

Remote-IT

Remote and Hybrid work for Thriving Cities



QUARTERLY REPORT 6

APRIL 2025 - DECEMBER 2025



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This **sixth and final quarterly report** marks the conclusion of the Remote-IT Action Planning Network. Over two and a half years, eight European cities –Dubrovnik, Brindisi, Bucharest District 6, Câmara de Lobos, Heraklion, Murcia, Tartu, and Tirana, have worked together to explore **how remote and hybrid work are reshaping urban economies, governance, and everyday life, and how cities can respond proactively to these changes.**

What began as a thematic exploration of remote work evolved into a deeper process of institutional and strategic transformation. Cities did not only develop Integrated Action Plans to attract and retain remote workers and digital nomads, but also reflected on their own role as **employers, service providers, ecosystem builders and place-shapers.** The network's work consistently connected external strategies (talent attraction, creative hubs, sustainable tourism, incentives) with internal change (hybrid work in administrations, leadership, organisational culture and digital readiness).

The final phase of the network focused on three interlinked objectives: **consolidating learning, translating it into transferable formats and tools, and positioning Remote-IT as a reference point for other European cities.** This resulted in the Remote-IT Digital Playbook, a structured collection of articles, tools, case studies, podcasts and recommendations, and in the Final Event in Dubrovnik, which reframed the network's journey as a shift in mindset, governance and practice.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TRANSNATIONAL MEETINGS



HERAKLION: LINKING REMOTE WORK, TOURISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Transnational Meeting in Heraklion, Greece, held 14. and 15. May, 2025., marked a turning point in how the network connected **remote work with broader territorial and environmental agendas**. Discussions moved beyond attraction strategies towards the **role of remote workers in smoothing tourism seasonality and strengthening year-round local economies**.

Cities explored how remote workers, workationers and long-stay visitors behave differently from short-term tourists, and how their presence can support local services, cultural life and community vitality outside peak seasons. The meeting also reinforced that this potential can only be realised if remote work strategies are embedded in integrated planning, combining **infrastructure, housing, mobility, culture, entrepreneurship, and community building**.

Heraklion also served as a methodological milestone, with a strong focus on **peer review, and deep dives into Integrated Action Plan development**. The network began to explicitly shift from experimentation to consolidation, and from **city-specific solutions to transferable learning**.

The topic of Living Library session in Heraklion was “Digital nomads and sustainable tourism: how can remote work support more balanced, year-round tourism”, that led to the following comprehensive reflection, posted on the Remote-IT URBACT network webpage:

Designing tourism for the future of work increasingly means **designing for people who arrive with a laptop, stay longer than a weekend and blend work with everyday life**. For coastal and heritage cities in the Remote-IT network, and for many other European destinations, digital nomads and remote workers are no longer a niche. They are part of a broader rethinking of tourism, seasonality and local development.

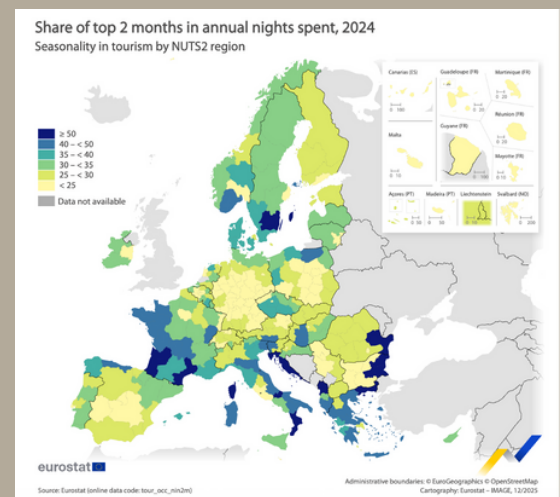
This entry explores how remote work can support more balanced, year-round and sustainable tourism, what this means for policy and planning, and how cities can use the Remote-IT experience as a starting point for their own strategies.

Why seasonality still defines tourism in much of Europe

Tourism in Europe remains highly seasonal, especially in coastal and heritage destinations that see a sharp summer peak and long low seasons. Eurostat data for 2024 shows that nearly one-third of all tourism nights in the EU were spent in just two months, July and August. The strongest seasonality was recorded in Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and Montenegro, precisely the types of places where Remote-IT partner cities are located or where their visitors come from.[1]

At the regional level, 1 in 6 EU NUTS 2 regions concentrate more than 40 percent of their annual tourism nights in the top two months. Coastal regions are among the most seasonal, while capital regions tend to be more balanced.

There are the structural consequences of this pattern- overcrowding and environmental stress during the peak season, underused infrastructure and unused capacity the rest of the year, temporary jobs, and pressure on community life as cities are forced into a “feast or famine” model of visitor flows.



For cities like Dubrovnik, Heraklion or Câmara de Lobos in the Remote-IT network, this is a familiar reality. Summer brings congestion, high housing pressure and overtourism debates, while winter can feel empty, with closed businesses and limited cultural activity. Remote-IT cities explored a shared question: can remote work help smooth the extremes of tourism seasonality in a way that is sustainable for residents?

Digital nomads, “workationers” and long-stay visitors: who are we talking about?

From a tourism perspective, not all remote workers are the same. The Remote-IT playbook distinguishes remote workers primarily as labour market actors, but for this entry the focus shifts to their role as visitors and residents-in-transition.

Drawing on recent studies, we can identify three overlapping segments that matter for tourism and local development:

1. **Digital nomads**- people who move between countries while working fully remotely. Recent estimates put the global number of digital nomads in the tens of millions. Global platforms such as Nomad List and Flatio show that Portugal, Spain and other European countries consistently rank among the most popular destinations.
2. **Workationers**- employees or freelancers who temporarily relocate for 2–8 weeks to combine work and holiday in a single destination. Research on workations in European cities finds that this segment tends to stay longer than typical tourists, value good internet and co-working options, and often travel outside the peak season.
3. **Slowmads, returnees and diaspora remote workers**- people who stay several months or return regularly to their region of origin while continuing to work for employers elsewhere. This category is especially relevant for Central and Eastern European cities with large diasporas and can blur the line between tourism, circular migration and long-term settlement.



Linking remote work, sustainable tourism and climate resilience

The acceleration of remote work corresponds with growing concern about overtourism and climate impacts. Heatwaves, extreme weather and overcrowded destinations are already pushing travellers towards “coolcations” and shoulder-season trips. Travel industry data for 2025 shows rising demand for northern and cooler destinations, as well as for travel in spring and autumn, as tourists try to avoid extreme summer temperatures and over-crowded hotspots.

This shift aligns naturally with remote work:

- remote workers can avoid peak-heat months and choose more temperate seasons
- they can stay longer, reducing the relative emissions per day of stay compared with frequent short trips
- they are often more aware of their environmental footprint; survey data suggests that more than 40 percent of digital nomads list climate action or environmental impact as a concern in their travel choices.

Remote-IT cities, particularly those with strong tourism brands, have been integrating these considerations into their Integrated Action Plans: looking at how coworking spaces, local entrepreneurship support, green mobility and cultural programming can be coordinated to create livable year-round environments that work for residents, remote workers and visitors alike.

Read full reflection [here](#).



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9th transnational meeting BUCHAREST D6, 2 – 3 June 2025

The meeting in Bucharest District 6 focused on **operationalising previous learning and transforming it into practical frameworks**. The Living Library on hybrid and remote work in public administration brought together legal, organisational, digital and cultural perspectives, helping cities understand the complexity of internal transformation and the importance of leadership, trust and results-based management.

The deep dive into **customer journey mapping** represented a methodological shift from abstract strategy to concrete service and experience design. Cities examined how remote workers, municipal staff and local businesses actually navigate city systems, and where friction, confusion or exclusion occur.

The co-design session on the Remote-IT Playbook crystallised the network's ambition to leave behind a coherent, usable and attractive final product. Partners jointly defined **audiences, purposes, formats and core messages, ensuring that the Playbook would serve as a practical reference for cities beyond the network**.

DUBROVNIK: CLOSURE, CONSOLIDATION AND TRANSITION

The tenth and final Transnational Partner Meeting took place on September 30th in Dubrovnik and marked the formal closure of the network's transnational collaboration phase. Unlike previous meetings, which focused primarily on learning, experimentation and co-creation, this final gathering was explicitly oriented towards consolidation, reflection and transition. **It offered the network a collective moment to look back on the two-and-a-half-year journey, to articulate what had been achieved, and to clarify how the work would continue beyond the life of the project.**

The meeting opened with a structured recap of the Remote-IT journey, revisiting the main thematic milestones, the evolution of local challenges and priorities, and the learning generated through ULG work, testing actions and peer exchange. This created a shared narrative of progression, from early exploration of remote work as an emerging phenomenon to a more mature understanding of it as a structural transformation affecting urban governance, economies and social life. Partners reflected not only on what had changed in their cities, but also on how their own thinking, assumptions and institutional practices had evolved through the process.





A central part of the meeting was the presentation of the final Integrated Action Plans by all partner cities. Each city summarised its **strategic approach, key actions, governance arrangements and implementation pathways, highlighting both ambition and realism.**

These presentations made visible the diversity of local contexts and responses within a shared methodological framework. They also demonstrated how the URBACT process had enabled cities to move from broad challenges to concrete, integrated and participatory strategies tailored to their specific conditions.

The day concluded with a site visit to the **TUP Factory**, one of Dubrovnik's emerging creative and remote work hubs and the city's testing action within the network. Visiting TUP provided a tangible illustration of the themes discussed throughout the project: the role of adaptive reuse, creative spaces, community building and hybrid work environments in shaping new urban economies. It allowed participants to see how strategic ideas translate into physical spaces, governance models and everyday practices.

Overall, the Dubrovnik meeting functioned as a moment of closure, but also of affirmation and continuity. It celebrated the partnerships built across the network, the trust developed between cities, and the shared language that had emerged around remote work, urban transformation and people-centred policy design. **At the same time, it made clear that Remote-IT does not end with the project's formal timeline, but continues through the implementation of IAPs, the use of the Playbook, and the ongoing relationships and collaborations established between partner cities.**

**REMOTE-IT FINAL
EVENT IN DUBROVNIK,
CROATIA**

Remote-IT Final Conference Agenda

**01 Oct 2025**

Paska Miličevića 4, 20000
Dubrovnik, Croatia

8.00 – 8.30

REGISTRATION

The Final Event: synthesis, validation and legacy

8.30 – 9.00

WELCOME REMARKS BY LOCAL
AND PROJECT REPRESENTATIVES

The Final Event, held in Dubrovnik on 1 October 2025, marked the formal conclusion of the Remote-IT Action Planning Network and served as a moment of synthesis, validation and transition.

Rather than functioning as a conventional closing conference, the event was explicitly designed as a

reflective and strategic space, allowing the network to consolidate learning, articulate its core messages, and position its work within a broader European conversation on the future of work and cities.

11:30 – 15:00

NETWORKING LUNCH

15:00 – 16:30

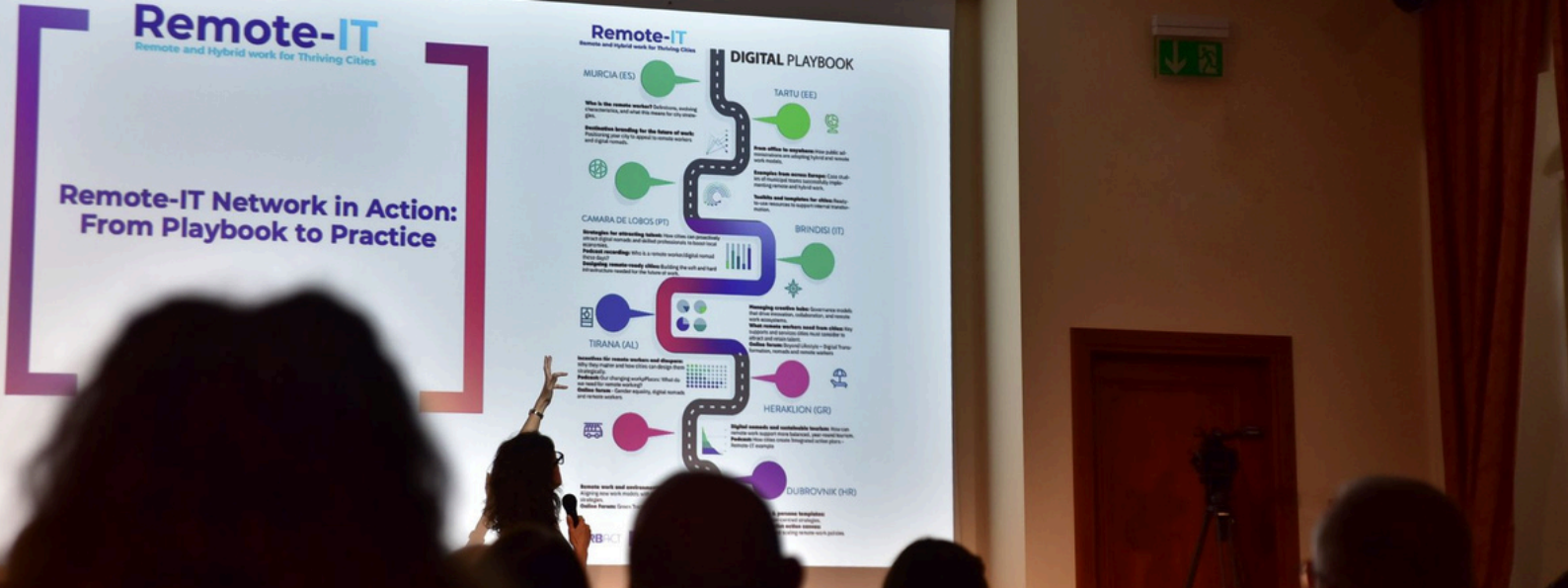
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16:30

CITY TOUR WITH
LOCAL GUIDES

17:40

COCKTAIL/DINNER



The programme was structured around **the Remote-IT Digital Playbook**, which was used not only as a publication, but as a narrative and analytical framework guiding participants through the network's journey. This journey moved from understanding who remote workers are and what motivates them, through internal transformation of public administrations, ecosystem building, creative hubs, sustainable tourism and environmental sustainability, to user-centred policy design.

City representatives shared specific examples, testing actions, and local stories, illustrating how cities of different sizes and contexts have approached the challenges and opportunities of remote and hybrid work in distinct but comparable ways. A recurring message throughout the day was that **remote work should not be treated as a trend to which cities merely adapt, but as a structural transformation that cities can actively shape through strategic, integrated, and people-centred approaches.**



Two panel discussions complemented this narrative structure by offering deeper reflection on the internal and external dimensions of change.

The first panel, **“The Hybrid City: Rethinking work in the public sector,”** focused on how public administrations are transforming themselves as organisations, addressing issues of organisational culture, leadership, trust, accountability, performance, and employer attractiveness.

The second panel, **“Cities as Enablers: Supporting ecosystems for remote work and digital nomads,”** shifted the focus outward to the role of cities as ecosystem builders, examining how infrastructure, partnerships, community building, and long-term governance arrangements can support sustainable and inclusive remote work ecosystems.

Across both panels, speakers emphasised that meaningful transformation requires **collaboration across sectors, deliberate institutional design, and an explicit focus on social and territorial impact, not only economic competitiveness.**



THEMATIC COVERAGE ACROSS THE FINAL PHASE

First, **remote and hybrid work inside public administrations** was further explored as a strategic issue rather than a technical adjustment. Cities reflected on legal frameworks, organisational readiness, digital security, leadership styles and the right to disconnect. Hybrid work was reframed as a question of institutional resilience, employer attractiveness and service quality, not only flexibility.

Second, **talent attraction strategies** evolved from promotional approaches towards ecosystem thinking. Cities recognised that attracting remote workers and digital nomads requires more than marketing. It requires coherent combinations of infrastructure, housing, services, community, culture and governance, and attention to integration and belonging.

Third, **the role of creative hubs and coworking spaces** was reinterpreted as part of local innovation systems. These spaces are not only workplaces but platforms for collaboration, learning and connection between newcomers and local actors. Governance, sustainability and programming emerged as critical success factors.

Fourth, **remote work was linked to sustainability agendas**, including reduced commuting, climate adaptation, balanced tourism and social inclusion. Cities explored how remote work can support environmental goals and demographic resilience if it is integrated into broader strategies.

Finally, **inclusion and gender equality** were consistently raised as cross-cutting concerns. The network acknowledged that remote work does not automatically lead to fairness and can reproduce or amplify inequalities unless intentionally designed.

All these, and some more thematic coverage was captured within [the Remote-IT Playbook](#).

REFLECTION ON PODCASTS AND ONLINE FORUMS

PROGRAM

Event Details:
Date: Thursday, April 24, 2025
Time: 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
Location: Online (Zoom)

10:00 – 10:05 **Welcome and Introduction**
 Natasa Miric and Alisa Aliti Vlastic

10:05 – 10:15 **Quiz**
Knowledge gaps and learning expectations
Objectives
 Alison Partridge

10:15 – 10:25 **URBACT – Gender Equal Cities**
 Sally Kneeshaw

10:25 – 10:35 **Gender Equality, Remote Working and Digital Nomads**
 Alison Partridge

10:35 – 11:00 **Learning from others**
 Guest speakers and Sally Kneeshaw

11:00 – 11:15 **Questions and Discussion Session**
 Sally Kneeshaw

11:15 – 11:25 **Individual Reflection + 1 commitment to start back in your city**
 Alison Partridge

11:25 – 11:30 **Reflections and Conclusion**
 Alisa Aliti Vlastic

11:30 **Closing**
 Alisa Aliti Vlastic and Natasa Miric

HOST'S SPEAKERS

Alison Partridge
 URBACT Ad Hoc Expert

Sally Kneeshaw
 URBACT Ad Hoc Expert

with guest speakers from EU cities

Alisa Aliti Vlastic
 Remote-IT Lead Expert

Natasa Miric
 Remote-IT Lead Partner

Podcasts and online forums within this last phase of our journey played a dual role: they **extended learning beyond physical meetings and acted as reflective spaces for consolidating insights.**

The podcast on Integrated Action Plans highlighted that the value of IAPs lies as much in the participatory process as in the final document. It reinforced that integration, adaptability and stakeholder ownership are central to meaningful local change.

The destination branding podcast reframed branding as identity, belonging and community, warning against superficial or extractive approaches and emphasising the primacy of local satisfaction.

Online forum on gender equality ensured that social justice remains embedded in the remote work conversation, preventing the topic from being reduced to lifestyle or economic competitiveness alone.



ADDITIONAL TOOLS USED

THE USER JOURNEY AS A DESIGN AND INTEGRATION INSTRUMENT

Among the tools used by the network, **the user journey and persona framework stands out as particularly transformative.**

By mapping the experiences of different personas - such as remote professionals, municipal employees, diaspora returnees or local entrepreneurs, cities were able to **shift from policy-centred to people-centred thinking.** User journeys made visible the specific steps, touchpoints, emotions, and barriers that individuals encounter when interacting with city systems.

This tool proved valuable at three moments: **diagnosing problems, co-designing solutions, and communicating change.** It helped reveal blind spots, test ideas before implementation, and translate complex reforms into relatable narratives. In this sense, the user journey acted as a bridge between strategy and practice, between institutions and users, and between different municipal departments.



WHATS NEXT?

**Local Final events across
partner countries,
throughtout November and
December 2025, and
January 2026.**

**Celebration and
showcasing the results of
the Remote-IT network
learnings at the URBACT
City Festival in March/April
2026 in Nicosia (CY)**

**Implementation of the
Integrated Action Plans
developed through the
Remote-IT network journey**

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Remote-IT is an URBACT Action Planning Network, financed through the URBACT IV (2021-2027) programme of the European Commission. Remote-IT network tackles the new challenges cities are experiencing connected to the future of work. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the transformation around how work is organised, with hybrid and remote work models significantly impacting the lives of citizens, as well as the organisational culture of major employers (public/private). Remote-IT partnerships of cities are collaboratively exploring this emerging topic in order to implement proactive policy making.

Website <https://urbact.eu/networks/remote-it>;

URBACT is the European Territorial Cooperation programme aiming to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. It is an instrument of the Cohesion Policy, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the 27 Member States, Norway & Switzerland. It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes.

More info: <https://urbact.eu/>

The Remote-IT Network is led by the Dubrovnik's Development Agency (DURA), Croatia. Partner cities include: Brindisi (Italy), Bucharest District 6 (Romania), Camara de Lobos (Portugal), Heraklion (Greece), Murcia (Spain), Tartu (Estonia), Tirana (Albania).



A special **thank you** to all Remote-IT network partners for their contribution and participation in transnational meetings in Heraklion, Bucharest District 6 and Dubrovnik, and online one-on-one meetings that supported the development of this report:

- [Dubrovnik]- Natasa Miric, Barbara Damić, Marijana Puljas, Luna Polic Barovic
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- [Bucharest District 6]- Octavian Aron, Lucian Veresciaghin, Mihaela Calin
- [Camara de Lobos]- Joel Viana, Dina Azevedo
- [Heraklion]- Renia Drosou, Panagiotis Tsakmopoulos, Markos Kourgiantakis
- [Murcia]- Amber Kay, Jesus de la Pena
- [Tartu]- Sandra Onne, Kerttu Ahuna, Liisi Park
- [Tirana]- Sano Nuriu, Ingrid Mecalla, Klevis Frasheri, Lek Hakani