URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

INTEGRATED ACTION PLANNING REPORT

December 2025

metacity

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1. Introduction

About the project:

Metacity aims to increase competitiveness of small and medium tech-aware cities, benefiting from the opportunity to enhance service efficiency and citizen satisfaction provided by the metaverse. By integrating metaverse technologies, cities can create immersive digital environments for education, healthcare, tourism and public services, enabling streamlined communication, remote access to services, and personalized experiences, levelling the playing field with larger cities.

Metaverse-driven urban planning fosters innovation, economic growth, and ensures that citizens have access to cutting-edge solutions, ultimately improving their overall quality of life. Like in other digitalization waves before, small/median cities must be agile and move fast, profiting from their smaller scale, simplicity of processes and higher flexibility, to be amongst the first to plan, experiment and set the rules for the public authorities' use of metaverse and this way increase their competitiveness as regards larger cities with each they compete for attracting investments and talents.

Partners in a glance:

The Metacity network will address the challenges above within the context of a group of tech-aware small/median cities and universities in Europe that wish to move forward with the path of Digital Transformation into the technologies of the future and embrace the use of new technologies to improve the quality of urban life, while taking heed of all the threats and challenges posed by this quick evolution.

The metacity network has been developed as a balanced group of entities directly engaged into Urban Development, with a balance sought both in geographic terms and in terms of level of development according to the European Regional Development Fund classification (following the URBACT rules), but also in terms of typology of eGovernment interactions, which is particularly relevant as a starting point for the

The METACITY network

present topic of city services in the metaverse and using state of the art IT tools. For this last criterion, the ESPON classification (dated from 2017, which is the most recent one available) has been used, with a desired balance in terms of cities located in regions classified with low interaction (as is the case with Italian or Bulgarian regions), medium interaction (as in Portugal, Greece or Czechia) and an already high level of interaction between citizens and eGovernment services, as in the Nordic countries and France. The map with the location of the metacity partners is presented above. While with different levels of development and digitalisation, all metacity partners are similar in size and can be classified as small or median size urban areas, being as such highly dependent on the success of their digitalisation strategies in order to remain competitive and attractive in comparison with larger cities and metropolitan areas that are located in their close neighbourhood. The most relevant data on partner cities at the date of the start of the network activities is presented in the table below:

Table 1 – The metacity partnership in a glance

Country	Partner	Type	Size	Level of Development (ERDF)	Typology of e-government interactions (ESPON)
	Åbo Akademi, working w/ City of **Nykarleby**	Academy	7.497	Transition	High interaction / Medium growth
	Campobasso	City	47.587	Less Developed	Low interaction / Low growth
	Fundão	City	26.509	Less Developed	Medium interaction / medium growth
	Härnösand	City	25.000	More developed	High interaction / Low growth
	ISI Patras, working w/ City of **Arta**	Academy	41.600	Less developed	Medium interaction / high growth
	Mostar	City	104.518	IPA country	Not available
	Nevers Agglomération	Grouping of cities	64.617	Transition	High interaction / medium growth
	Písek	City	30.724	Transition	Medium interaction / medium growth
	Razlog	City	18.966	Transition	Low interaction / Low growth
	Újbuda	City	144.880	More developed	High interaction / Low growth

Structure of the report:

The present IAP Report presents a summary overview of the action-planning process of the METACITY network and aims to intends to offer practical information on the key aspects of the action planning process and evolution the partners have travelled through. The Report consists of the following main sections:

1. Introduction (this chapter): this chapter briefly present the challenge and ambition of the network, our partners and the structure of the report.

2. The IAP Journey: in this chapter we provide a concise description of the partners' journey, present the approach, methodology and tools we used along the journey, as well as a visual

3. The Testing Actions: a summary of the testing actions developed within the network.

4. The last chapter presents the **main lessons extracted from this unique journey.**

[urbact.eu]

Virtual solutions for real people

metacity

Total network budget

€ 849.986,75

EU funding

€ 575.528,57

IPA funding

€ 58.314,33

Network duration

01.06.2023 to 31.12.2025

Fundão (Portugal)

ISI, Patras (Greece)

Campobasso (Italy)

Nevers (France)

Písek (Czech Republic)

Újbuda (Hungary)

Razlog (Bulgaria)

Härnösand (Sweden)

Åbo Akademi (Finland)

Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Network Partners

URBACT

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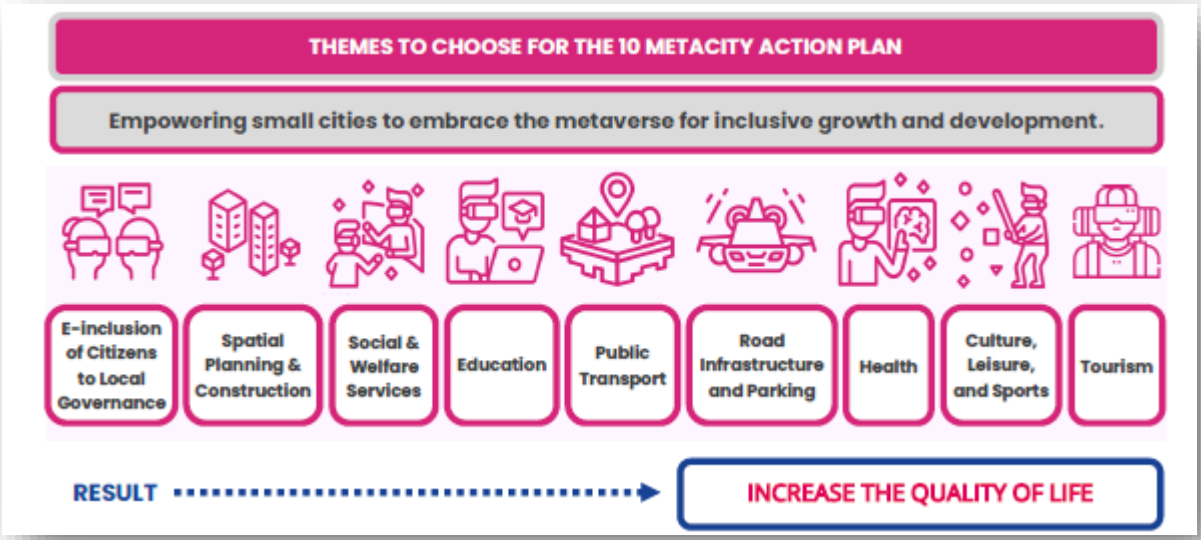
2. The IAP journey

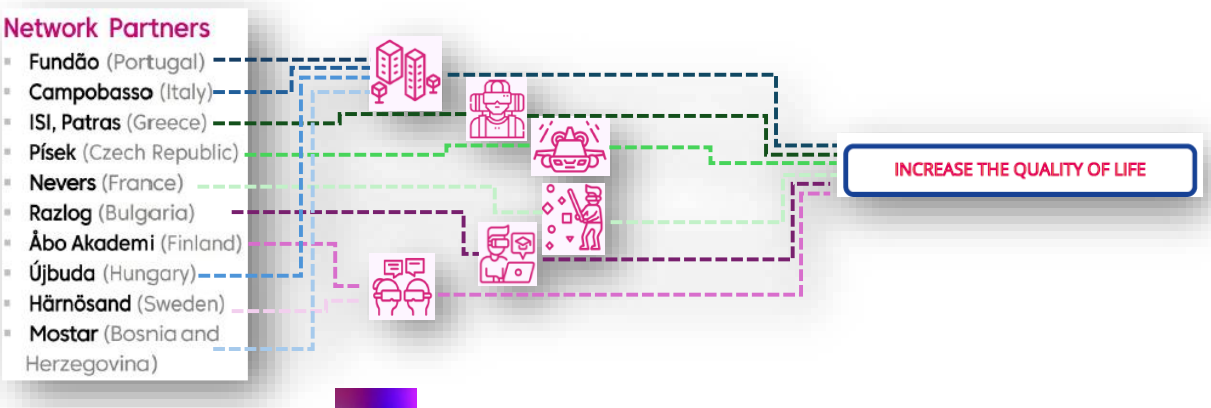
The Starting point and methodological approach:

For developing the methodological approach and network roadmap we must build on the main findings from the city visits to the network, presented under 3.1 Synthesis, a section that highlights the main knowledge areas identified during activation stage within the network - and beyond - and that can be shared between partners for inspiring the individual action planning, and build as well as on the main channels for sharing this knowledge both at network and at local level within the URBACT method and at disposal of the network.



metacity METACITY thematic areas

The analysis of the city profiles, summarized in the network baseline study, has allowed to identify 9 thematic areas within/for the network that can improve the overall know-how of the partners within the topic of digital transformation and inspire the individual action planning process. These areas are presented above, and have originated the following paths for the different partners (note that not all the topics have been addressed in the IAPs):



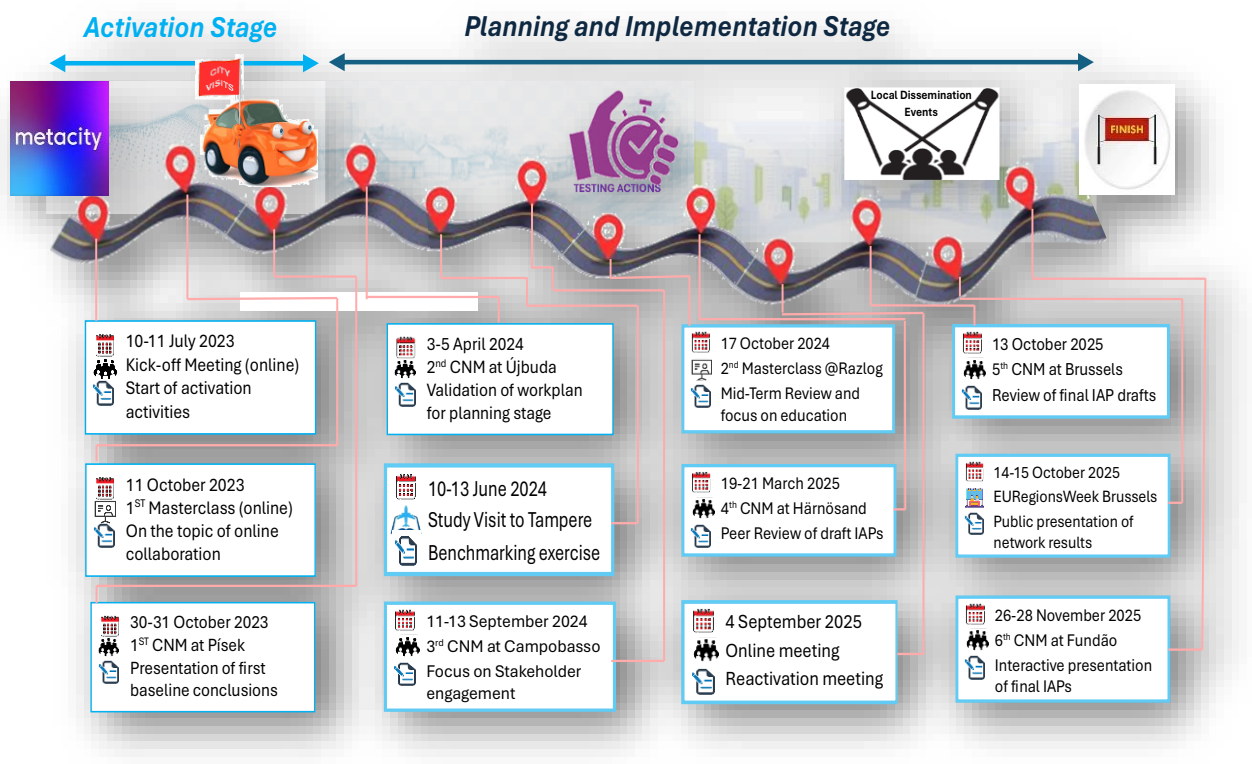
metacity Partners thematic focus

The implementation stage of the METACITY network has shared the knowledge above through a series of instruments, that were foreseen in the Network Roadmap and implemented during the 24 months and are graphically presented here:

ULG meetings 01 02 03 04 05	Local level	Min. 5	ULG meetings will serve to communicate and discuss the knowledge learnt at network level with local stakeholders and advance with the planning process at local level, ideally taking place in-between CNM meetings. An initial ULG meeting should take place within the Activation Stage and between **5 and 6** ULG meetings should be organised as a minimum.
Core Network Meetings (CNM) 02 03 04	Network level	6 (1 in Activation Stage)	CNMs are the main knowledge-sharing and mutual learning instrument within URBACT. They offer a chance for partners to meet in one partner city, visit good practice/knowledge benchmarks and advance with the common learning process. Within **metacity** 6 CNMs will be organized, each of 2,5 days duration, of which 1 during activation stage. CNMs will be organized in cities with relevant knowledge benchmarks so that other partners can profit from the meeting to visit it.
Study Visit 03	Network level	1	A study visit has been organized to Tampere, host of the Metaverse conference and owner of a Metaverse 2040 strategy, that has been considered as a relevant benchmark for the network.
Masterclasses 03 04	Network level	3 (1 in Activation Stage)	Masterclasses are online events dedicated to a specific knowledge area of relevance for the network, deployed by experts in the area that can both be internal or external to the network. As a result of this approach, 3 Masterclasses will be organized in total during **metacity**, of which 1 during Activation Stage.
Testing / Small-scale Action 04	Local level	Up to 10	A Testing Action is the possibility to test in the field a concrete action, at a small-scale, and during a limited period of time, in order to extract conclusions for the larger-scale planning of the action (namely in terms of necessary budget, implementation period and expected impacts) and its integration in the IAP.
Peer Reviews 04	Network level	1	A Peer Review is a very useful instrument of mutual learning, where a City Partner output is reviewed by other partner(s) with the production of recommendations for improvement. **1** Peer Review of Draft IAPs will be organised within **metacity** at start of the 'Preparing for Implementation' stage, within the 4th CNM.
Local Dissemination Events 05	Local Level	Up to 10	Local dissemination events should be organized in each city – up to **10** in total for the whole network – at the final stage of the project implementation for public dissemination of the final IAPs. The model and content of each event is the responsibility of each city partner.

The journey:

The following image pictures the journey and lists the main milestones along the way. The activation stage of the network, that took place in 2023, focused on the city visits carried out by the Lead Partner and Lead Expert and allowed all partners to set the scene and define their respective assets, challenges and ambitions before initiating a common discovery path towards a more digital future. The planning stage and implementation stage, that expanded throughout 2024 and concluded (with the Finale stage for wrap-up) at the end of 2025 has been a time for mutual learning and sharing of experiences in network meetings, for intense local experimentation of possible future actions through Testing Actions , for seeking inspiration in study visits to benchmark cities outside the network and for intense reflection and testing in each city together with their local support groups. At the closing stage of the project the organization of Local Dissemination Events in all 10 cities for public presentation of the final Integrated Action Plans has also been one of the cornerstones of the project activities.



metacity METACITY journey in a glance

Highlights from the journey:

Metaverse cities may look like a thing you see in movies, but what the “METACITY” network partners have achieved during their planning stage, that started in January 2024, is no science-fiction or even urban fiction. It is pure reality and was even tested in real urban environments with the participation of real people, as part of the preparations for future larger-scale implementation of actions that will put technology at the service of the citizens.

The activation stage of the network, that took place in 2023, allowed all partners to set the scene and define their respective assets, challenges and ambitions before initiating a common discovery path towards a more digital future. The planning stage, that expanded throughout 2024 and concluded in the first quarter or 2025, has been a time for mutual learning and sharing of experiences in network meetings, for seeking inspiration in study visits to benchmark cities outside the network and for intense reflection and testing in each city together with their local support groups.

Five core network meetings have been organized in this stage with the presence of all partners, in the partner cities of Újbuda, Campobasso, Härnösand, in Brussels during the EU regions Week event of 2025 and finally in the lead partner city of Fundão. In between these meetings, in June 2024, partners travelled to Tampere in Finland, for the “Imagine the Metaverse” conference, in what was one of the highlights of our journey. Here, partner cities had contact with some of the most advanced best practices in digital cities, from Los Angeles to Abu Dhabi, and could hear what makes Tampere Metaverse Strategy so unique directly from the mouths of the policy officers that have developed it and are putting it into practice.

The deployment of Testing Actions in almost all partner cities was another major highlight of the METACITY journey.

metacity The full METACITY team on stage during the IMAGINE the Metaverse conference in Tampere, June 24

The city of Razlog, for instance, that has focused their action plan development on education, has developed a Media Lab in one of the city's secondary schools and has organized a Masterclass on the use of Artificial Intelligence and digital tools for education from there, with active participation of students. This testing action was so successful that it was featured national TV (Euronews channel in Bulgaria) and welcomed the visit of the Prime Minister of Bulgaria during the national Enlightener's day.

Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Mr. Rosen Zhelyazkov (on the right) and Member of European Parliament Andrey Novakov (left) wearing METACITY VR glasses at the place of Razlog Testing Action during Bulgaria's National Enlighteners' day celebrations, November 1st 2025.

Following the success of the initiative, the Razlog Integrated Action Plan will now include the creation of similar Media Labs in all the eleven other secondary schools of the municipality, engaging students in the use of digital tools. While in Härnösand, the project team together with its local support group stakeholders, several highest politicians and city management staff and other departments in the municipality, have decided to test an AI powered chatbot, available both physical and online, for receiving input from residents on urban planning in the municipality. The aims are to improve user experience, with faster and easier support in everyday life for all citizens and city staff, increase citizen engagement through simpler participation, increase security by making correct information available in a simpler and faster way and reduce administrative burden, by simplifying access to information. Just as in Razlog, if the measure is successful and impacts are up to expectations, the initiative will be included in the Integrated Action Plan in a scaled-up format, extended to other areas, services and departments of the city.

Another great highlight was undoubtedly METACITY participation with its own stand at the EU Regions Week event in Brussels. With over 200 sessions with more than 300 speakers and 6500 participants from all over Europe and beyond, this impressive event that took place from 13 to 15 October and attracted policy makers, practitioners, project partners and stakeholders in regional development and urban planning. This year edition of the European Regions Week has remained faithful to its tradition, continuing to be big,

crowded and full of novelties as ever. But amongst all this buzz there was one stand that certainly didn't go unnoticed with a constant flow of interested visitors testing the VR tools in display, and this was the one from METACITY.

METACITY stand, with a constant flow of visitors, during EU Regions Week 2025 in Brussels.

The network joint participation in the European Regions Week, as a single team, has been on itself one of the major final results of the project.

Starting with the collective decision to participate made in a true partnership spirit, to the selection of the network application for a stand in a very competitive process that validated the relevance of the network topic, and culminating in the high interest and engagement raised from attendees on the displayed actions and tools, the METACITY participation has been a very visible success that has raised the profile of the network. This participation has once more demonstrated that the use of new digital tools to enhance citizen engagement, participation and relationships with city authorities is an absolute must for all cities, big or small, and the path to go for more citizen-friendly and sustainable cities in Europe.

The finish line, with the completed IAPs:

The METACITY journey has been a successful one with all 10 partners making it to the finish line with a complete and meaningful IAP, duly adapted to their local challenges and including a list of actions capable of evolving the city into a more immersive and citizen-friendly digital transformation.

The work on the IAPs started right at the start of the Planning Stage, with the presentation of the guidelines for the IAP at the Core Network Meeting hosted by Újbuda in early April 2024, putting everybody on the same page regarding what was expected from them. The study visit to Tampere in June, with the participation in the international conference "Imagine the Metaverse" and the contributions and insights of the first ad-hoc expert (Sølve Fauskevåg from Augment City) on advanced tools for urban planning such as digital twins, offered the necessary inspiration for partners to kick off the co-creation process with local stakeholders back at home.

The second half of 2024 saw the start of the Testing Actions in most cities, which offered tangibility and visibility to the planning process, and when partners met in September for the 3rd Core Network Meeting in Campobasso it was time to address stakeholder engagement, with a support of a second ad-hoc expert (Simone d'Antonio) in order to fuel up the local co-creation and accelerate IAPs development.

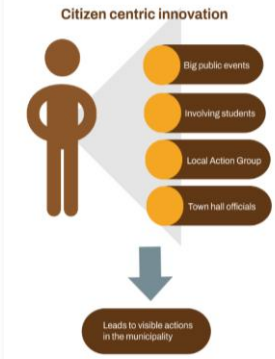
Most of the IAP development was then carried out during winter, with several ULG meetings at each city, culminating in the Peer Review held at the 4th Core Network Meeting hosted by Härnösand in March 2025, organized and animated by the third ad-hoc expert engaged by the network (Maria João Rauch). The feedback gathered from partners and experts (ad-hoc and lead expert) was instrumental for the final stage of the IAP development, and when the network met in early October in Brussels it was to present their results – especially from the testing actions – and their first ideas for the future included in nearly finalized IAPs during the EU Regions Week where Metacity participated as an exhibitor, in parallel with the 5th Core Network Meeting.

The 6th and final core network meeting of the network took place in Fundão in late November, where partners could publicly present their final IAPs to their partners – some already absolutely finalized and presented beforehand locally in Local Dissemination Events, others still pending final graphic review and local dissemination, but all complete in terms of content.

The next pages present a glimpse of each final IAP.

Fundão:

Åbo Akademy with the city of Nykarleby:



Campobasso:

Goal	Description	Integration within the URBACT Metacity Project	Actions
Inclusion of citizens in local governance	To encourage active and informed participation of the community in public decisions, through digital tools, consultations, and immersive environments in the metaverse.	Consistent with the "Citizen Engagement and Transparency" pillar of the Metacity network; it helps make citizens protagonists of the decision-making process and to test models of inclusive digital governance	Office for the Digital Transition Strengthening of data security and cybersecurity
Smart City and Urban Planning	Experiment with the use of the Digital Twin to improve urban planning, the management of public	It falls within the "Digital Urban Development and Smart City" focus of the Metacity project; it supports the development of solutions	Digital Territorial Information System Digital Twin of the Municipality of Campobasso

Härnösand:

– compact, innovative, sustainable and future-oriented

Härnösand is a median/small city in the northern coast of Sweden with 25.000 inhabitants. Despite its small numbers of inhabitants, the city is the administrative capital and seat of the Västernorrland County that includes seven municipalities and hosts about 245.000 people.

Digitalization and AI development that leaves no one behind

2025/2026	2026/2027	2027
Strategic foresight work Guidelines for generative AI. Develop skills in how to use generative AI.	Regional cooperation around open source solutions for generative AI and the AI workshop. Test new solutions on a smaller scale to ensure they work for end users and contribute to desired outcomes.	Regional cooperatic ce solutions for ger workshop. Implement the new nued improvement

Continuously invest in service design and education and training to ensure all employees understand both user ne

Work iteratively and be open to adjusting the strategy based on insights and lessons learned.

Digital resilience and strengthened media and information literacy

2026	2027	2
Develop methods for strengthened media and information literacy. Offer relevant AI tools free of charge.	Strengthen the ability to detect influence campaigns and develop methods for debunking them.	

Continue to develop the Digidelcenter as the municipality's hub for digital participation in relation to digitalizati

Develop the public librabry as a testing hub for new digital services and Sambiblioteket as meeting place and as in times of crisis.

Arena for dialogue and visualization about the city

2026	2027	2
Collect new data using IoT solutions, aerial surveys, and resident data. Structure through system integration and data standardization. Make available and accessible with the support of generative AI, VR, and real-time visualization.	Improve the methods for citizen dialogue, with a particular focus on young people and young adults. · Systematic user surveys and updated plans · Place branding, attractiveness, and the importance of the location	Implement new wo Continue with, and quality-assured dat

Innovation In Urban Planning (2026-2029) Interreg Aurora

Creative meeting places and an accessible cultural life

2026	2027	2028
Digitize and present the The Qvist Collection Create digital twins of the art hall where visitors can wander around and take part in the art hall's exhibitions through VR/AR.	Create immersive rooms where visitors can step into paintings or sculptures, which means that the work becomes multi-dimensional. With Technichus and the VR studio.	Create new artworks togethe audience, controlling the cor work, or participating in artis ses remotely. Co-creation ar of the relationship between audience. With local artists, Technichu relevant actors.

Human-centred healthcare – preventive, accessible and including

2026	2027	2028
Introduction of Secure Digital Communication, SDK, for Social Services. This lays the foundation for new working methods that improve the quality of collaboration with external parties.	Standardization in the most important systems to facilitate operations and development within the systems and to be able to apply AI solutions. Continue the development of the pilot and the use of generative AI.	Standardization in the most systems to facilitate operatio development within the syste be able to apply AI solutions. Oc the development of the pilot an of generative AI.

HUMAN (2025–2029)

Continued development of policies for welfare technology solutions.

ISI Patras with the city of Arta:

5.1 Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of this Integrated Action Plan (IAP) align with the broader vision of enhancing the municipality's digital infrastructure and promoting sustainable urban development. The objectives serve as foundational pillars for addressing key challenges and leveraging opportunities in Arta. The Specific Objectives will focus on two areas, as shown in the image bellow, the Urban Management & Sustainability and the Tourism & Cultural Heritage.

Urban Management & Sustainability

SO1: Enhance the efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness of municipal operations by leveraging advanced digital tools.

SO2: Foster sustainable urban development and improve quality of life by incorporating energy-efficient technologies, smart resource management, and green infrastructure.

Tourism & Cultural Heritage

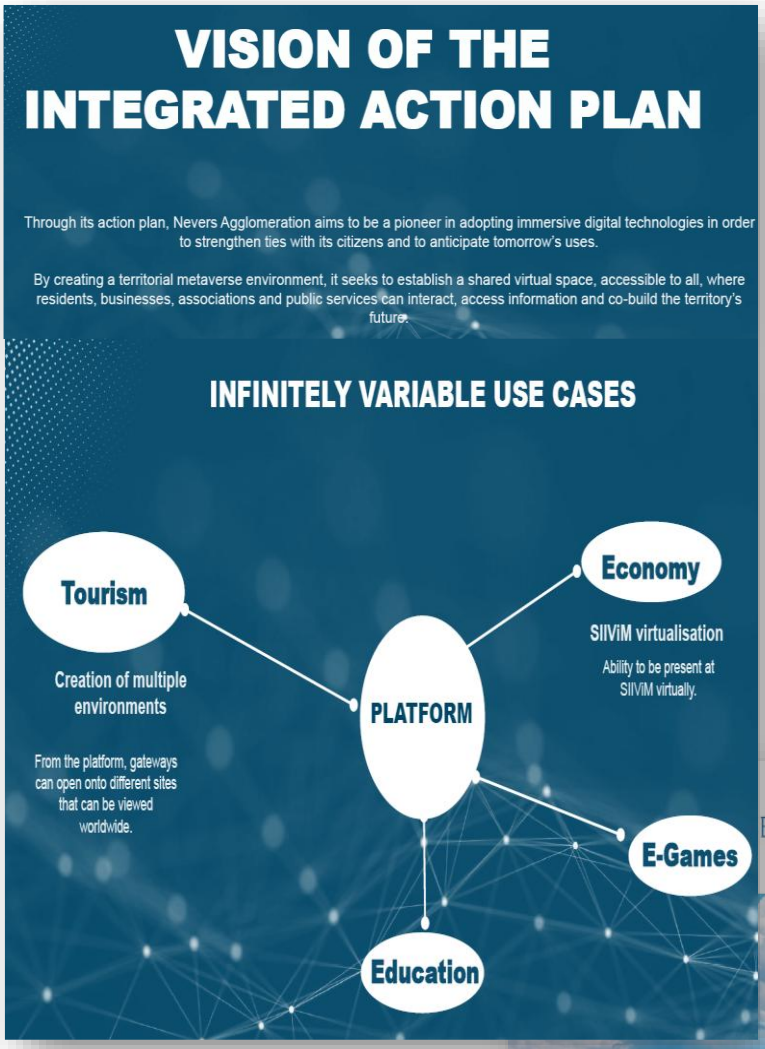
SO3: Drive economic growth and tourism by using digital platforms to showcase Arta's rich cultural heritage, support local businesses, and create job opportunities.

Mostar:

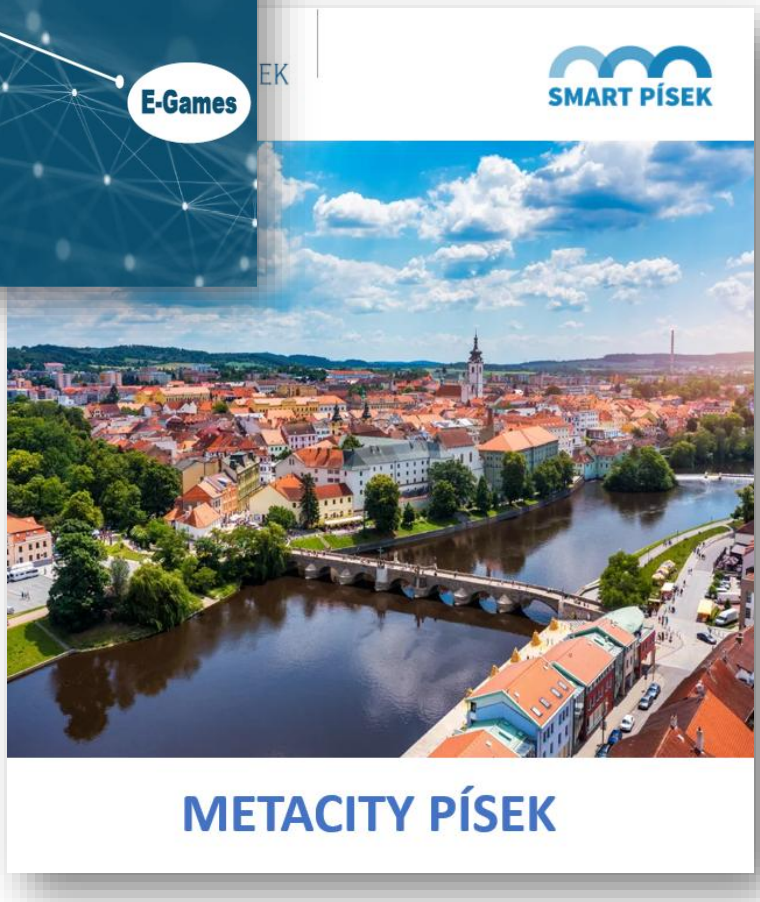
One of the strategic focuses of the city includes 'developing the city as a desirable and recognizable environment for business development and investment based on smart, creative, and innovative solutions and new technologies'[5].

The Mostar Integrated Action Plan (IAP) envisions transforming Mostar into a model of sustainability, digital advancement, and social inclusion, aligned with strategic EU initiatives such as the Green Deal and Digital Compass. The IAP focuses on creating a forward-thinking urban environment by integrating innovative technologies, promoting environmental stewardship, and fostering inclusive participation to enhance the quality of life for all residents. The IAP builds on the City of Mostar's Digital Transformation Strategy (2022) and the Development Strategy (2022–2027), supporting their goals of digital infrastructure, smart public services, and inclusive governance. The SSA visualization aligns with the strategic priority of establishing Mostar as a 'Smart and Creative City'.

Nevers Agglomération:



Písek:



Razlog:

VISION

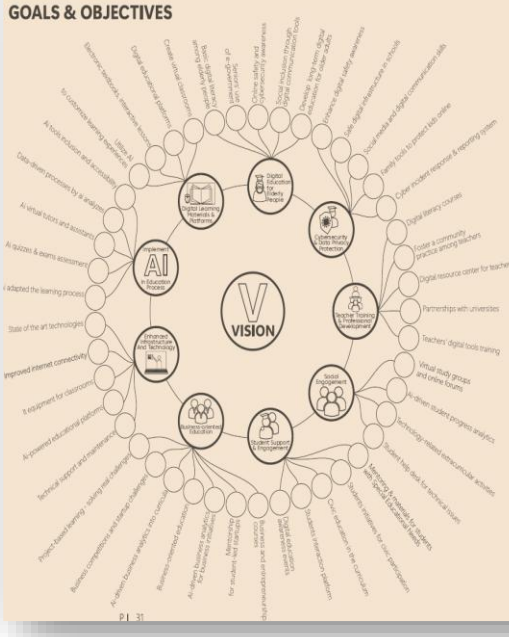
Successful and modern education in the municipality of Razlog that meets the needs of contemporary society by creating a sustainable digital educational environment ensuring that all young people graduate from school as functionally literate, adaptive, innovative, socially responsible, and active citizens, motivated to continually enhance their competencies through lifelong learning.

Schools:
- Off er a maximally secure, digitally oriented, ecological, and supportive environment.
- Blend educational traditions with innovative pedagogical solutions, artifi cial intelligence, and digital development.
- Evolve into spaces for learning, leisure, and interaction among children, students, parents, and the local community.
- Unite around shared values to achieve a common goal: forming knowledgeable and capable individuals who can make responsible choices and achieve their goals in a dynamic and competitive digital environment.

Teachers:
- Digitally competent, supportive, dialogic, and open to innovations.
- Mission-driven to motivate and inspire children, helping them build digital skills and competencies applicable in various life and professional situations.
- Dedicated to fostering critical and analytical thinking in children and students, by using digital technologies and supporting their professional, creative, personal, and emotional development.

Students:
- Possess knowledge, digital skills, and competencies, striving for personal development and lifelong improvement.
- Have a mindset geared toward successful social and professional realization.
- Be active citizens with society oriented values and work for the overall improvement of society and public welfare.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES



1. **Enhanced Infrastructure and Technology**
   Modernize technology to support a digital educational environment.
2. **Implement AI in Education**
   Use AI to prepare students for the future while keeping critical thinking and problem-solving central.
3. **Digital Learning Materials and Platforms**
   Develop and integrate digital resources to enhance teaching and learning.
4. **Teacher Training and Professional Development**
   Improve teacher skills in digital literacy and innovative teaching methods.
5. **Student Support and Engagement**
   Provide support to students, including those with SEN, for success in digital learning.
6. **Social Engagement – Raising Digital Awareness**
   Promote digital skills for socially responsible and active citizens.
7. **Business-Oriented Education**
   Equip students with entrepreneurial and business skills through digital tools.
8. **Cybersecurity and Data Privacy for Children**
   Ensure safe digital envoiorment in schools and social media, family protection tools.
9. **Digital Education for Elderly People**
   Promote basic digital skills and long-term learning for seniors.

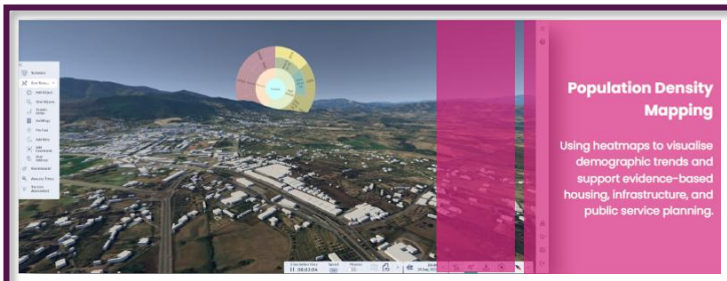
Újbuda:

n – summary table

	Action	Responsible	Deadline	Source	KPI
	Workflow catalogue and e-signature standardisation	Clerk, SMART11	2025. Q4	Local + tender	E-signature penetration 100%
	ASP–DMS One interfaces go live	SMART11, E Involvement of e-administration group and Iktató	01/01/2026	Local	Proportion of automatic filing ≥90%
	Network stabilisation and equipment replacement	SMART11	2026. Q2	Local + leasing	SLA ≥99%, average age <36 months
	UC/telephone exchange modernisation	SMART11	2026. Q3	Local	UC coverage ≥90%
	Blended training wave + phishing simulation	HR, SMART11	2026 Q2–Q4	Local + tender	Training coverage ≥95%, phishing ≥90%
SO4	Újbuda App – case portal and participation module	Cabinet (Média11 communication), SMART11	2026. Q4	Local + EU	Active users ≥25,000; ≥4 consultations/year
SO4	Open data catalogue and algorithm registry	SMART11, Legal group involvement	2026. Q4	Local	≥30 datasets; public registry

3. Testing Actions

Metaverse cities may look like a thing you see in movies, but what the “METACITY” network partners have achieved during their journey is no science-fiction or even urban fiction. It is pure reality and was tested in real urban environments with the participation of real people as part of the possibility for “Testing Actions” for Urbact action planning networks. All the 10 METACITY have experimented with Testing Actions of some scale and local support groups have been instrumental in the process, both in defining what can be done in the future, i.e. the priority lines for the future actions, and on what can be done already today, as a small-scale testing actions to see what can work and how, and what needs to be done and planned ahead, in order to bring citizens into this new reality. The outputs from the Testing Actions are presented next.

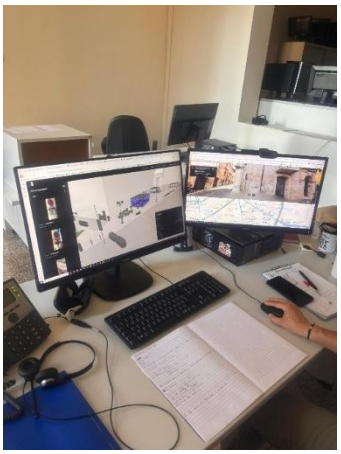


Fundão: The Testing Action (TA) developed under the METACITY project represents a major milestone in Fundão’s digital transition and smart governance strategy. Inspired by the Metacity Digital Twin City Workshop, particularly the session led by Sølve Fauskevåg (Augment City), this pilot demonstrated the transformative potential of Digital Twin technology for small and medium-sized cities. The initiative aimed to test how integrated spatial data, simulation tools, and predictive analytics can support data-driven decision-making, enhance urban management, and improve communication with citizens and local stakeholders.

The Digital Twin prototype enables a unified visualisation of the municipality’s territory and assets, creating a dynamic environment for analysing, planning, and monitoring urban systems. It sets the foundation for a new generation of digital governance tools capable of increasing efficiency, sustainability, and public engagement.

Åbo Akademy with Nykarleby: During the Culture Night in Nykarleby on August 21st, residents and visitors had a unique opportunity to step into the future of urban planning—literally. Åbo Akademi/Experience Lab invited people to try a VR experience where they could design their own version of the town square. The activity was part of the Metacity project, which explores how small and medium-sized cities can use immersive technologies to strengthen democratic participation and improve public services. The event was an important part of the testing action jointly carried out by the town of Nykarleby and Åbo Akademi University within the Metacity project. In addition to giving citizens a chance to experience new visions of the town square, the city also gained new ideas—both for the square itself and for how digital visualization tools can be used in future planning processes.

Campobasso: The Testing action at Campobasso included the implementation of the innovative DT Campobasso Application and the mobile component Monitora Campobasso. The Action has been structured in two distinct phases. The first phase, held on 16 September 2025, involved the Municipality's internal technical team, made up of operators from the Heritage, Environment, Maintenance, and Urban Planning departments, who had already contributed to the development of METACITY. The day served to validate the system's functionalities, with on-site testing carried out along the streets of the historic centre. Participants experienced the digitalized workflow of reporting, processing, and managing urban issues. The activity concluded successfully, delivering complete pilot cases that demonstrated the effectiveness of the participatory maintenance model. The second phase, from 30 September to 3 October 2025, was open to the general public. Citizens were invited to test the Monitora Campobasso app firsthand, submitting reports of issues concerning pavements, green areas, and urban furniture. The goal was not only to assess the platform's user-friendliness but also to promote a new culture of shared responsibility for urban heritage, where residents' contributions become an integral part of the city's Digital Twin.



Härnösand: As part of the Testing Action under Metacity, the municipality of Härnösand has developed innovative AI assistants designed to streamline municipal services, save time, and improve user experience for both employees and residents. From rapid-response IT support and digital advisors to assistants guiding home care services in real time, these tools demonstrate the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in the public sector. Eleven different AI assistants were developed and tested using the Intric platform, already in use by other municipalities such as Sundsvall. While the pilot highlighted significant benefits—including quicker access to information, improved service availability, and more time allocated to core responsibilities—not all assistants have been tested in open environments. Most were trialled under controlled conditions to assess their potential before considering broader implementation.

In the end the Testing Action has deepened the city's understanding of how artificial intelligence can support operations and provided valuable insights for future developments about AI and digital transformation.

ISI with Arta: In alignment with the intervention area "IA3.1 Digital Tourism and Cultural Heritage Promotion" and "SO3: Economic Revitalization and Tourism Development", outlined in the IAP, the proposed small scale testing action implemented during the project aims to enhance Arta's digital presence and tourism appeal through the use of immersive technologies. During small-scale testing a Virtual Reality (VR) experience was developed focused on cultural heritage presentation and tourism engagement. The VR used photorealistic 3D models of four core monuments in Arta, which were created by HERMES and SMARTiMONY project to create a digital shadow of the city as a first step towards the city vision of digital transformation and metaverse integration. This testing action will help enhance tourism outreach by making Arta accessible to a global audience, targeting international visitors and tourism enthusiasts. By offering an immersive, educational tour of the city's most historically significant sites, the VR experience will help promote Arta as a culturally rich destination. As a digital tourism tool, this application will highlight Arta's unique architectural and cultural heritage, encouraging potential tourists to consider the city as a destination.

The results of this small-scale action were presented to the Urban Local Group (ULG) and demonstrated the potential of ICT for enhancing tourism and to educate them on the effective use of these technologies. The expected outcomes of this pilot include both technical and strategic insights that will inform the future development of Arta's full digital twin.

Mostar: The testing action of the city of Mostar within the MetaCity initiative was the creation of a 3D visualization—or digital twin—for the Miljkovići Industrial Zone. This transformative technology bridges the gap between virtual and physical spaces, offering an unprecedented tool for urban and industrial management. Unlike static planning models of the past, the digital twin integrates real-time Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data and operational insights to simulate scenarios, optimize resources, and inform strategic decisions. These elements transform the Miljkovići Industrial Zone into a living, interactive system that benefits industrial operators, policymakers, and residents alike. Central to the MetaCity initiative is the collaborative spirit fostered by the URBACT Local Group (ULG) in Mostar. This multi-stakeholder platform brings together representatives from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector to co-create solutions tailored to the city's needs.

Recent survey results from ULG members reflect strong alignment and shared enthusiasm. Stakeholders see the ULG as a hub for innovation, where knowledge-sharing and participatory decision-making drive progress. The collaborative ethos is a cornerstone of the project's success. As one ULG member noted, "MetaCity is not just about technology; it's about people coming together to solve problems and seize opportunities."

Nevers agglomération: At Nevers the testing action consisted of an was an experiment carried out with the higher education service, within Nevers Agglomeration's Connected Campus. The first results were conclusive in terms of: (i) Immersion and realism: Thanks to VR headsets, students are immersed in a realistic simulation of a conference room or an examining jury. The immersive environment reduces anxiety by recreating the conditions of a real oral exam, while AI adapts the virtual audience (facial expressions, ambient noises) for a dynamic experience. (ii) Personalised AI coaching: AI analyses tone of voice, body language and speech rhythm, offering instant feedback. AI generated questions simulate real exchanges and evolve based on the student's answers. The algorithm adapts to the learner's level, proposing progressive challenges. (iii) Improved public speaking skills: VR allows unlimited rehearsal across different situations (presentation, interview). AI analysis identifies filler words, overly long pauses or lack of clarity and students gain confidence by practising in a judgement free immersive environment. (iv) Performance tracking and analytics: Detailed statistics are provided after each session (voice volume, discourse structure). The system tracks individual progress and recommends targeted exercises and students can review and analyse their own performance on video. (v) Accessibility and flexibility: Students can practise at any time, without needing a live audience and VR training is less costly than classic sessions with a coach being ideal for shy or anxious people, who progress at their own pace. This VR module transforms public speaking training by making it immersive, interactive and effective It builds self-confidence, supports stress management and drives continuous improvement in oratory skills, with invaluable help from AI. The partnership was renewed following this success, and the project is now being scaled to new audiences such as startups and high school students.

Písek: The city of Písek decided on one main action as part of the project - an interactive visualization of the Old Bridge, which serves not only to support tourism and promote cultural heritage, but above all as a pilot project for the use of advanced digital technologies and work with spatial data in the city. The city collaborated on the project with the Prácheň Museum, which owns a 3D model of the bridge from around 1500, created by Jan Adámek. This model forms the basis for our visualization, the aim of which is not only to present the beauty of this structure, but also to bring its history, including key events, closer to us. The visualization also includes a dramatic story from 1768, when a major flood swept away one of the original bridge towers along with the sounding board. This element will contribute to the authentic experience and at the same time remind us of the bridge's resilience in the face of natural elements.

The project also has an educational dimension – the visualization will be available not only in VR, but also on mobile devices, so visitors will be able to view it directly on site. In the future, we plan to expand this approach to other places in Písek. The final video is exported in a format suitable for 360° players and uploaded to available platforms. Visitors can view it either using VR glasses for a fully immersive experience, or via mobile devices or computers, where the image can be rotated as needed.

Razlog: Within the METACITY network, Razlog established a Digital Lab for Virtual Reality (VR) at the "Brothers Kanazirevi" School. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, the lab became the creative hub for the first-ever VR reenactment of Razlog's iconic festival "Starchevata." More than 80 participants—guardians of local tradition dressed in authentic kukeri costumes and folk attire—brought the spirit and ritual energy of the festival to life. Their performance was captured entirely through the lenses of the students, who applied their newly acquired digital skills to film, edit, and produce the VR experience.

The Testing Action under the URBACT framework was initially designed to transform a simple storeroom into a modern VR and live-streaming lab. However, its success quickly spread beyond the school walls, proving the transformative potential of targeted local investment. The creation of the Digital Lab and the VR reenactment of "Starchevata" have become a powerful model for integrating technology, education, and cultural heritage—showing that innovation can be deeply rooted in local identity. As a natural continuation and upgrade of the MetaCity Testing Action's success, Razlog's History Museum has also been transformed into a VR Historical Museum. Building on the experience and know-how gained through the school's Digital Lab, the museum now offers visitors the opportunity to step into the world of the kukeri tradition through immersive VR headsets. They can hear the powerful clang of the bells, feel the rhythm of the dances, and experience the unifying energy of the ritual firsthand.

Újbuda: The testing of the ASP (Application Service Provider) system, which will bring significant changes to the way local administrations operate, aims to support the digital transformation of local authorities and strengthen central IT support, has been the main focus of the Testing Action at Újbuda in Metacity. The testing action development focused on improving efficiency and transparency, while preserving fiscal stability. Once upscaled, the system will be provided to local governments by the Hungarian State Treasury and the Municipality of Újbuda plans to fully will implement the service from 1 January 2026.

The ASP system provided to municipalities is a comprehensive IT service that provides a single platform for the most important municipal tasks. This includes integrated systems for taxation, management, document management, property registration, industrial and commercial administration, and electronic customer portals. One of the biggest benefits of the system is that it provides free access for local authorities, so they can switch to digital without major investment. Through central training programmes to support the roll-out, municipal staff receive detailed, professional support to ensure a smooth transition.

4. Lessons learnt

In the METACITY partners, the engagement of local stakeholders in the participatory processes revealed the existence of rich and diverse ecosystems of local actors, like heads of departments and thematic agencies, city officials, experts of technologies, professors, teachers, technical experts, start-uppers, and representatives of the cultural and tourism sectors, and stressed the relevance of such ecosystems – and of their active engagement – for successful and sustainable urban transformation, especially in complex and challenging areas as digital transformation.

One key lesson from the project was that the active involvement of elected representatives is crucial for ensuring political legitimacy in the field of metaverse and digital transformation. Cities such as Fundão, Razlog, and Písek actively involved mayors and deputy mayors in their URBACT Local Groups, ensuring alignment between digital innovation strategies and broader municipal goals. The presence of senior officials and technical experts within the municipalities, not only from ICT sector but also from communication, urban planning and quality management, reinforced ownership and created a bridge between experimentation and long-term implementation of thematic policies and integrated strategies, while ensuring adherence between the ambitious goals of the IAPs and their operational feasibility.

The engagement of knowledge providers is also essential in areas that address new technologies and processes. Universities and schools played a crucial role in many cities of the network, not only as holders of technical expertise but also as multipliers of knowledge on metaverse and immersive technologies at the local level. In cities like Härnösand, Campobasso, and Fundão, educational institutions became incubators of new ideas, linking digital transition to learning, research, and workforce development. Professors and students were not just beneficiaries of new digital services but active co-creators of knowledge to be shared with local communities, shaping how the metaverse could serve public education and lifelong learning, with positive impact for different segments of the local community.

But also private sector actors, such as representatives of start-ups and digital SMEs, also emerged as drivers of innovation in the participatory processes, and their engagement and active contributions is one of the key lessons to retain. Their involvement encouraged experimentation with concrete solutions, while chambers of commerce and business associations helped identify opportunities for economic diversification but also for connecting the innovation tested with METACITY to ongoing broader processes. Cultural organisations, museums, and creative industries complemented this ecosystem by connecting digital innovation to local identity and tourism development strategies.

While community participation remained limited in some contexts, cities expanding engagement through the inclusion of “unusual suspects” such as residents’ associations, youth groups, and civil society organizations, all categories that are not usually involved in projects regarding digital innovation but that gave a crucial contribution in the case of METACITY for grounding the conversation on immersive technologies to possible future applications.

5. The author

This IAP report has been developed by the Lead Expert with contributions from all the 10 city partners of the METACITY Action Planning Network.

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