the Vision — and SMART goals reframed as specific objectives — make outcomes easier to communicate.
- ✓ **Coherence improves when all strategic tools are integrated**
Including the Theory of Change and strategic procurement approach creates a unified IAP framework.
- ✓ **Integration needs to be shown clearly**
Highlighting key integration dimensions makes the plan's approach more visible and understandable
- ✓ **Lessons from Testing**
Presenting a summary of what was actually tested and learned grounds the strategy in real experience
- ✓ **A defined funding logic supports feasibility**
Identifying priority actions and potential funding programmes clarifies how implementation can move forward
- ✓ **Structure and visual consistency enhance readability**
Clear layout and colour coding make the IAP easier to navigate

- IAP -

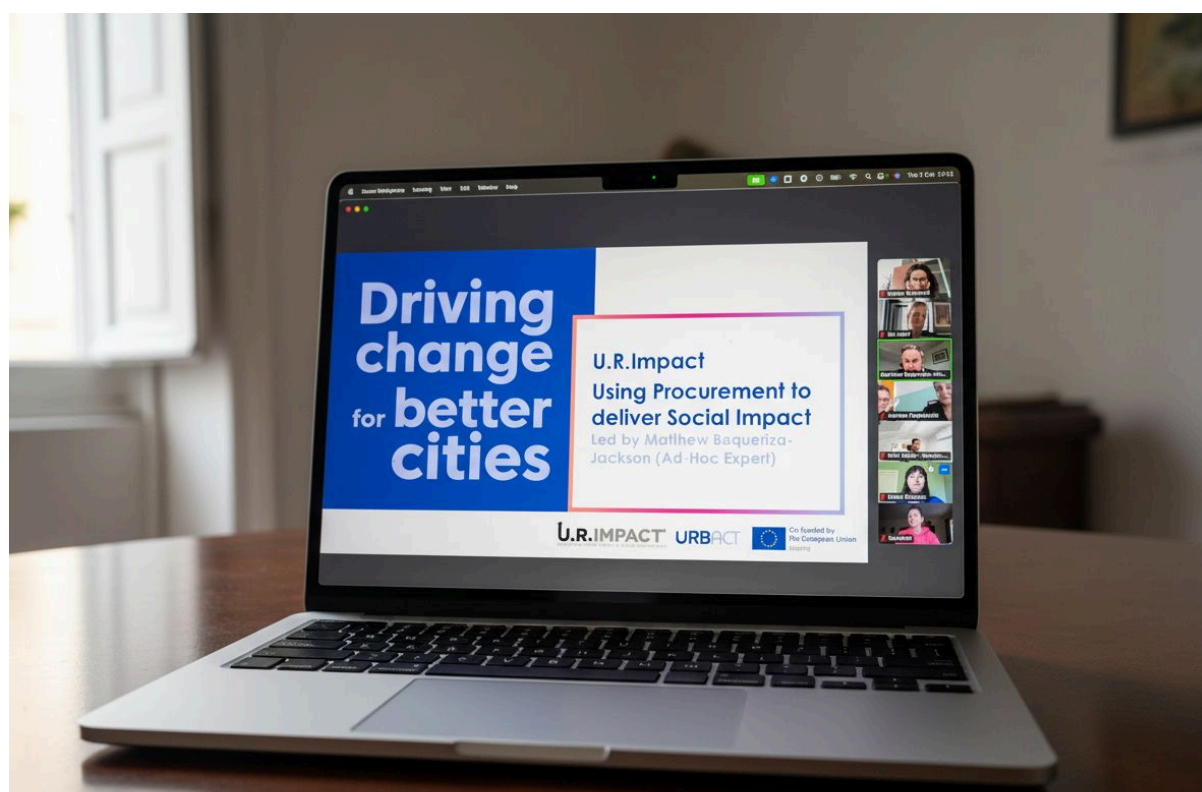
Social Procurement

Online meeting with Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson



During the quarter, the network attended a masterclass led by Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson on how public procurement can be used strategically to advance social outcomes. The session reframed procurement—often seen as bureaucratic or overly technical—as a powerful policy tool, given the scale of public spending and its potential to support job creation, skills development, poverty reduction, and the growth of SMEs and social economy organizations.

Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson introduced a six-step procurement cycle (spend analysis, commissioning, tendering, evaluation, contract monitoring, and post-contract review) and demonstrated how social and environmental criteria can be embedded throughout the process. The discussion highlighted practical approaches such as breaking contracts into smaller lots, reserving specific contracts for eligible organizations, and using scoring systems to assess social impact.



- EXCHANGE -

The power of peer visits: Bovec visiting Longford

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In August 2025, Longford County Council welcomed a delegation from Bovec to Ballymahon, Ireland, as part of the URBACT peer exchange program. The study trip focused on social inclusion, the use of public assets for community benefit, and sustainable funding models for social and cultural initiatives. The peer visit included a variety of projects across the county from youth centres, family resource centres and museums, to coworking hubs and new social projects, highlighting the collaboration with and work by the local community and volunteers.



Takeaways from Bovec

What we learned:

- Community-driven initiatives are powerful. Projects such as Attic House Foroige and Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre showed how local volunteers, families, and youth can shape safe, creative, and supportive environments.
- Public buildings can find new life. The Yard Hub in Abbeyshrule demonstrated how a derelict site can be transformed into a vibrant co-working and community hub, supporting both rural development and tourism.
- Social enterprises strengthen resilience. Examples like the “Pre-Loved Boutique” illustrated how re-use and social entrepreneurship can provide both services and income, while also promoting sustainability.
- Partnerships are essential. Successful projects relied on strong cooperation between local authorities, national programs, and grassroots organizations.
- Spaces create belonging. From youth cafés to Men’s Sheds, the importance of safe, welcoming places for connection, creativity, and well-being was evident throughout.

The visit confirmed that Longford's approach—grounded in community participation, creativity, and multi-level collaboration—can inspire similar practices in our own local context.

Takeaways from Longford

The Cathaoirleach (Mayor) of Longford County Council, Cllr Garry Murtagh said after the visit that “this international partnership perfectly captures what makes Longford special – our ability to transform challenges into opportunities whilst keeping community at the heart of everything we do.” The visit of our Slovenian colleagues gave us an opportunity to stand back and look at some of the very positive work that is happening in Longford and the importance of the collaboration with the voluntary sector and our local communities and shows the impact we can have when we work together.

- 6TH UR IMPACT TRANSNATIONAL MEETING -

Urban regeneration, impact indicators and celebrations



The sixth and final transnational meeting of the URBACT U.R. Impact network, held in Cinisello Balsamo from November 25th to 27th, 2025, was a meaningful conclusion to the shared learning journey that has shaped the network over the past years. Gathering for the last time in person, partners had the opportunity to reflect on their Integrated Action Plans, revisit the challenges that emerged along the way, and examine how the tools developed within the network can continue to guide implementation beyond the project's formal end.

Over three days, participants combined reflective sessions with on-site visits to Italian examples of sustainable urban transformation, creating a balance between strategic discussions and concrete field inspiration. The meeting served not only to share progress updates and future goals but also to consolidate a cross-network understanding of impact: how it can be measured, how it evolves over time, and how cities can build the capacities needed to sustain it. This closing moment strengthened the sense of community within the network while opening space for new collaborations that may continue beyond URBACT IV.

SUSS project (Urban Strategy for Sustainable Development)

Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (SUSS) under the 2021–2027 ERDF Programme of Lombardy Region are defined as Strategic Operations that promote integrated and inclusive social, economic, and environmental development in urban areas. Supported by over €150 million for 14 medium-sized municipalities, they focus on urban regeneration through the renovation and energy efficiency of public housing and infrastructure, complemented by community engagement and skills development initiatives co-financed by the ESF+.

A key part of the meeting was the exploration of the SUSS project in Monza, focused on the regeneration of the San Rocco neighborhood. The area, marked by high density and diverse social needs, used the SUSS framework to link physical improvements—such as school renovations, traffic calming around school entrances, new green spaces, and multifunctional hubs—with educational initiatives, social cohesion activities, and stronger local governance. The Civic Center acted as the main coordination node for schools, third-sector actors, residents, and municipal departments.

Particularly relevant was the co-design process involving 13 local organizations, which resulted in a shared agreement defining roles, responsibilities, and a joint monitoring system. With the support of Politecnico di Milano, a set of neighborhood-specific indicators was created to track changes in mobility behavior, school choices, participation, and family engagement over the next two years. The main message emerging from Monza is clear: regeneration succeeds when infrastructure, participation, and long-term shared responsibility evolve together.



Event: Social Impact in Sustainable Urban Development

The “Social Impact in Sustainable Urban Development” event, hosted at Villa Ghirlanda in Cinisello Balsamo, brought together network partners and external guests for a focused reflection on how cities can evaluate and strengthen the impact of their urban strategies. In parallel, partners presented a poster exhibition showcasing their Theories of Change, offering a visual overview of how each city links actions, expected outcomes, and long-term transformations.

Professor Gabriele Pasqui opened the session by highlighting how implementation processes rarely unfold linearly. Cities were encouraged to confront the complexity of “wicked problems,” adapt to evolving contexts, and build the administrative capacity necessary for lasting social innovation. His contribution emphasized the importance of aligning resources, coordination structures, and long-term commitments when pursuing measurable impact.

The roundtable expanded the discussion with practical insights from Cinisello Balsamo and other partner cities. Gaia Del Negro, Massimo Capano and Arezoo Mohebpour reflected on the challenges of co-developing social impact indicators, engaging underrepresented groups, and creating shared narratives around wellbeing. Examples from the Crocetta neighborhood and Cinisello’s recent work illustrated how participatory assessment tools can reconnect fragmented initiatives and strengthen the coherence of urban policies. The session ultimately reinforced a key idea for the network: building an impact-oriented culture requires reducing barriers to participation, experimenting with temporary solutions, and integrating evaluation into day-to-day decision-making.



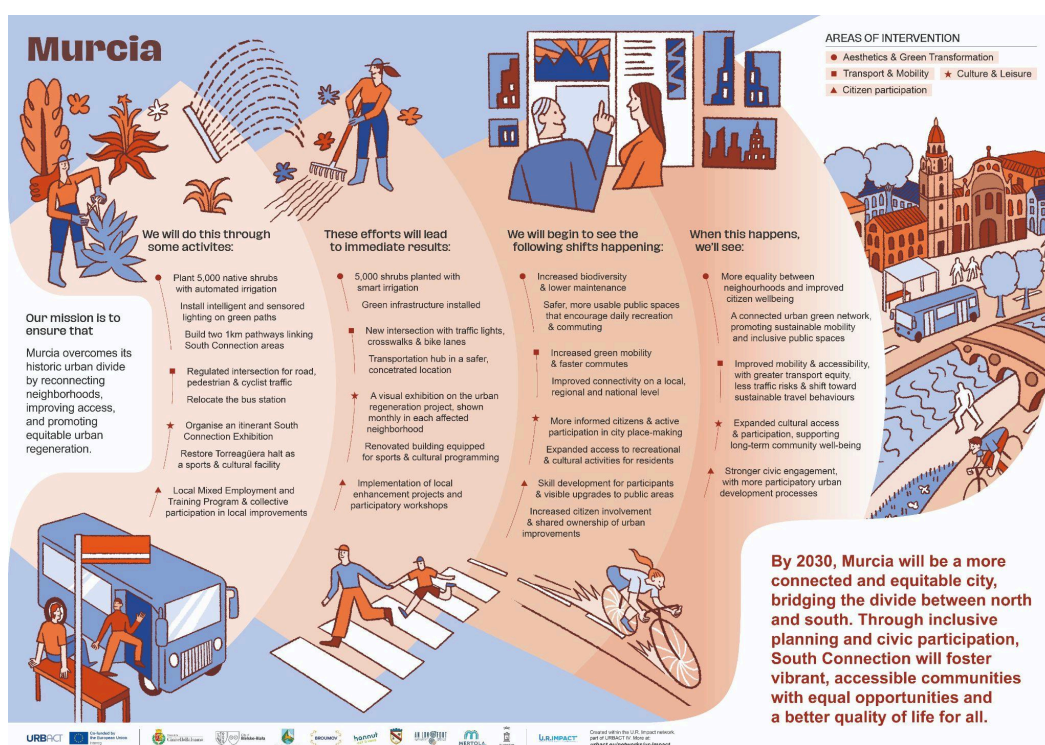
- TOOL FOCUS -

IAP's posters

In the final phase of the project, as partners began consolidating and communicating the knowledge developed over the past months, a new tool was introduced: a set of illustrated IAP's posters translating each city's Theory of Change into a clear and accessible visual format. The aim was to support partners in explaining their work to colleagues, municipal leaders, citizens, and external stakeholders through a medium that is immediate, coherent, and easy to share.

The starting point was a common challenge: the Theories of Change produced within the network were methodologically solid but often too dense for broader communication. The illustrated posters responded to this need by distilling each city's impact pathway into a structured visual narrative aligned with the U.R. Impact identity. This translation process required identifying the essential storyline of each theory and testing whether the visual synthesis preserved its logical coherence.

The result is a set of posters that share a common framework: a central depiction of the city's long-term vision, surrounded by smaller visual elements that map the steps connecting actions to outcomes. The balance between abstraction and concreteness varies by city, but the overall structure enables quick understanding and cross-context comparison.



WHAT NEXT?



With the U.R. Impact network reaching its formal conclusion, the coming weeks will be dedicated to finalising the last deliverables: the completed IAPs and the network's final product. The project cycle is therefore approaching its definitive end, marked symbolically by the final transnational meeting in Cinisello Balsamo, where partners exchanged their last in-person reflections and farewells.

Over the past years, partners have strengthened their technical capacity and refined their approaches to impact-oriented urban development. Just as importantly, the network has generated strong professional and human connections that many hope will lay the foundations for future collaborations. While the URBACT framework now draws to a close, the shared ambition to continue learning and working together remains an open path for the years ahead.