

CITIES@HEART

TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE

7th QUARTERLY NETWORK REPORT ♥

July 2025
September 2025



URBACT



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♥ 1. Cities@Heart

Cities@Heart mobilises ten European urban areas. Led by the Greater Paris Metropolis (a public entity with a sound track record in downtown revitalisation policy), network partners work together to understand the way **city centres** function and create a new framework to be used in city centre improvement initiatives.

Quadrilátero Urbano
(Portugal)

Granada (Spain)

Sligo (Ireland)

Greater Paris Métropole
(France)

Fleurus (Belgium)

Cesena (Italy)

Celje (Slovenia)

Osijek (Croatia)

Krakow Métropole (Poland)

Amfiktyonies (Greece)



♥ 2. Where are we in our pathway to the City Centre toolbox?

Our roadmap proposes to exchange best practices and define indicators for public policies deployed in the city centre to generate a series of thematic objectives.

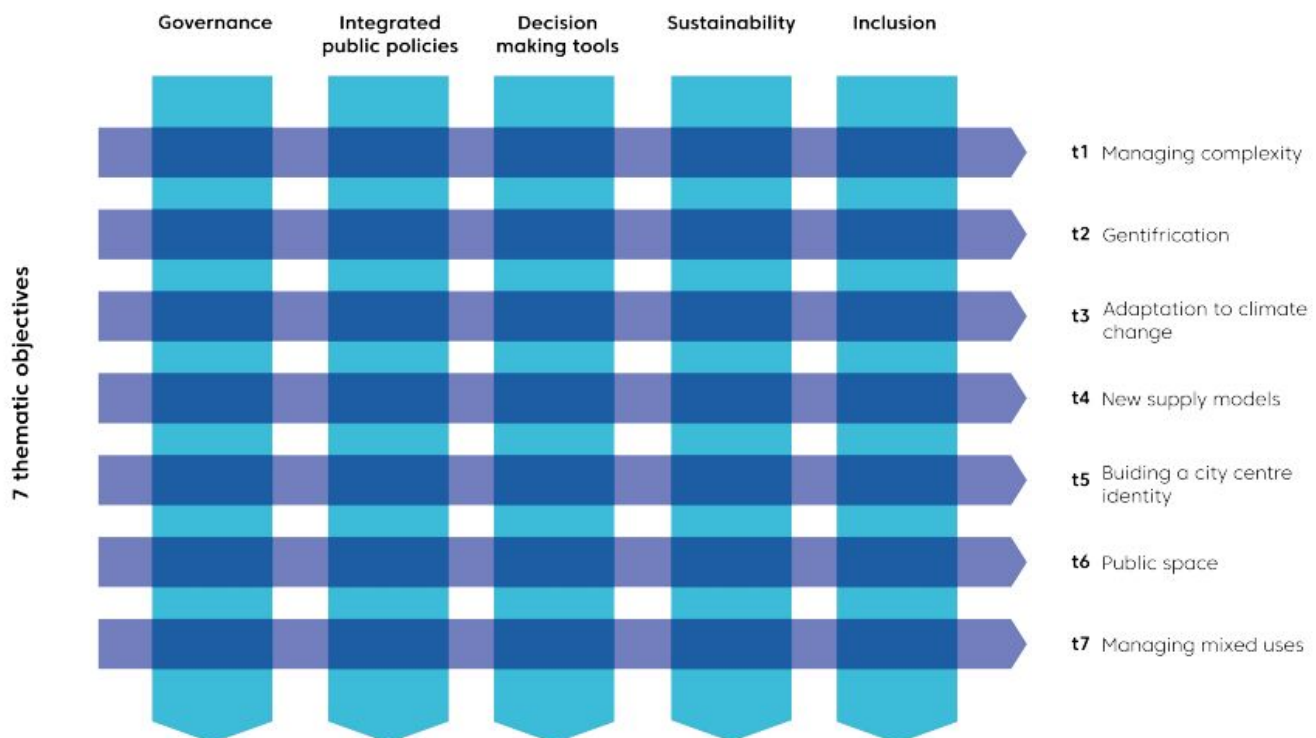
After more than a year and a half of network activity (meetings and dedicated workshops), we have explored all the topics proposed in the Baseline Study. The knowledge generated around these thematics will help us structure the final guidelines through a series of levers and their associated actions and indicators.

Highlights!

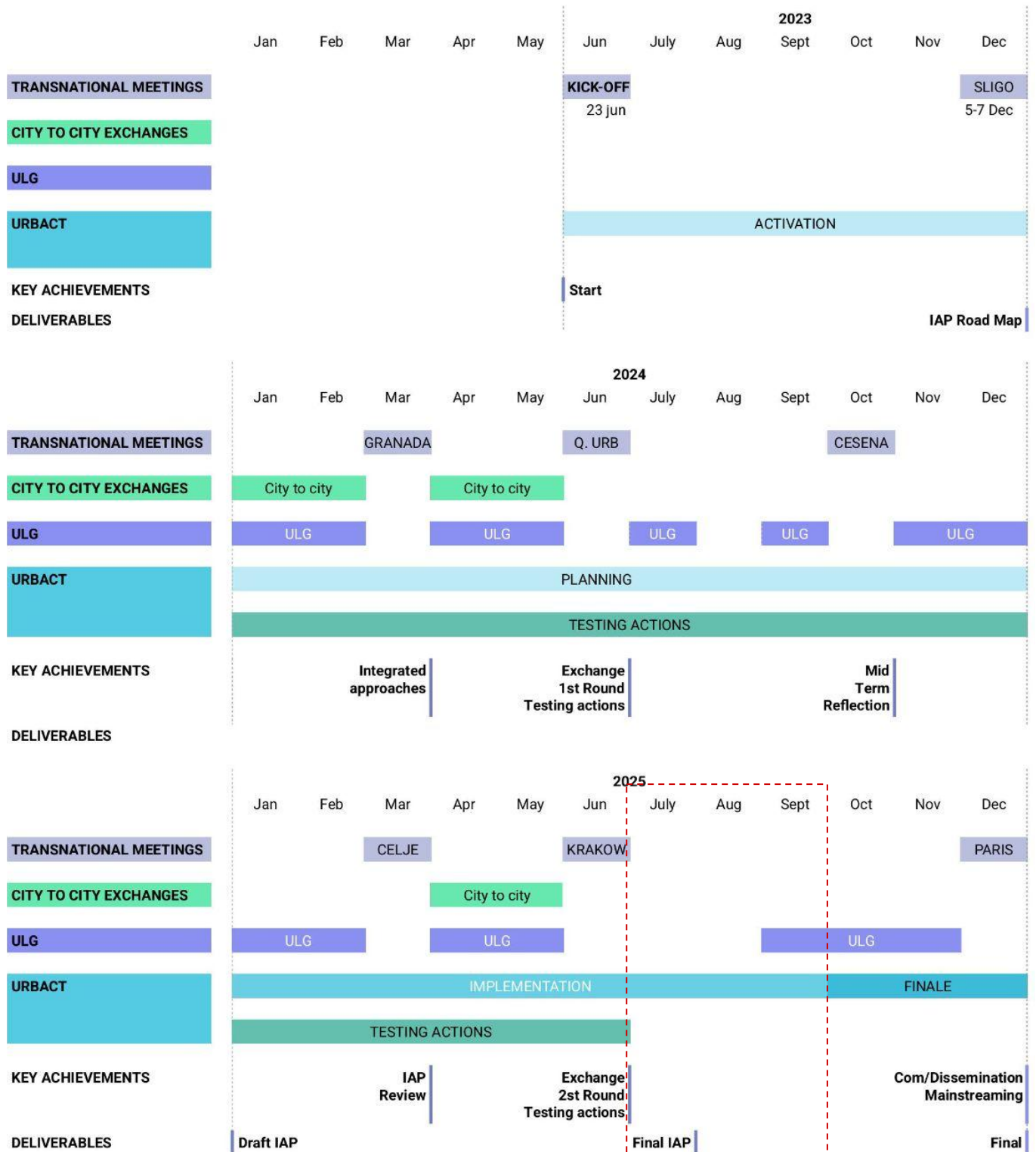
- 7 strategic objectives
- 5 Transnational meetings
- 7 online meetings
- 3 online webinars

Coming soon!

The partners have also proposed to make in-depth focus, organised by clusters of cities.



2. Our pathway to the city centres toolbox



♥ 3. What is going on in the network?

Throughout this third quarter of the year, the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) in each city have been deeply involved in a series of collaborative meetings. These sessions have served as a valuable forum for co-creating IAP visions and objectives and defining the Action Tables together with the local stakeholders.

ULGs seek to drive meaningful progress that aligns with the overarching objectives of the network while addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within their respective cities.

Developing partnerships involving local authorities, beneficiaries/users, NGOs, public agencies, the private sector and the civil society has proven to be a key component in the design and implementation of efficient urban policies.

♥ 4. The Sixth Transnational meeting: Krakow

Day 1

The event opened with a welcome by the vicemayor of Krakow to the participants in the city, then a session introducing the Krakow Metropolitan Area. Julita Ewert-Stawowy, Deputy Director of the Krakow Metropolitan Area Office, presented the region's priorities and its growing strategic role within Poland and Europe.

The morning continued with insights into Krakow's Smart City Strategy, followed by a presentation on the challenges of tourism and the role of the Krakow Tourism Alliance in addressing them. These opening contributions set the tone for the day, linking metropolitan governance, innovation, and the future of sustainable urban development.

Cities@Heart organised the sixth URBACT transnational network meeting in Krakow, focus on the challenges of over tourism







The visit to the Wesola Quarter showcased Kraków's flagship revitalization project in the city centre. Formerly a hospital district, the area is being transformed into Poland's first creative quarter, combining the preservation of historic and architectural heritage with adaptive reuse to create new cultural and community-oriented spaces.



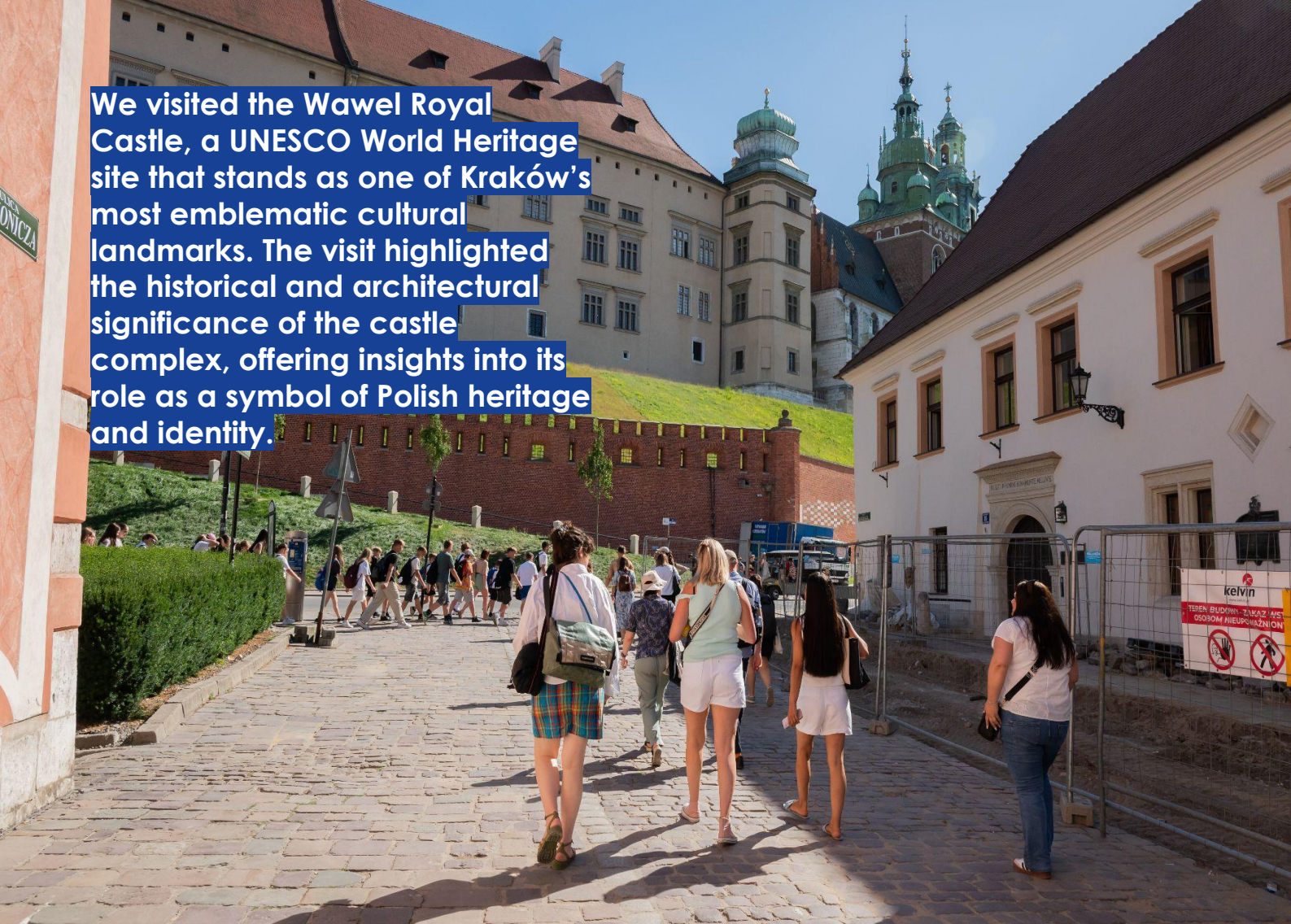




The first part of the workshop took place at Apteka Designu, a creative venue that provided the setting for collaborative discussions and project work. Purpose of the workshop: Identifying best practices for the five levels of the common guide.



We visited the Wawel Royal Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site that stands as one of Kraków's most emblematic cultural landmarks. The visit highlighted the historical and architectural significance of the castle complex, offering insights into its role as a symbol of Polish heritage and identity.



**Presentation of the Krakow
Tourism Alliance
Meeting with the Night-time
Mayor.**



Day 2

The second day began with a transfer from Kraków to Niepołomice, where participants gathered at *Piekarnia Sztuki*. The visit opened with a welcome session and introduction to the town, followed by a presentation on the small-scale action led by Mayor Michał Hebda together with representatives from the municipality and the Institute of Urban and Regional Development.

The morning continued with the second part of the workshop, providing space for partners to exchange experiences and deepen discussions around local implementation strategies.

The day concluded with a presentation of the small-scale action focused on the reorganization of space and traffic in the city center, illustrating Niepołomice's efforts to enhance safety, accessibility, and quality of public space through targeted local interventions.

Cities@Heart organised the sixth URBACT transnational network meeting in Krakow, focus on the challenges of over tourism

Transfer from Krakow to
Niepołomice





Participants were welcomed to Niepolomice with an introduction to the town and its development priorities. The session featured a presentation on the local small-scale action, highlighting strategies to improve public space and community well-being.



Workshop - part II



Visit to Niepolomice City Centre
Presentation of small-scale action
- reorganization of space and
traffic around Primary School



5. Our Quarterly best practices

The best practices of this period are synthesized from those presented in the transnational meeting in Krakow.

5.1. Tourism challenges

5.2. Wesola Quarter

5.3 Niepołomice City Centre strategy

♥ 5.1 Tourism challenges

Krakow is one of Europe's main tourist destinations, with UNESCO heritage sites. International tourism is gradually recovering—14 million visitors before COVID, 9.5 million in 2020, and city's statistics confirm 14,72 mln tourists in 2024.

The focus is shifting from overtourism to sustainable tourism. The city has a strategy running until 2028 to balance social, environmental, and economic aspects.

Key actions: Night-time economy initiatives in Kraków focus on the use of technology and data to guide decision-making, supported by strong cooperation among stakeholders. Campaigns promoting basic coexistence rules aim to balance urban vitality with community well-being, while monitoring indicators—such as the length of stay—help assess impacts and adapt policies effectively.



♥ 5.1 Tourism challenges

Krakow is the second city in the country with a night mayor and there is also a Night-time Economy Commission and work around short-term rentals. Krakow is included in the Global Sustainable Tourism Index.

Krakow Data Lab's work supporting culture and tourism departments with tourism data analysis. They are preparing open tourism datasets and buying mobility and credit card data to identify high-impact areas and explore decentralisation strategies.

[The Historic Centre of Kraków



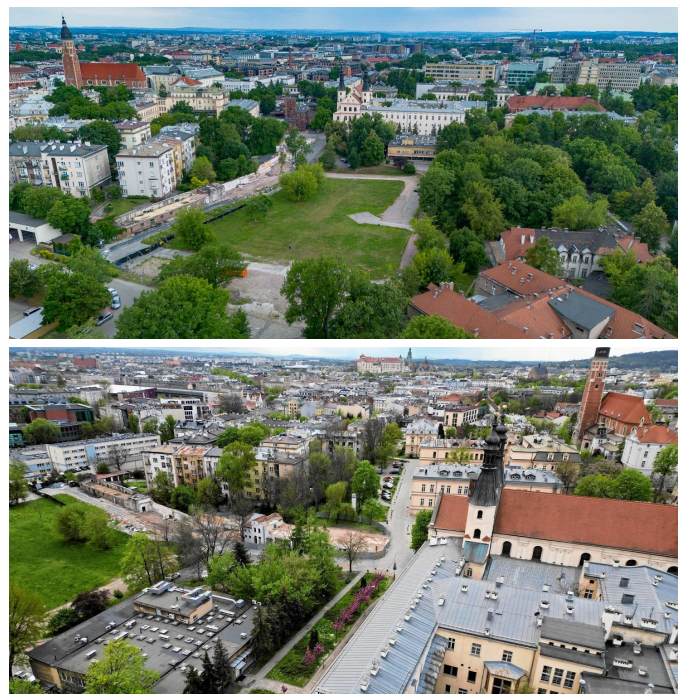
[The Wieliczka Salt Mine

♥ 5.2. Wesola Quarter

When the teaching hospital in the Wesola neighborhood of Krakow changed sites, the 9-hectare campus lay empty, resulting in a vast, mostly unused space steps away from the core of the city center.

That is when the city stepped in with a plan to develop the site into Poland's first cultural district in this UNESCO City of Literature.

To imagine the best future for this site, it was essential to engage stakeholders, "institutions, individuals and entities which value Wesola".



♥ 5.2. Wesola Quarter

KBF organised over 30 participatory workshops over 18 months to codesign Wesola and address a wide range of issues: food security, coliving, recreational activities or wayfinding strategies.

The result is a multifaceted roadmap crafted for users by users, illustrating the importance of authentic participatory processes like co-creating when imagining city center projects.

Residents include the design hub Apteka Designu, Krakow Festival Office, the chamber choir capella cracoviensis and many other cultural actors essential to keeping the city's art scene vibrant and active.

The KBF wants you to remember one thing: Wesola is a process—not a project.



♥ 5.3. Niepołomice City Centre strategy

Niepołomice is located east of Kraków, within the Wieliczka District, and forms part of the Kraków Metropolitan Area. Its proximity to a major urban center like Kraków fosters the town's growth. Urban processes such as suburbanization are evident in the Niepołomice commune, reflected in ongoing construction activity and a steady rise in population.

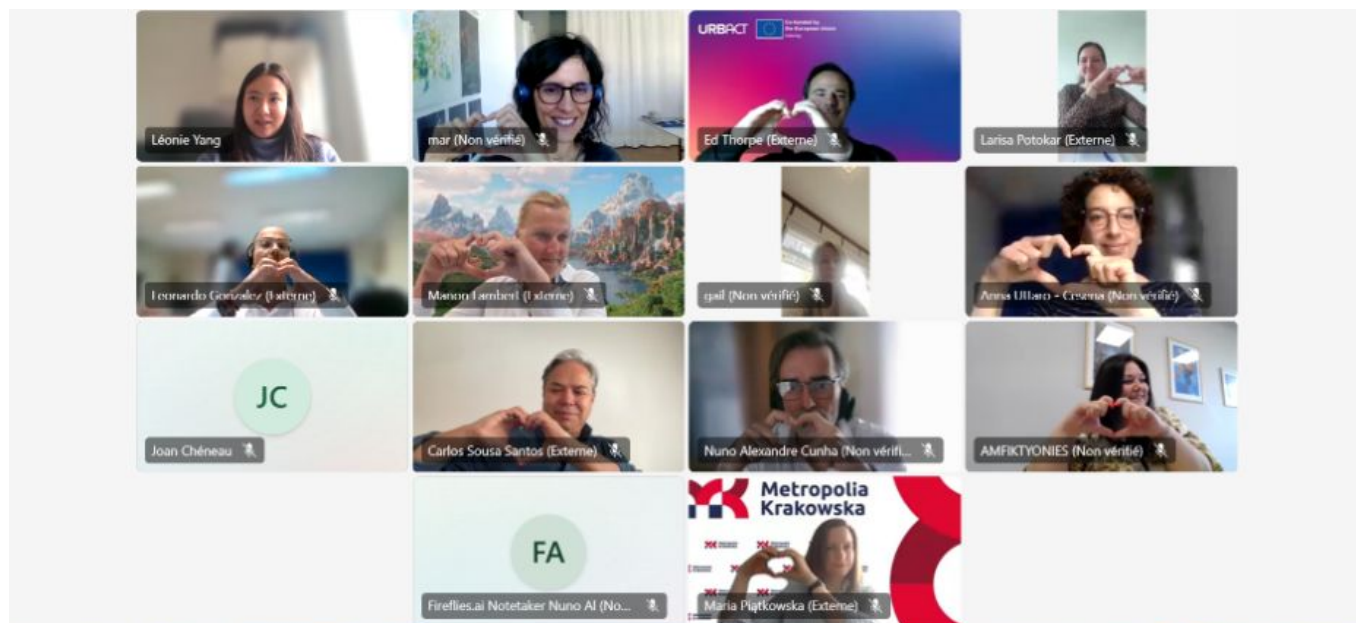
The development strategy for the City and Commune of Niepołomice was in place from 2011 to 2023 and encompassed 109 tasks distributed across four key strategic domains. These included fostering a stable economy based on the Niepołomice Investment Zone and local economic potential; building an organized community by supporting active, healthy, and well-rounded residents; creating an integrated and attractive range of leisure opportunities; and promoting environmental responsibility through sustainable practices.



♥ 6. Integrated Action Plan Review

During this quarter, the cities in the network refined their IAP visions and objectives. These drafts were reviewed in two key sessions.

In the online session focused on updates from the Lead Partner on contact lists, surveys, upcoming meetings, SSA expenditures, and deliverables. Partners shared progress on their IAPs and SSAs, integrating feedback and addressing local challenges, while the Lead Expert emphasized clarity, prioritization, and governance in IAP development.



♥ 7. Upcoming milestones

FINAL TRANSNATIONAL MEETING Paris - November 2025

The **upcoming transnational meeting in Paris** will...

In Paris, we will
present...

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In addition to the transnational meetings, we will be organising webinars on specific topics of interest to the partners.

**Thank you,
And stay posted for more!**



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