

# BREAKING ISOLATION

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**REPORT N°3**

January-July 2025

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**URBACT**



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Interreg

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

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This report explains what happened in the Breaking Isolation URBACT network from January to July 2025. If you're interested to know what happened in the previous stages you can download the Report N°2 (July to Dec. 2024) and N°1 (January to June 2024), and for the initial stage (from June 2023 to December 2023), you may download the Baseline Study of the Breaking Isolation network.

In this report, you'll find out what happened both at network level during Transnational meetings, as well as local level with URBACT Local Groups (ULG) and in particular their testing actions. You will also find some tools created specifically for some of our action-planning steps.

If you have any question regarding the report, you may contact Christophe Gouache, Lead Expert of the network:  
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\* <https://urbact.eu/networks/breaking-isolation>

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Cover picture taken by Christophe Gouache of an artwork exhibited in the Centro de Dia de Personas Mayores Jumilla during the Breaking Isolation TNM in Jumilla (Spain)

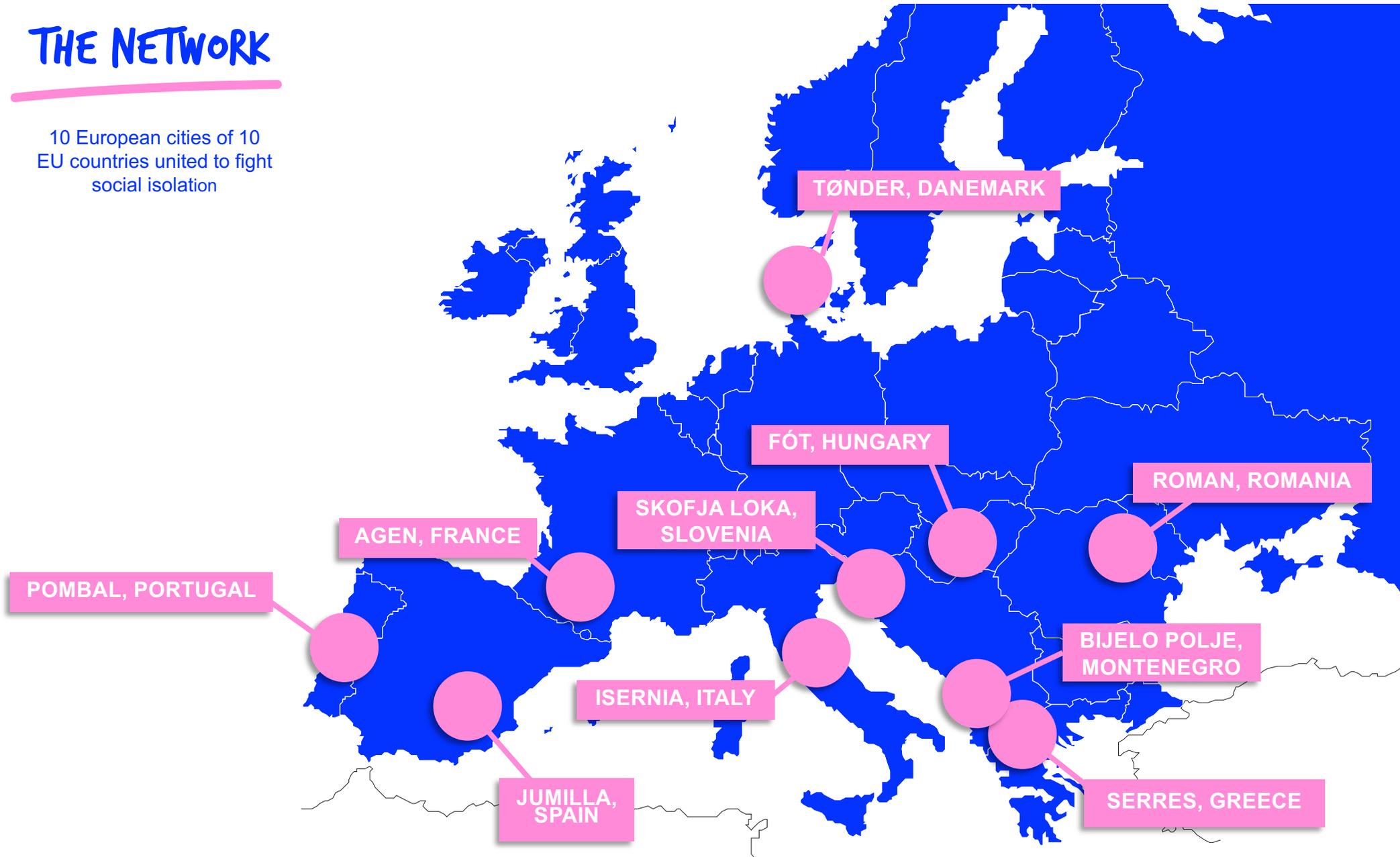
# CONTENT

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<b>The network</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A collective journey</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Transnational Meeting in Bijelo Polje (Montenegro)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Transnational Meeting in Jumilla (Spain)</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Transnational Meeting in Toender (Danemark)</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Getting towards the finish line</b>	<b>28</b>

# THE NETWORK

10 European cities of 10  
EU countries united to fight  
social isolation

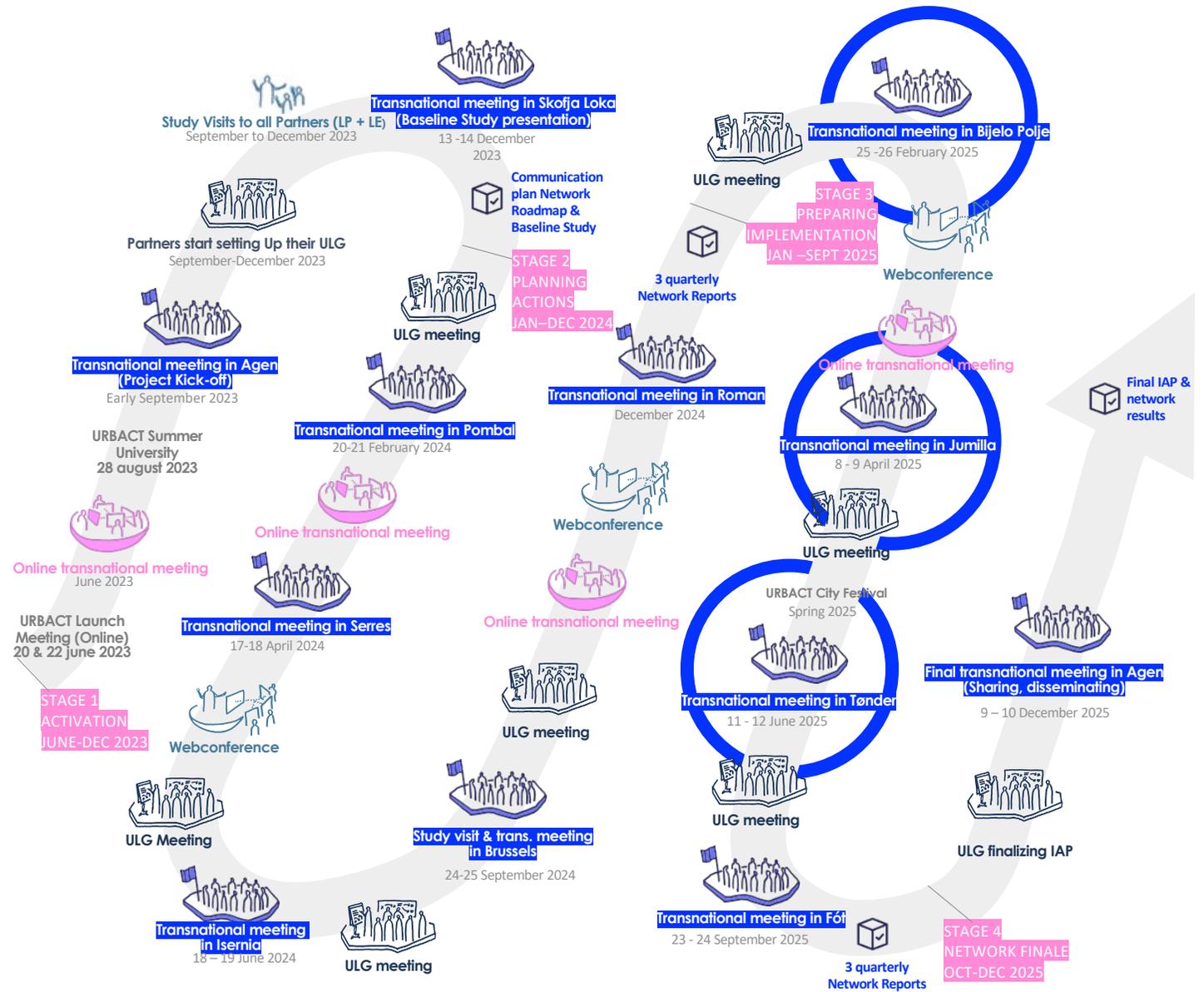


# A (COLLECTIVE) JOURNEY

The Breaking Isolation journey is structured around a series of collective rendez-vous called Transnational Meetings (TNM). These TNM gather, systematically, the 10 cities of the Breaking Isolation network and is the most precious exchange & learn space for the network. Indeed, during those TNMs, each city presents the results of their work at local level with their URBACT local group, then the hosting city showcases inspiring practices (through on site visits), Lead Partner checks up administrative and communication matters while the Lead Expert explains the next steps of the journey as well as presents the ad-hoc tools that cities will have to use with their ULGs.

In between each TNM, cities organize their URBACT Local Group (ULG) meetings, in order to share their results to the next TNM. Alongside ULG meetings and TNMs, the network also punctually organizes online meetings as well as webconferences on specific issues/topics.

This report summarizes what happened during the first semester of 2025 (between January 2025 and July 2025) which included three Transnational Meetings, one in Bijelo Polje (Montenegro) one in Jumilla (Spain) and one in Toender (Denmark).



# TRANSNATIONAL MEETING IN BIJELO POLJE (MONTENEGRO)

## WHAT HAPPENED

The Transnational Meeting of Bijelo Polje in Montenegro took place on the 25th and 26th February of 2025. This TNM was the occasion for the network to see inspiring practices and cases of how the city tries to prevent isolation from a series of individuals at risk and in particular: youth with disabilities, elderly people, teenagers and young adults, through the site visits of:

- a day care advanced center for youth with disabilities
- an elderly nursing home
- a youth dancing club

The meeting also marked a crucial milestone in the network's Stage 3 "Preparing Implementation" phase. Cities have moved beyond initial problem analysis and idea generation, now focusing on concrete action planning and testing actions. The Bijelo Polje meeting

centered around several core activities:

- **Progress Assessment:** Cities presented their advances since the previous meeting in Roman, sharing ideation processes and testing actions ideas
- **IAP Development:** Partners initiated the drafting of their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs)
- **Knowledge Exchange:** Through site visits to local facilities for elderly care and children with disabilities, participants gained insights into Bijelo Polje's approach to populations at risk of isolation
- **Network Communication:** Cities collaborated on LinkedIn articles highlighting their most innovative initiatives and actions for Breaking Isolation



The JU Centar Tisa of Bijelo Polje – It is the first Day Care Center in Montenegro and it represents a supplement to the social protection services for children with developmental disabilities as it goes well beyond occupational activities but include a lot of cognitive stimulation activities (salt room therapy, relaxation room, video game neurostimulation, swimming, etc.)



JU Dom starih Bijelo Polje is an elderly nursing home hosts over 150 elderly residents who can enjoy convivial moments of sharing, playing, singing, etc. but also smaller bubbles of socialization through the shared living rooms between 4 residents. Instead of having only large communal space, residents can enjoy gathering in smaller living rooms with direct neighbours or roommates.



Art & cultural activities, clubs & groups are often taken for granted but, similarly to sports clubs, they often provide precious community-based values and opportunities to socialize and escape possible isolation amongst the youth. In Bijelo Polje, traditional dancing is one of those many activities providing socialization opportunities (esp. long lasting relations) outside the walls of the school system.



The TNM in Bijelo Polje was also, for the network partners, a key moment to share and discuss about Testing actions ideas and plans of each city.

# TRANSNATIONAL MEETING IN JUMILLA (SPAIN)

## WHAT HAPPENED

The Jumilla meeting occurred at a pivotal moment in the network's journey - the cities were now deep into Stage 3 "Preparing Implementation" and approaching their IAP (Integrated Action Plan) draft deadline. This represented significant progress since the previous meeting in Bijelo Polje, Montenegro.

### Key Meeting Activities

- **Progress Updates:** Each city presented developments since Bijelo Polje, sharing advances in their ideation processes and testing actions, demonstrating the network's momentum toward concrete implementation.

- **Communication Initiatives:** Partners discussed new communication outputs, building on the network's LinkedIn presence and exploring innovative ways to share their anti-isolation strategies with broader audiences.

- **IAP Development Support:** The meeting included dedicated time for cities to advance their Integrated Action Plan drafting, with Q&A sessions to address challenges in the template completion process.

- **Actions Market Exercise:** An innovative peer-to-peer learning activity where cities presented their planned actions in a marketplace format, allowing partners to "buy" the most promising ideas from their fellow city partners (copying their neighbour). This exercise included pricing mechanisms (10-20-30-40-50 units) to simulate real-world resource allocation decisions.

- **ULG Therapy Session:** A reflective workshop examining what works well and what challenges exist in the Urban Local Groups (ULGs) that drive local implementation in each city.

- **Jumilla's Inspiring Local Practices** : as usual during in each TNM, the network also had the opportunity to site visits so as to discover Jumilla's inspiring cases to fight & or prevent isolation. In particular the network had the opportunity to visit (see details in next slides) :

- A second-hand clothes shop association, providing clothes at low price as an entry point for further mutual support and help with people living in precarity

- An elderly day leisure center (Centro de Dia de Personas Mayores Jumilla) which gathers hundreds of elderly who come everyday to socialize and spend quality time around dozens of different types of activities

- A cheese-making association using traditional cheese-making as a pretext to socialize and stimulate intergenerational exchanges

- Youth music bands as an opportunity to create strong social bonds

The city of Jumilla also used the opportunity of the TNM to launch two of its **Testing actions**:

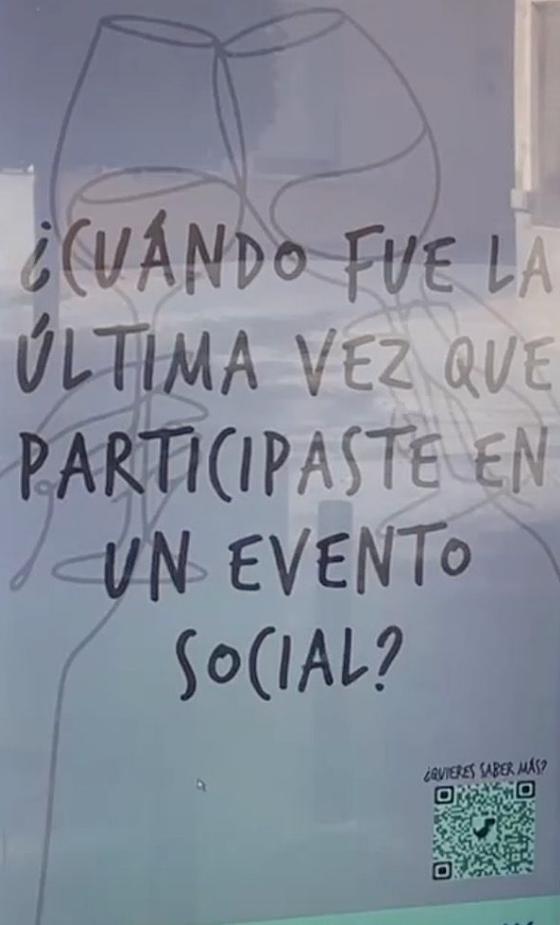
1. An awareness raising campaign on street advertising panels about loneliness, social bonding, and isolation

2. In-the-street self-test tool, designed by the Lead Expert: 'How social are you?' meant to see whether or not a person is at risk of potential isolation





Progress Updates: Each city presented developments since Bijelo Polje, sharing advances in their ideation processes and their testing actions



¿CUÁNDO FUE LA  
ÚLTIMA VEZ QUE  
PARTICIPASTE EN  
UN EVENTO  
SOCIAL?

¿QUIERES SABER MÁS?



 Ayuntamiento  
de Jumilla

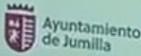


**BREAKING  
ISOLATION**

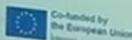
Awareness raising campaign testing action in Jumilla

¿TIENES  
AFICIONES?

¿QUIERES SABER MÁS?



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BREAKING  
ISOLATION

Awareness raising campaign testing action in Jumilla



Youth music bands as an opportunity to create strong social bonds with testimonials from participants themselves sharing their stories of isolation



2<sup>nd</sup> Testing action - In-the-street self-test tool 'How social are you?'





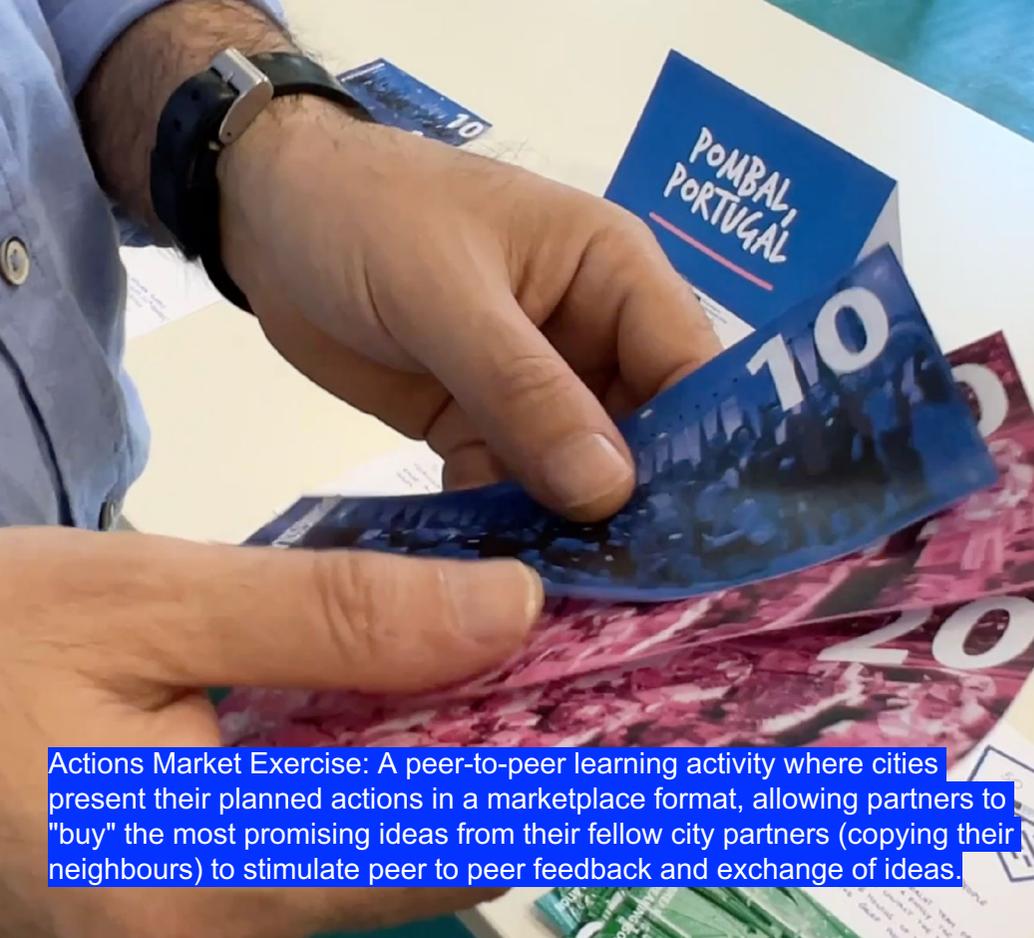
Daycare Centre for Elderly: A vibrant community hub with 3,500 members and 1,000 active participants, offering 25 workshops led by both volunteer and paid tutors. The center functions almost like a "bee hive" of social activity, providing everything from professional services to social events, effectively preventing isolation through constant engagement.



Cheese-making association using traditional cheese-making as a pretext to socialize and stimulate intergenerational exchanges



A second-hand clothes shop association, providing clothes at low price as an entry point for further mutual support and help with people living in precarity



Actions Market Exercise: A peer-to-peer learning activity where cities present their planned actions in a marketplace format, allowing partners to "buy" the most promising ideas from their fellow city partners (copying their neighbours) to stimulate peer to peer feedback and exchange of ideas.



# MARKET OF ACTIONS

## What is it?

The Market of Actions is a group method aimed at identifying and discussing the most promising actions amongst partners of a network or members of a ULG.

## Why to use it?

Cities, at a certain point within the action planning process, end up having to choose and prioritise amongst dozens of actions, not knowing which ones to favor and which ones to abandon, etc. The Market of Actions is meant to help members of a ULG or partners of a network to review all available actions and run a buy-in process to see which ones come out.

## How to use it?

*Network use:* Each city writes down 3 to 5 of its actions on action templates (indicating a fictional price based on how big/ambitious the action is). Then everyone receives bills for a total amount of 250 pts. First round, people walk around the market to have a first look at the actions (every city leaves one person at its table to explain the actions to the buyers in case of need). Second round: spending time. Participants go around and spend their money of their most preferred actions. Thus, indicating to each city, which actions are the most supported/approved by their peers.

*ULG use:* Similar process than the Network one, but instead of selling the actions of the partner cities, all the actions of the city itself can be put on the table, to choose from.



## Materials

- Action templates + Fake bills





Network ULG Therapy time discussing challenges of mobilizing and ensuring the full engagement of ULGs across all cities – Sharing tips, tricks and struggles

# TRANSNATIONAL MEETING IN TOENDER (DENMARK)

## WHAT HAPPENED

The Toender meeting was the first time cities had to present their advanced IAP drafts to the others, it was therefore a key meeting to ensure that all cities were moving forward and delivering what was expected from all of them. Obviously, like each TNM of the Breaking Isolation network, the meeting was also the occasion to discover and dive into Toender's inspiring practices and testing actions.

The Key Meeting Activities were:

- **Progress Updates:** Each city presented developments since the Jumilla TNM, sharing their testing actions results and in particular their IAP drafts

- **Communication checkup:** Ensuring that all partners are actively promoting the network's topic, findings and advancements.

- **Checking partners' feeling about the IAP journey:** questioning all partners how

they feel about the IAP, about their ULG, about their political support, etc. This is meant to measure, qualitatively, who feels lost, who feels behind, who feels at ease and comfortable, who feels stressed or panicked, etc.

- **Discovering inspiring practices:** the meeting was also the occasion to discover some of the testing actions done by Toender such as the 'Adding value' initiative bringing together isolated men suffering early dementia, the group singing programme or the nature school programme which brings people altogether through nature-based activities (observing, walking, picking, etc.).

- **Imagining risks :** thinking about risks should be a creative process, not just a planning activity. Partners were put in a position to imagine risks and reasons why their IAP will fail... and find the ways to mitigate those risks



Every city of the network is sharing its progress regarding testing actions





Presentation of 2 inspiring testing actions from Toender: the first one, 'Adding Value', focussing on stimulating socialization between citizens suffering from early dementia, the second one, 'Centre of Song Power' focussing on group singing as a bonding activity



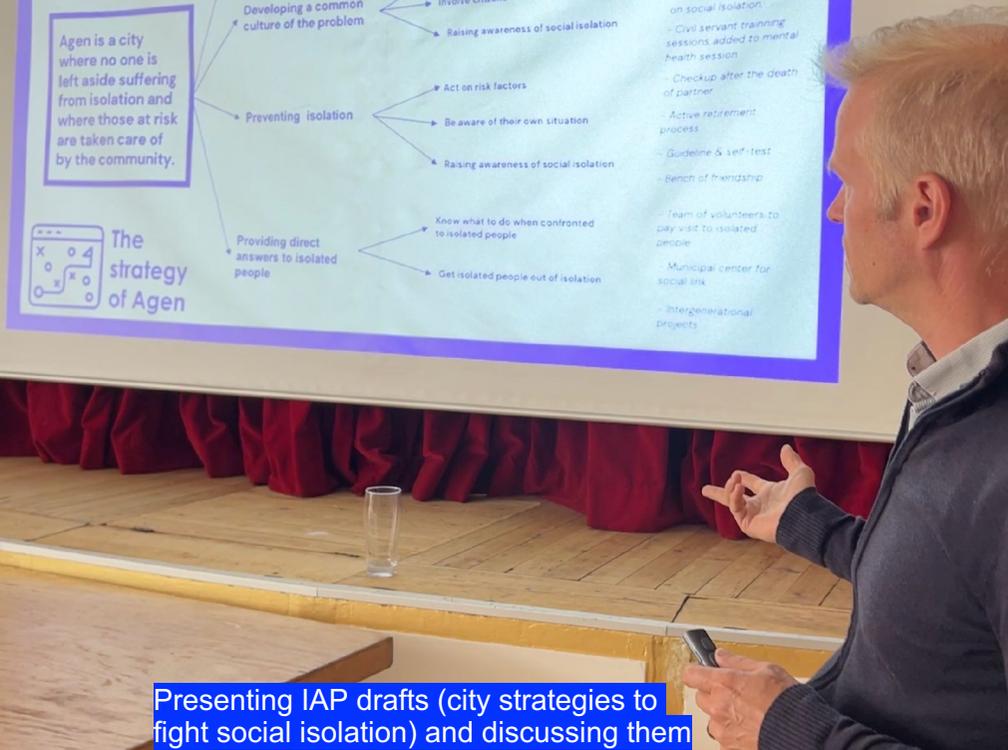


**WHY USE MULTIPLE FORMAT IN COMMUNICATION?**

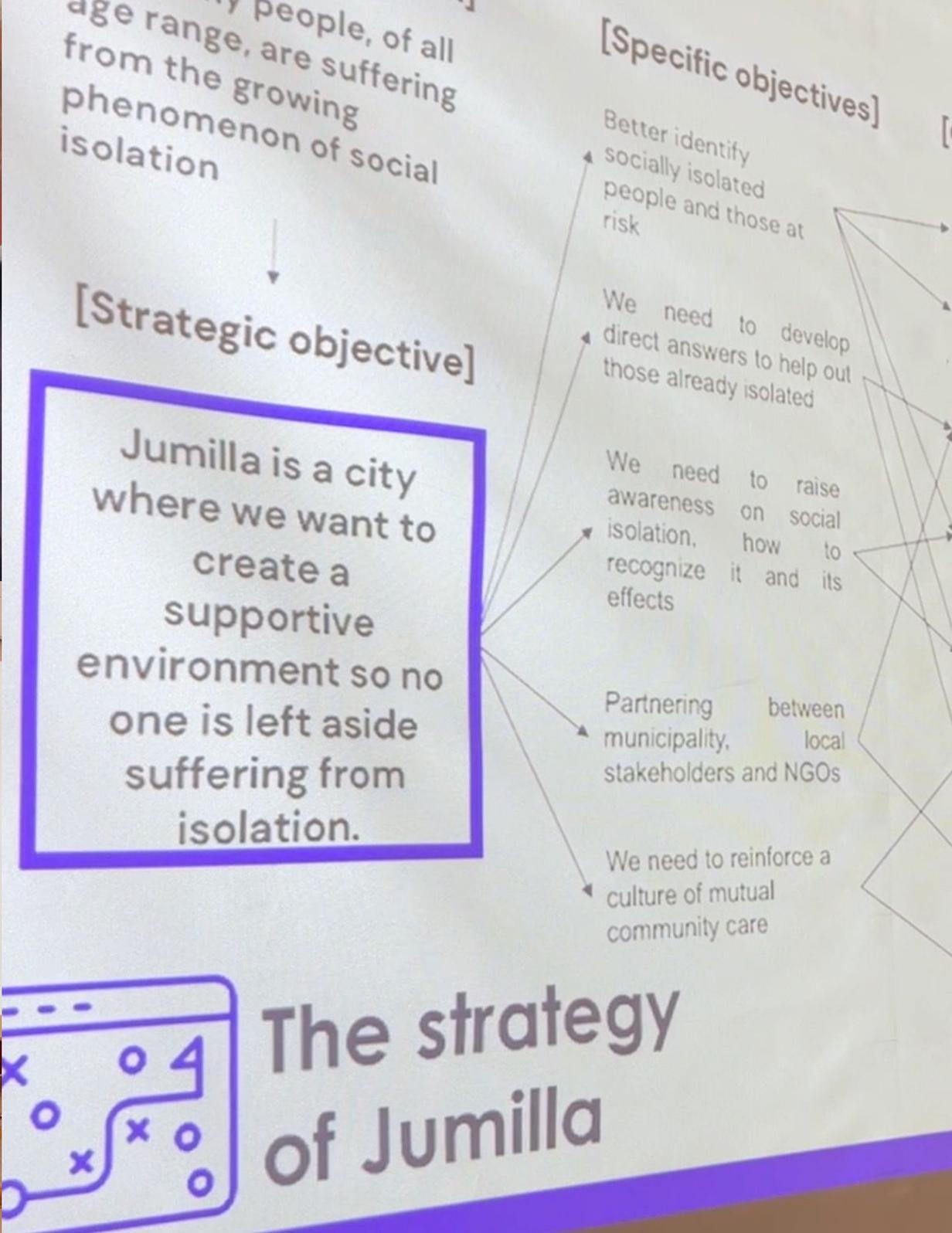
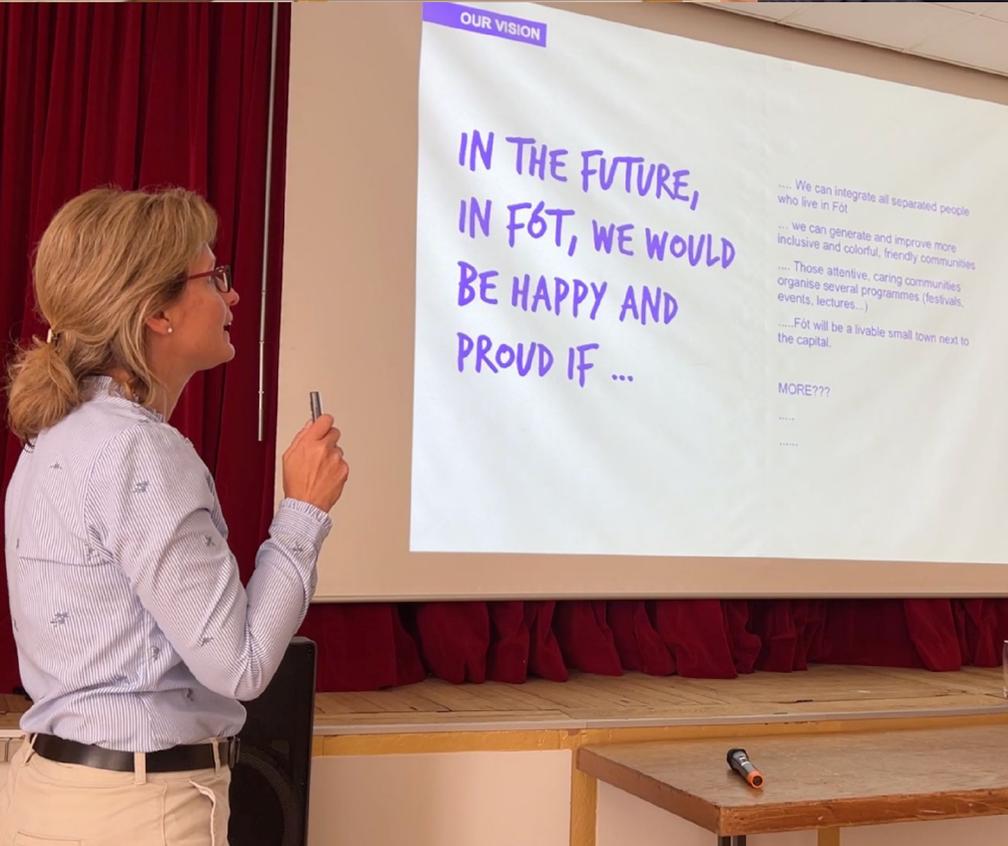
- Audiences learn differently
- Different formats evoke different emotions
- Different formats force you to look at your story from different angles

Discussing and brainstorming with Lead Partner about communication tools and methods to spread the word about the network and social isolation in all cities



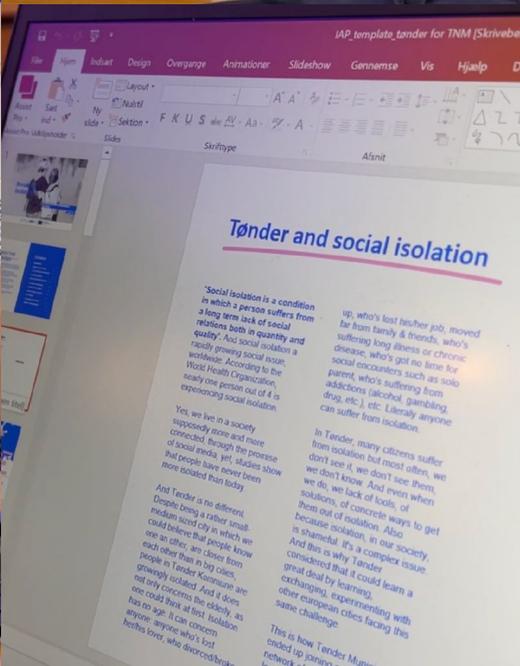


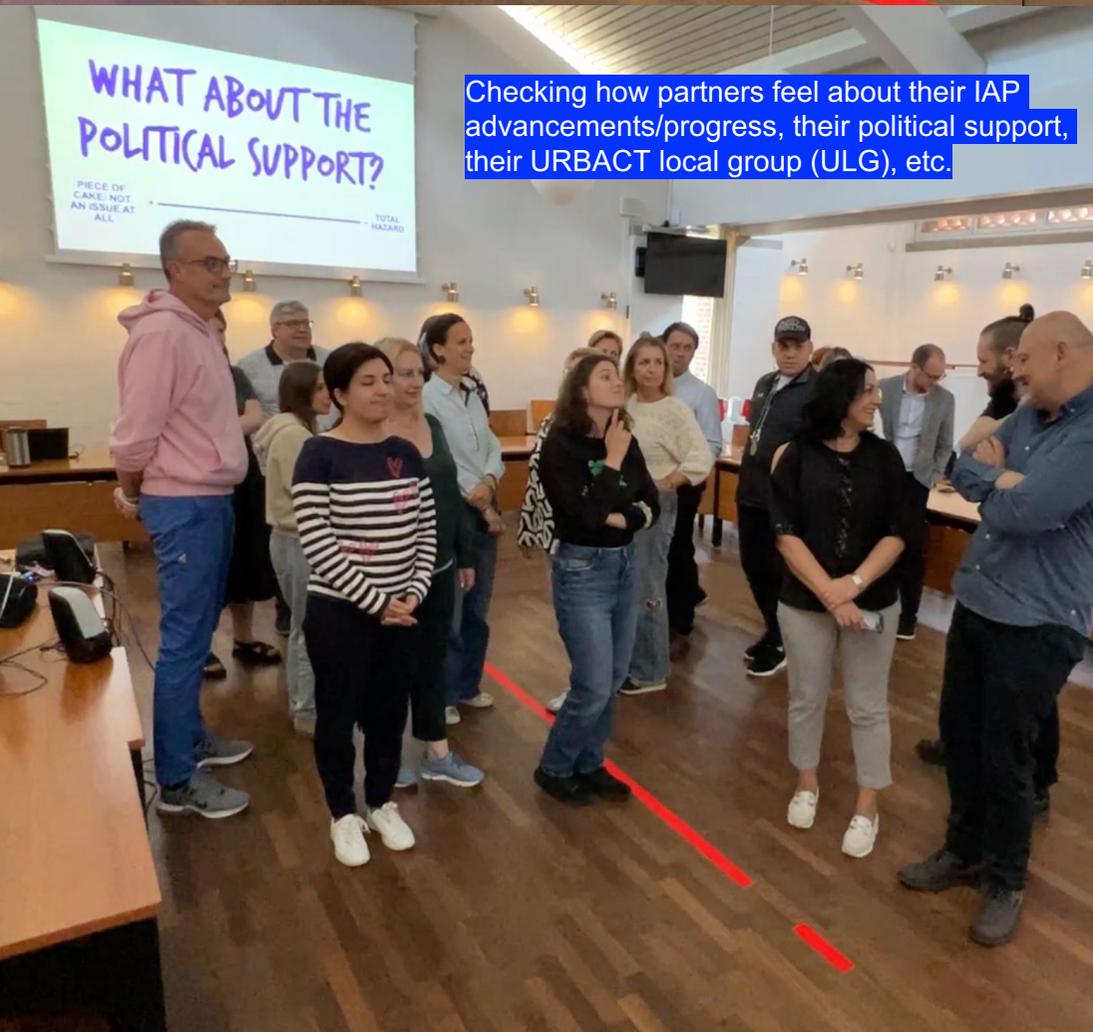
Presenting IAP drafts (city strategies to fight social isolation) and discussing them





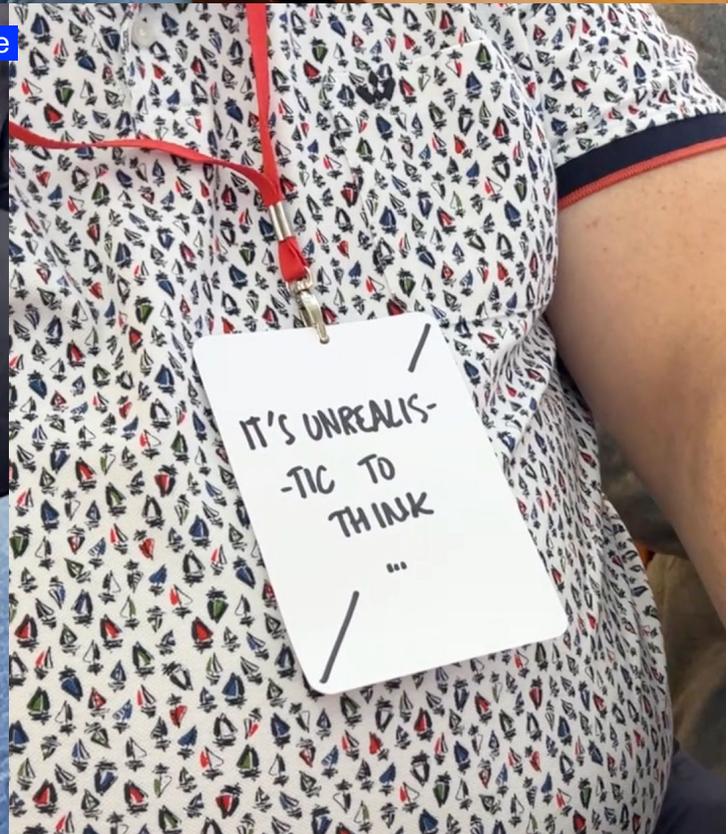
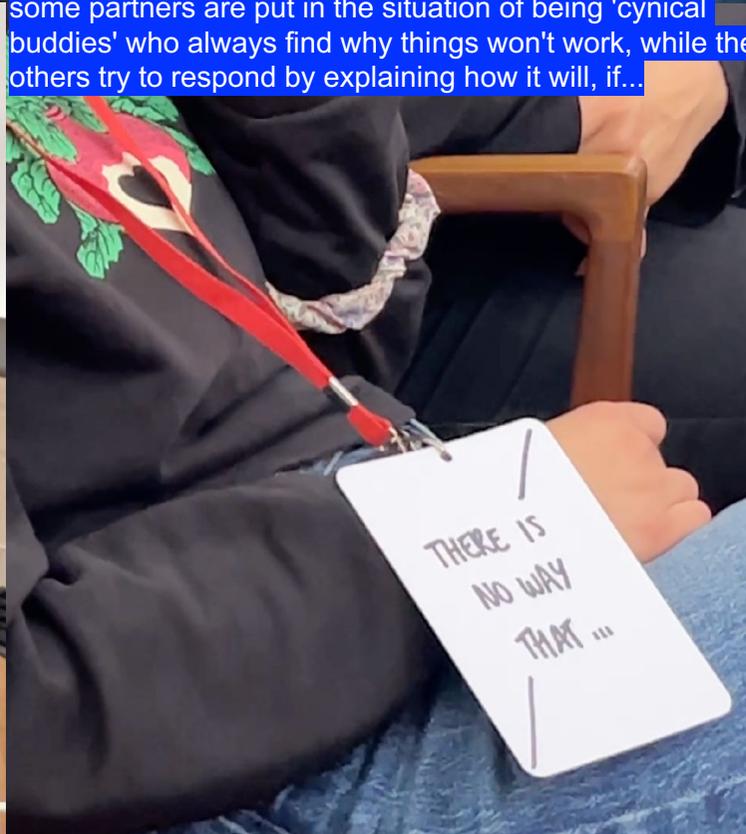
Advancing Integrated Action Plans (IAP)







In order to think creatively to risks & mitigation strategies, some partners are put in the situation of being 'cynical buddies' who always find why things won't work, while the others try to respond by explaining how it will, if...



# THE PROBLEM IS...

## What is it?

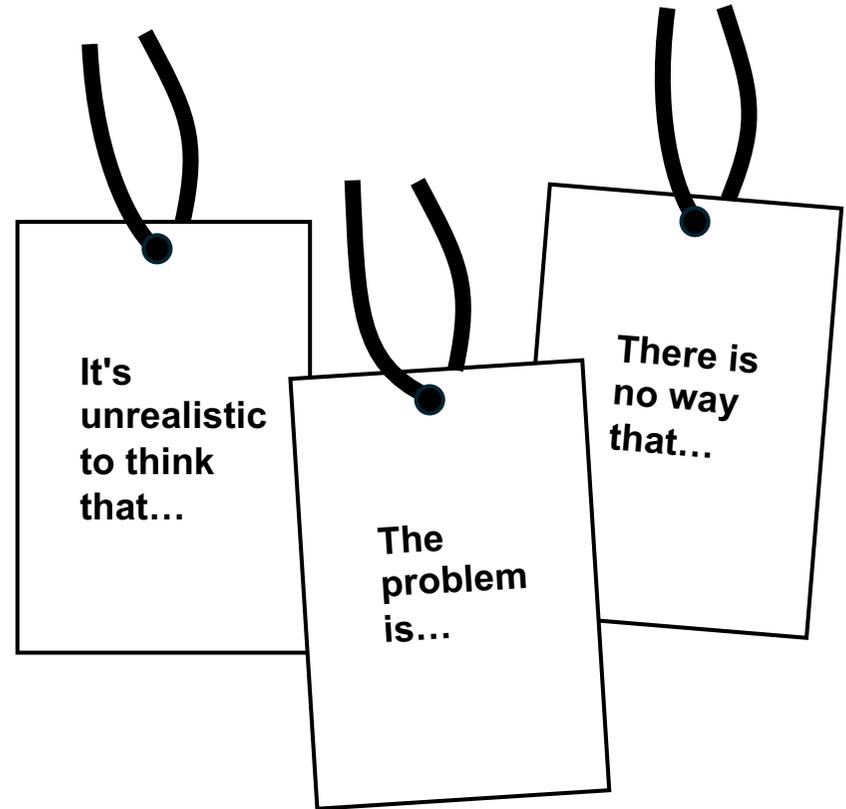
'The problem is...' is a tool to think collectively and in creative way about risks and its mitigation leverages.

## Why to use it?

Whether it is the Integrated Action Plan as a whole or the actions themselves, many factors (direct, indirect, internal, external, etc.) may disrupt the implementation plan and lead to reduced impact, lower results than expected or even, in some case, the giving up of some actions or the strategy itself. The tool helps to challenge assumptions and to provoke reflection about 'all the things that may go wrong' and why the IAP might end up being a failure.

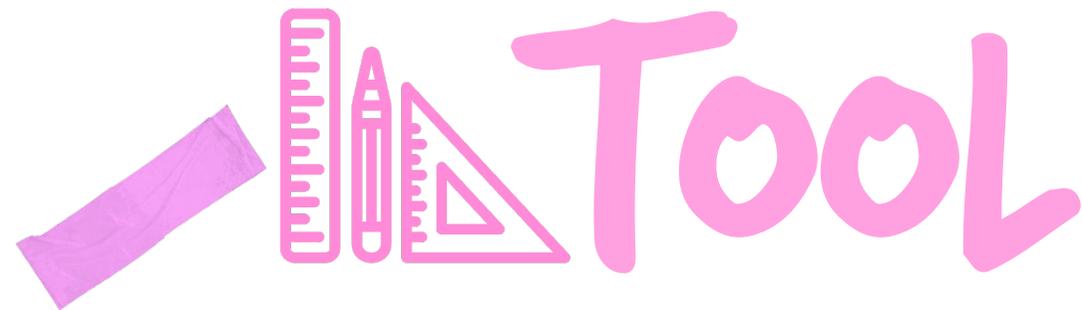
## How to use it?

The group (ULG or else) is split in half. One half receives lanyards and hanging cards including negative/cynical statements. Those with lanyards shall start all their sentences with the prompt they have on their card. The other half must find counter arguments and demonstrate that the risks are not valuable because they can be mitigated by x and y leverage. Attackers and defenders debate and try to identify risks and mitigation ideas. When the group finds some strong arguments or solutions, they write them down. After a given time, the group exchange roles.

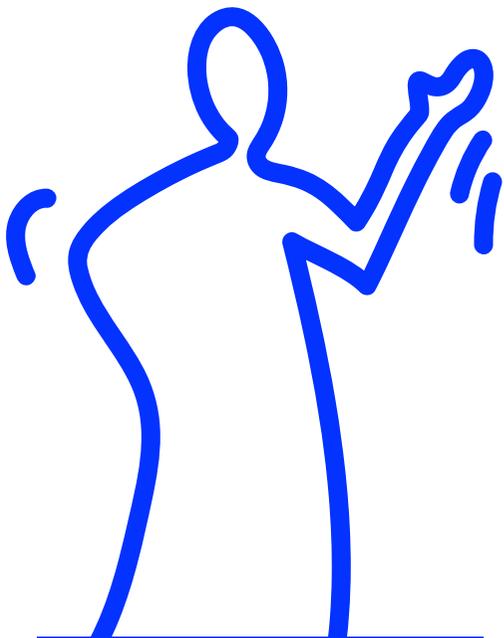


## Materials

- Lanyards
- Set of cards



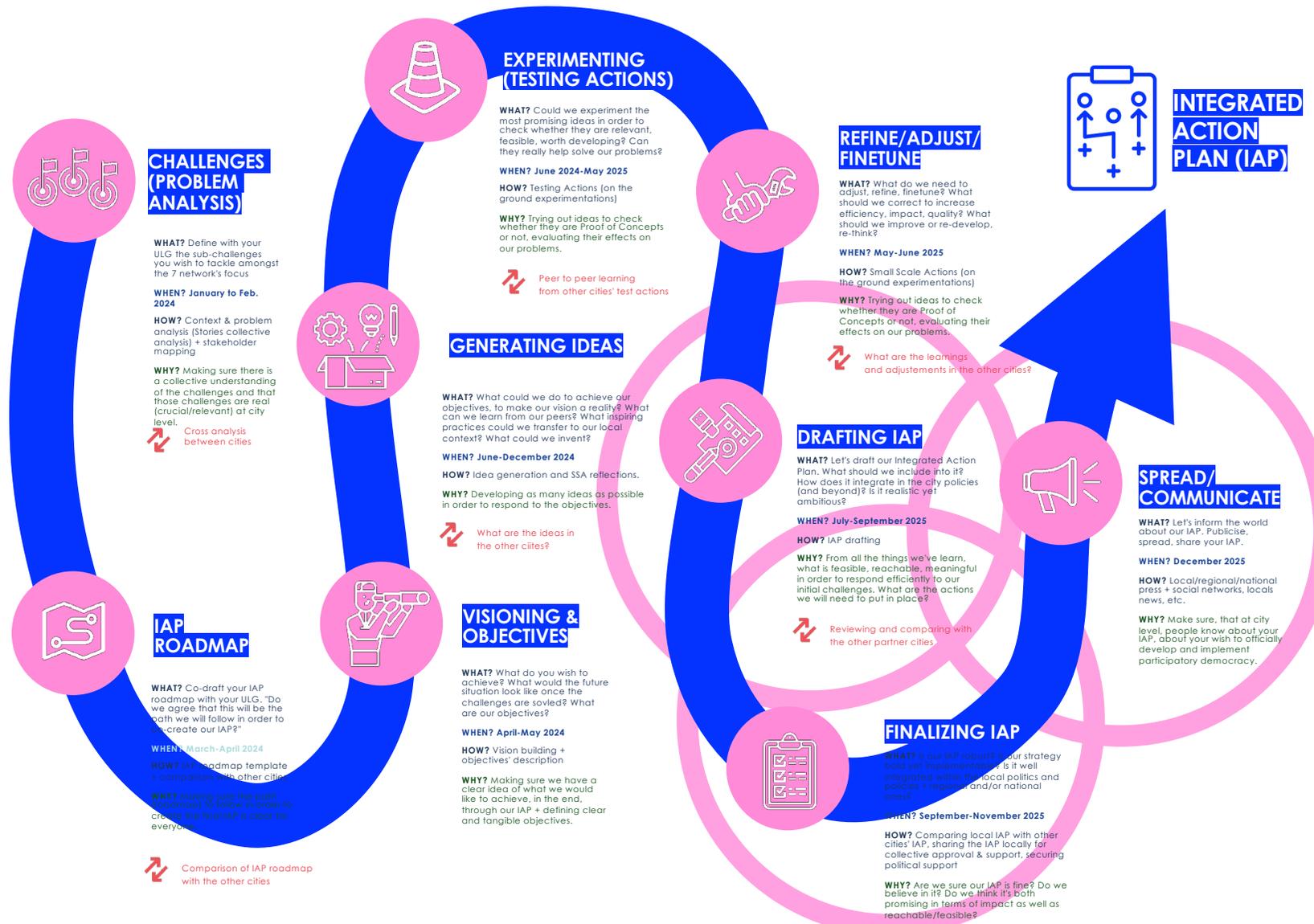
# WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE NETWORK?



## ACTION PLAN ROADMAP

The Breaking Isolation network, similarly to the other Action Planning Networks, is slowly getting towards the end of its journey and is now reaching the last 3 key stages of the action planning: moving from the IAP draft to a finalized/stabilized version (inc. politically validated) and the outreach stage to

publicize the Integrated Action Plan of each city locally (and at national & European levels). The end of the Action Planning Journey will be articulated around 2 key rendez-vous, the first one at the end of September in Fót, Hungary, and the very last one in the Lead Partner city, Agen, France.





This report highlights and summarizes the activities of the Breaking Isolation network during the first semester of the year 2025.

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Written by Christophe Gouache, Lead Expert

