

BREAKING ISOLATION



REPORT N°2

July-December 2024

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URBACT



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Interreg

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report explains what happened in the Breaking Isolation URBACT network from July to December 2024. If you're interested to know what happened in the previous stage (from January to June 2023) you can download the Report N°1, 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 more info about the network and in particular our midterm reflections, and a highlight, for each stage of the action planning stages, of what the network has done, both at network level during Transnational meetings, as well as local level with URBACT Local Groups (ULG). You will also find all the tools that were created and/or used for each step.

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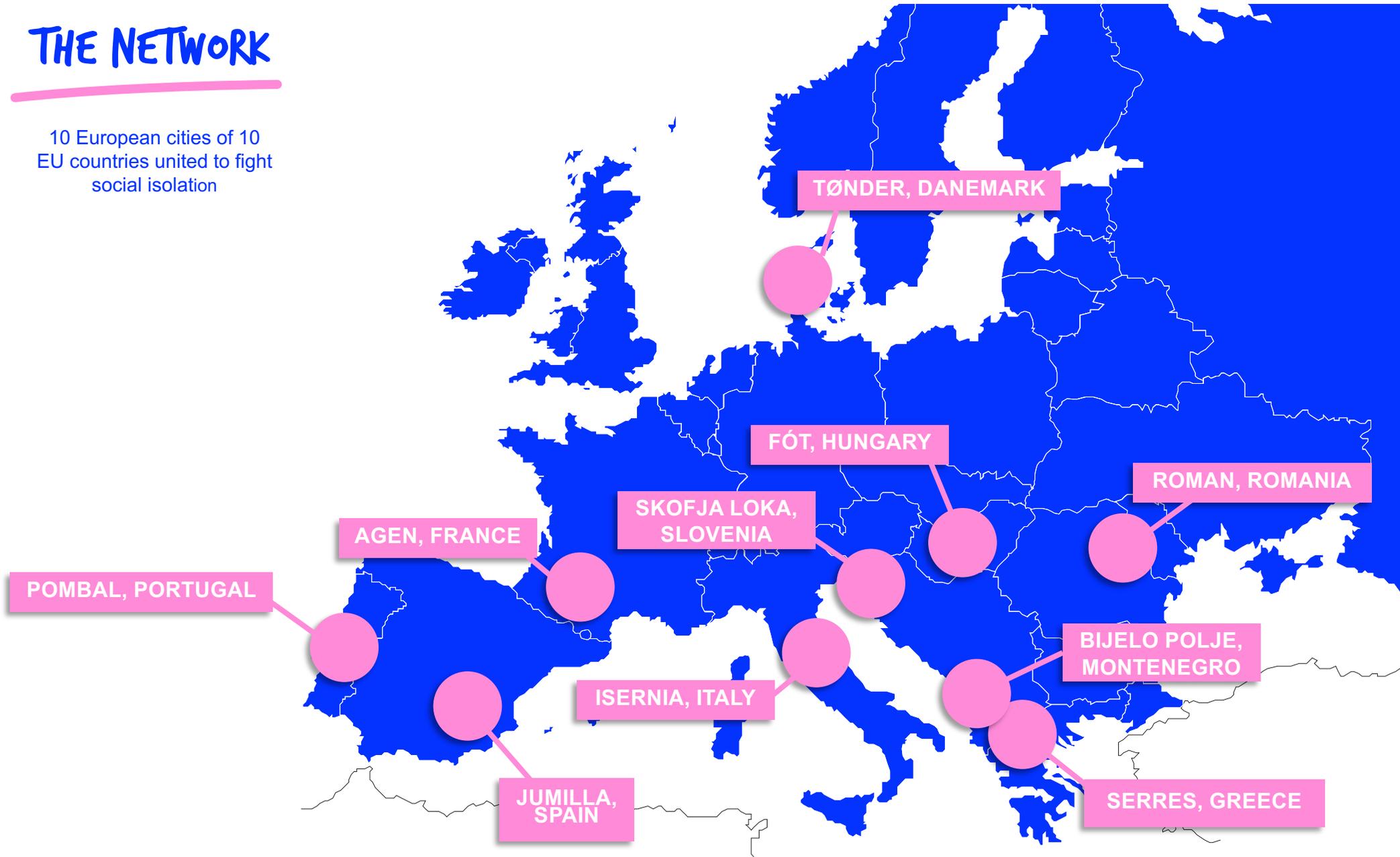
* <https://urbact.eu/networks/breaking-isolation>

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THE NETWORK

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

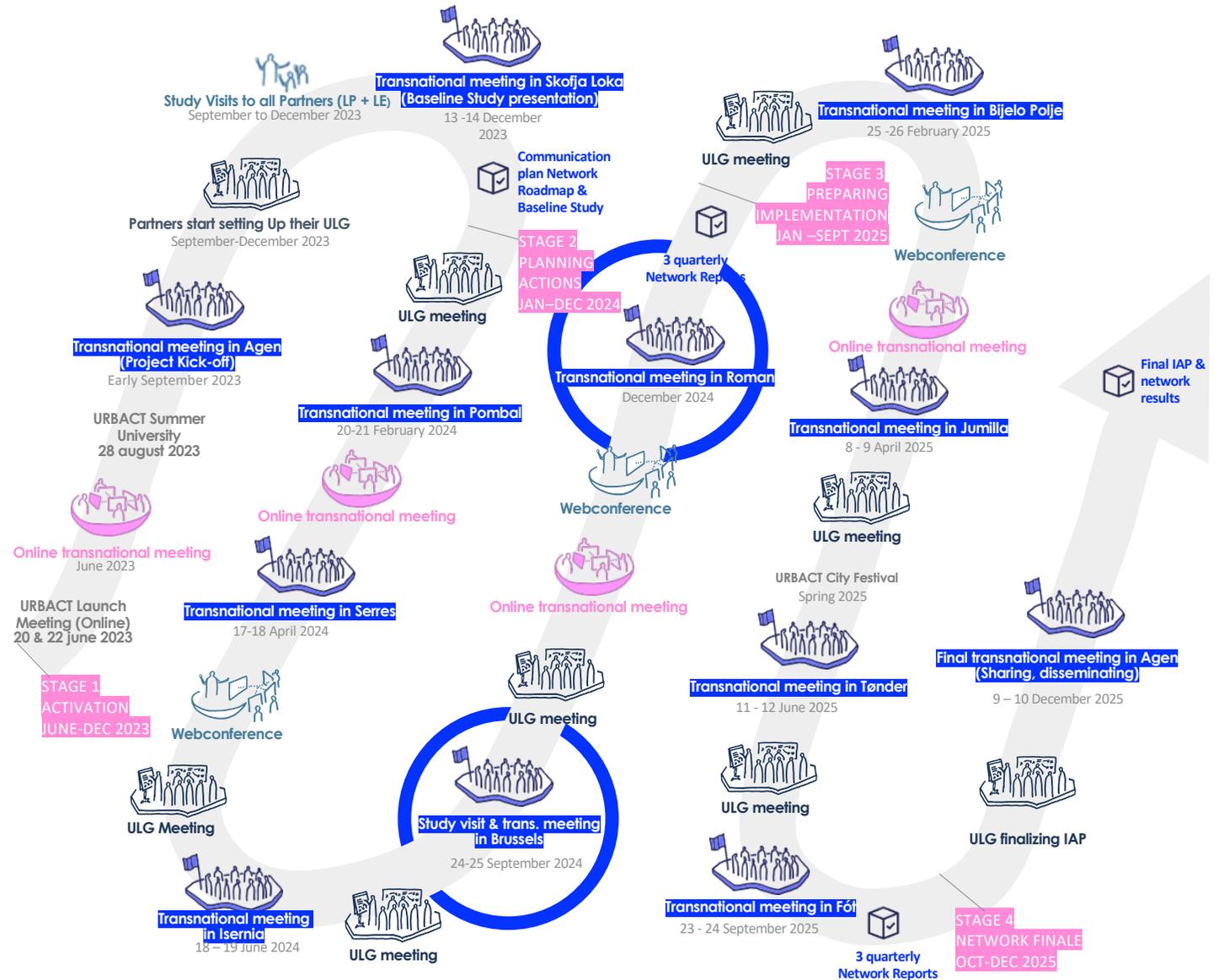


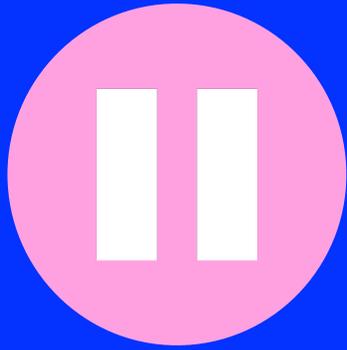
A (COLLECTIVE) JOURNEY

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 second semester of 2024 (between July 2024 and December 2024) which included two Transnational Meetings, one in Brussels (Belgium) and one in Roman (Romania) and which were partially dedicated to doing a midterm pause and reflection.





PAUSE & REFLECT DOING THE MID- TERM REVIEW

PAUSE & REFLECT

In every URBACT network, **roughly midway throughout the journey, a Midterm review is organized in order to collectively pause, step back and analyze how things are going, so as to adjust things if need be.** Concretely, our Breaking Isolation midterm survey questioned the cities partners about the following:

- Where are you now? How do you feel about your own progress in the action planning process?
- How about testing actions? What do you plan to do?
- How about your ULG : What are the good points / what are the issues if you have any?
- What did you get from Breaking Isolation so far & what did the transnational exchanges and

learning bring to you?

- Looking ahead, what could be the obstacles for your IAP and its future implementation?
- What about the quality of the LE and LP support? What could be improved/needed?
- What about URBACT and its offers at programme level?

This survey was filled in by all 10 city partners in September 2024 then discussed and presented in the Brussels' Transnational Meeting which took place on the 24th and 25th of September 2024.

Results are presented and augmented with comments of the Lead Expert in the following pages.



The midterm review and next key rendez-vous of URBACT by Nora Kebel (URBACT secretariat)

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS SO FAR? HOW ARE YOU DOING?

To this first and rather straightforward question, 2 cities indicated feeling very comfortable and at ease with the process and their own progress within the action planning journey, 7 partners indicated that they were doing ok and 1 partner indicated feeling 'a bit uncomfortable/unsure'.

This first results confirm the observations and discussions of the LP and LE about the network in general, indeed, despite 1 or 2 partners lagging a bit behind (in terms of pace), **the group is moving forward quite well altogether.**

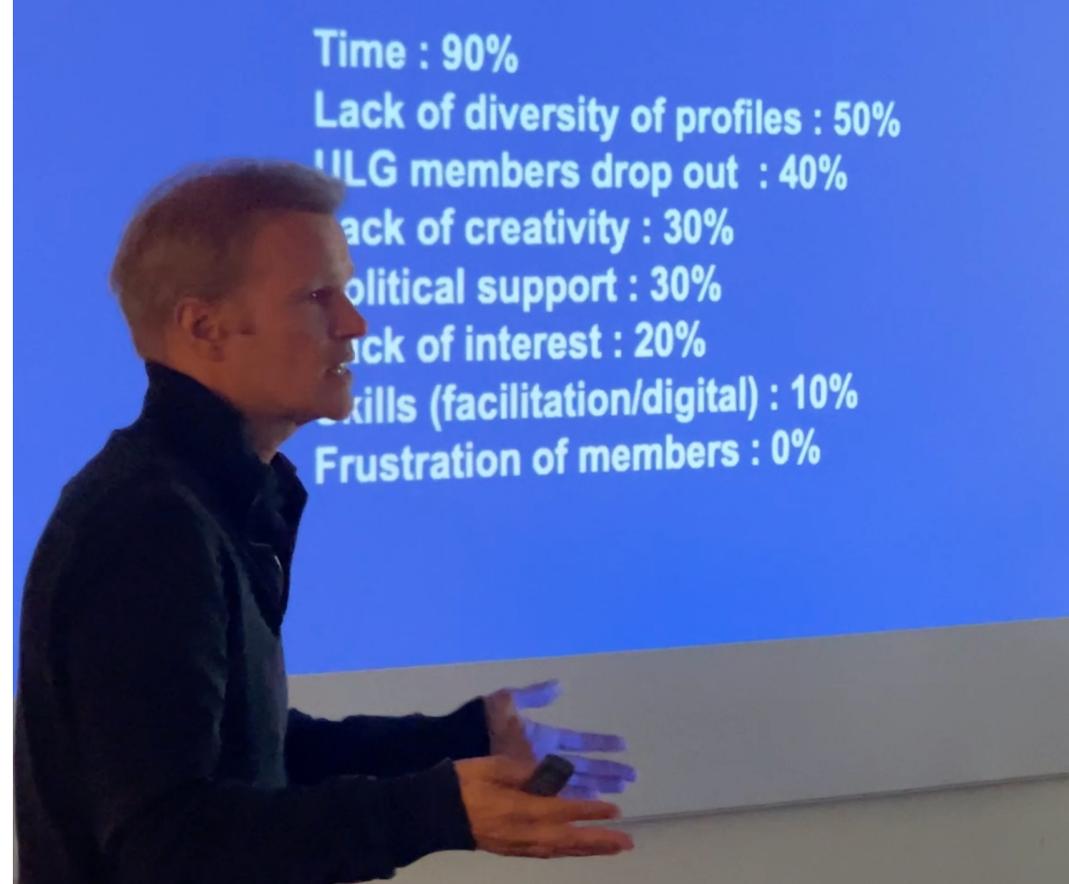
Not only they all demonstrate a strong commitment but they seem 'to do their best'. Indeed, the few ones that are lagging a bit behind in terms of level of advancements, are doing so not because of a lack of investment and dedication but rather because of staff issues. Indeed, some partners rely on external local experts for which contracts

renewal, mission letters, etc. are not necessarily as smooth as planned (delays in approval, extension, etc.) and/or experience change or instability in terms of 'staff in charge' of the project (due to internal staff change, responsibility switch, etc.).

Yet, **despite a couple of staff challenges (which are not particularly exceptional or rare), all cities are moving forward with the action planning process and delivering what is expected from them.** This is confirmed by the second question of the survey:

LOOKING AT YOUR INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN, WHICH STATEMENT IS MOST ACCURATE AT THIS STAGE?

8 cities stated they were progressing as expected. 1 city indicated moving faster than planned and 1 partner city indicated moving slower than expected (lagging behind). Again, this seemed rather consistent with the LE and LP's observations.



Sharing feelings about the URBACT journey at midterm



Sharing feelings about the URBACT journey at midterm

HOW ABOUT TESTING ACTIONS?

All partners showed interest in carrying out testing actions. 6 of them indicated that testing actions will be very useful for the Integrated Action Plan, 3 of them indicated that they'll be rather useful and 1 did not answer.

In practice, in December 2024, in our Romanian Transnational Meeting (in the city of Roman), all 10 cities presented to the others their plan about Testing Actions. This confirms that all cities, even though there is uncertainty regarding the outputs of the testing actions, have great interest in running some. Indeed, no city is planning to avoid testing actions. As a partner stated 'ULG members are looking forward to it'.

Indeed, Testing Actions are often a great opportunity to consolidate the ULG members' engagement and mobilization. With testing actions, things become also concrete, real, operational. Action planning can sometimes be perceived by ULG members as something rather 'intellectual' and a bit 'abstract' as they work for 2-3 years to design a plan for the future, thanks to Testing Actions, their work becomes more real,

more tangible.

If you wish to know which ideas cities want to test out, please refer to the Testing Action chapter of this report.

HOW IS YOUR ULG DOING?

'We had some loss but also newcomers', 'We have an average of 15 people. The persons that participate are not always the same' commented partners. Participation fluctuates within ULGs. It is a well known phenomenon in URBACT that ULGs fluctuate throughout the duration of the network. It is ok as long as the missing participants are being replaced and as long as the ULG keeps on meeting and advancing all together.

An action planning process is a rather long process and it can be quite demanding for ULG members in terms of engagement and availability. 'It is not easy to motivate them and keep them in the project' comments an other city partner. Also, **'not all ULG members are equally engaged, even though most of them are quite interested in the outcome of the project'** comments an other.

'They are really involved in this project because most of them are part of the social service team, they know how to deal with people in risk of isolation.' Indeed, the profiles of ULG members are usually very eclectic and this diversity is what makes ULG valuable, but it also means that the motivation of participants may vary from one person to another. It's not the same thing if you are a professional working directly on social isolation or an NGO or else working indirectly on the topic. Motivations may vary and it's normal.

The main objective is to ensure diverse perspectives and points of view to enrich the action planning process. And the lack of diversity, despite the efforts, is something that regularly pops up when talking about the challenges of the ULGs. Indeed, 5 cities out of 10 point out the lack of diversity of profiles (too many professionals from the social sector for example). This lack of diversity might, in part, explain the feeling of lack of creativity within the group. Several partners highlighted that the group, despite the ideation tools that we developed, still lack of creativity. This is mostly due to the fact the group gathers too

many professionals who tend to have difficulties imagining new ways of thinking, new perspectives that differ completely from what they are used to.

Also, time appears as a key issue. The biggest one even, cited by 9 partners out of 10. Finding the right meeting moment is a struggle. Afternoon? Lunch time? Evening? All the time slots have advantages and disadvantages. In the evening, it favors the participation of citizens who work during the day. In the afternoon or morning, it favors the participation of professionals and civil servants... **There is no perfect choice and partners all experiment and try to adapt time slots but also the duration of the ULG sessions as well as their frequency and format (outdoor meeting, in informal places, etc.)**

But despite challenges, partners also highlight strong positive outcomes: 'Joint effort in finding new solutions to overcome the problem of social isolation', 'The communication, interaction, discussions, the ability of the ULG coordinator' or 'All Activities are well done, the objectives of the meetings are fully achieved'.



ULG meeting, Pombal, Portugal



TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE NETWORK ALLOW YOU TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE ON ISOLATION?

Partners rated their knowledge gain on isolation to 3.9/5. This score varies from one city to another and depends very much on whether or not the city was already working on the topic of isolation prior to the network. 'We understand the complexity of the problem better' comments a city. 'We explore new ways to fight isolation' comments another. Also, 'we learnt not only from the Lead Expert and the Lead Partner, but also from the other cities-partners and from ULG members'. For some partners, isolation shed a new light on their city: 'even if it is my hometown, now I see it with different eyes' explained a partner city coordinator.

Also, all the network-level activities were all rated in accordance to their usefulness:

- Exchanging with cities in the network: 80% extremely useful
- Study visits: 70% extremely useful (and 30% very useful)

extremely useful (and 10% very useful)

- Knowledge from the Lead Expert (100% extremely useful)

- Exchange with other URBACT networks (40% very useful, 20% somewhat and 30% not applicable).

Partners highlight the ,network's value: 'it's always very rich to exchange with new people' and 'we are very grateful for the colorful network' commented partners.

TO WHAT EXTENT DID PROGRAMME LEVEL ACTIVITIES WERE USEFUL SO FAR?

Partners also highlighted the value of the programme-level activities, in particular the guidelines of the Secretariat, the URBACT toolbox and the National URBACT point. 'We are in good connection with other URBACT network partners though the National Urbact Point' explained a partner. The online meetings at Programme Level are very useful' pointed out another.

ULG meeting, Skofja Loka, Slovenia

LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST RISKS TO COMPLETING AND DELIVERING YOUR IAP ?

Regarding the challenges of the future delivery of the IAP, partners highlighted that the lack of political support and the lack of resources/funds for implementation were the two biggest challenges. Regarding the completion of the IAP itself, missing stakeholders and project timescales appeared to be the main concerns. The lack of capacity of implementation was also cited but in a minor concern. Political change is always, within URBACT, a speculative yet real risk. Indeed, some of our cities have elections during the life of the network: 'we have a new mayor and new city council and unfortunately we haven't got any information about their political plans yet' explained Fot, in Hungary (had elections in October 2024). Others will also have the elections just before or right after the end of the life of our network putting a lot of uncertainty on the IAP's future implementation. This is, however, a well-known challenge within URBACT APN, this is also why involving as much as possible elected officials along the network is crucial.

REGARDING NEXT STEPS, WHAT WOULD BE THE MOST USEFUL?

Identifying relevant funding sources for the IAP and assessing how operational the IAP is to get it ready for implementation is perceived as the most useful steps to plan forward.

However, writing successful applications to bid for funds, getting your IAP reviewed by a peer,

designing sound and robust funding strategies for the IAP, setting-up an efficient monitoring & evaluation framework, refining risks related to implementation and aligning specific objectives and results indicators all appear crucial steps also to be considered as the network will advance towards its IAP implementation.

As usual, finding funds to support the implementation of the IAP is the most common worry, and this might be even more true as all the cities of Breaking Isolation are small and medium sized cities, which means, both in terms of staff and financial support lower capacities in comparison to big cities.

FINALLY, WHAT ABOUT COMMUNICATION?

Well, here we can observe rather good practices of communication at local level, meaning at partner city level. Indeed, all cities publish regular posts about the project on their city's social media accounts, but also on the city's official website. Several of them also regularly manage to get newspaper article that talks about the project, in particular at the occasion of transnational meetings.

When it comes to network level communication, we could definitely do better. Indeed, the LinkedIn page of Breaking Isolation is not enough fed with regular posts. This has been identified as something to be improved in the coming weeks and months and a dedicated session of writing articles with all partners is planned to be organized in our next Transnational meeting in Bijelo Polje, Montenegro, in February.



GRUPO LOCAL URBACT AVALIA IDEIAS NO ÂMBITO DO PROJETO BREAKING ISOLATION

Home > Ação Social > Breaking Isolation > Grupo

Local Urbact avalia ideias no âmbito do projeto

Communication actions, Pombal, Portugal



Urbact IV en phase d'expérimentation pour lutter contre l'isolement à Agen

ABONNÉS

Communication actions, Agen, France



Le groupe agenais en pleine séance de travail en cette mi-janvier. / Photo - R. B.



Société, Agen

La première réunion 2025 du groupe agenais, chef de file du réseau « breaking isolation » du projet Urbact IV, a permis de définir les actions à expérimenter, dès ce printemps, pour lutter contre l'isolement.

Mardi 21 janvier s'est tenue la première réunion de l'année du groupe agenais dans le cadre du projet Urbact IV. Pour rappel, Agen est chef de file d'un des 30 réseaux représentant autant de grands enjeux urbains. Celui piloté par Agen vise à résoudre la problématique de l'isolement, toutes générations confondues, et rassemble une dizaine d'agglomérations européennes.

Des idées aux actions

Après une série de réunions locales tenues en 2024 et du dernier meeting transnational qui s'est déroulé début décembre à Roman (Roumanie), près de 80 idées avaient été recensées. Le projet Urbact, qui mutualise les expériences entre plus de 150 villes européennes, vise à déboucher sur une multitude de solutions afin de réduire le nombre de personnes affectées par le fléau de l'isolement.



Communication actions, Serres, Greece

ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΟΣ Παρατηρητής
ΠΡΟΔΕΛΤΙΚΗ ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ ΤΟΥ ΝΟΜΟΥ ΣΕΡΡΩΝ

Πέμπτη 18 Απριλίου 2024 serresparatitisi.gr karatitisi@gmail.com @Paratitisi Serres Αρ. φύλλου 10744 Έτος: 38^η 1^η ημ. φύλλο 0.30

“BREAKING ISOLATION” Δήμος Σερρών: «Σπάζοντας την Απομόνωση»

Στις Σέρρες η 4^η Διακρατική Συνάντηση

19^ο ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟ ΣΕΡΡΩΝ:
Επικίνδυνη η αίσθηση πληροφορίας στο σχολείο

ΠΑΣΟΚ:
Υποψήφιος ευρωβουλευτής ΝΔ ξηλώνει τη «μεταρρύθμιση» Γεωργιάδη για τα απογευματινά χειρουργεία

ΤΡΑΓΩΔΙΑ ΣΤΙΣ ΣΕΡΡΕΣ:
Νεκρός 24χρονος μετά από ανατροπή μηχανής

Κάτοικοςτών 90 ξεκίνησε να μαθαίνει γαλλικά

Οι Σερραίοι μαθητές του Ειδικού Σχολείου στη συναυλία της Ελ. Ζουγανέλη στη Μονή Λαζαριστών

Υπεγράφη σύμβαση 6 εκατ. για έργα στο αρδευτικό δίκτυο Νιγρίτας

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Agen, αφορά στην άρση της κοινωνικής απομόνωσης, η οποία πήρε μεγαλύτερες διαστάσεις κατά τη διάρκεια της πανδημίας, επενδύοντας στην κοινωνική ένταξη και ενθάρρυνση των κοινωνικά υπεύθυνων στάσεων των πολιτών.

Στο πλαίσιο της Διακρατικής Συνάντησης, που τοποθετείται χρονικά ένα χρόνο μετά την επαρκή συνάντηση του δικτύου στην πόλη Agen της Γαλλίας, οι εκπρόσωποι των πόλεων που συμμετέχουν στο πρόγραμμα Breaking Isolation, ενημερώθηκαν για τις τοπικές πρακτικές και της προσπάθειες της πόλης των Βρυξελλών να Σπάσει

MENU

SO, AT MIDTERM, WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE?

Half way through our URBACT action-planning journey we can say that the network is generally speaking doing pretty well. All partners are engaged and committed. It is important to point out that the partners turnout to every Transnational Meeting is very high despite the fact that we meet on a very regular basis, at the rate of every 2-3 months. This can be very demanding for partners but at the same time we are convinced, Lead Partner and Lead Expert together, that in-person Transnational meetings are a key to the collective success of our network. Not only it allows every city to showcase what they do and what they struggle with but it is also the occasion for all the others partners to see, with their own eyes, the reality of each others' contexts.

Besides the exchange of experience, TNMs are also precious and enjoyable team-building moments. Indeed, informal and convivial breaks in between working sessions, combined with site visits or even shared meals are all incredibly effective occasions for trust

building, exchange of points of view, of ideas, etc.

The continuous active participation to all TNMs are good demonstrators of the commitment of our partner cities within the network. Also, despite some delays for a few partners as explained previously, all cities are delivering what they are asked to and are using the tools that the Lead Expert is proposing them to use with their ULGs.

We also have, depending from one city to another, a rather good political engagement. Indeed, we regularly have, during TNMs, political representatives coming over, which is key to maximize the future success and implementation of the Integrated Action Plans. However, in some cities, the political backup is more discreet or uncertain and is something to work on (especially in the cases of some cities with new elections and political change).

Generally speaking, the network is doing quite well and the coming up Testing Actions will be an exciting next step for us all.



ULG meeting, Pombal, Portugal

TRANSNATIONAL MEETING IN BRUSSELS: A SPECIAL EDITION

A EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

How come did the Breaking Isolation network end up organizing a transnational meeting in a city that is not part of the network? Together, the Lead Partner and Lead Expert, agreed on the fact that organizing a TNM in Brussels (Belgium) would be interesting for the network. First, because it would give to all partners a European dimension to our network, second, because it would be the occasion to see what a much bigger city can do and offer when it comes to breaking isolation. Indeed, the network is composed

only of small and medium sized cities, so their action is also done in accordance with their limited capacities, both in terms of finance but also staff and infrastructure.

The TNM in Brussels was therefore the occasion of discovering good practices from the City of Brussels on one side and the EU institutions on the other including the EU Parliament and the EU Commission. The TNM in Brussels was also the occasion for the network to meet with our URBACT network officer, Nora Kebel.



Discovering The Maison de Quartier (Neighbourhood House) – Ville de Bruxelles

The Maisons de Quartier (Neighborhood Centers) offer residents of the City of Brussels a multi-purpose, local reception area where they can exchange ideas and forge links through activities, workshops, visits and social projects.

Their mission is to provide general care for families and individuals of all ages and backgrounds who may find themselves in difficult

situations and in need of community intervention.

The work of the Maisons de Quartier involves individual, collective and community social action. In this context, the association participates in the development of the concept of the social emancipation of people in general, one means of which, in particular, is to break the isolation of people and combat loneliness in urban areas.





Discovering the European Parliament and its missions



Discovering the European Parliament and its missions



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Discovering the European Parliament and its missions



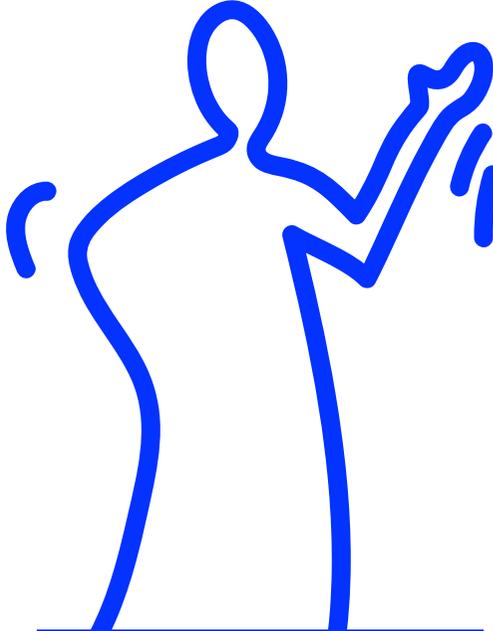


Discovering inspiring practices from the City of Brussels such as the 'Museum on prescription' programme in which patients are sent to museum as part of their health medication (for mental well being)

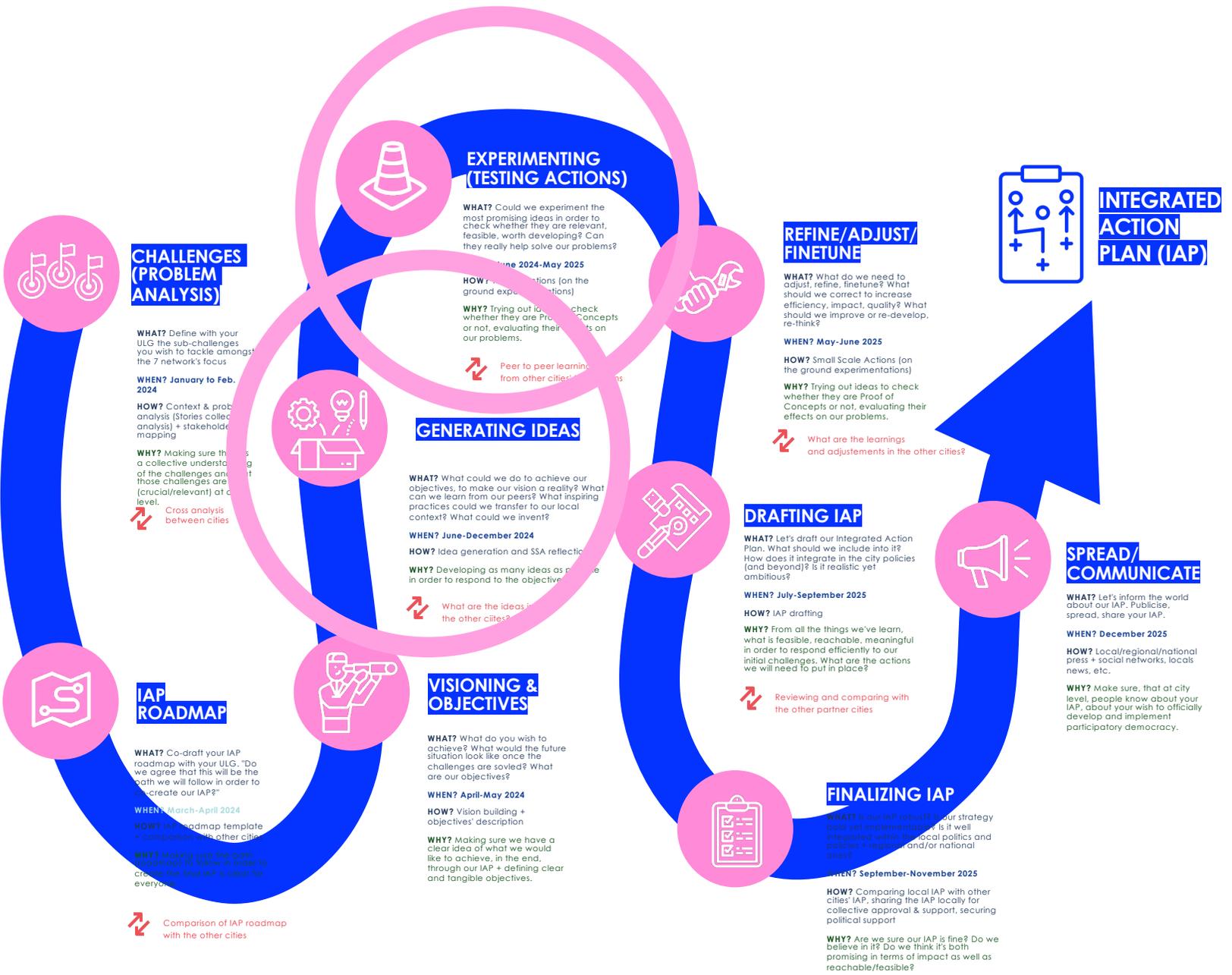


Discovering the EU Commission and its missions





ACTION PLAN ROADMAP





TESTING ACTIONS

FINDING IDEAS & TESTING ACTIONS

The second semester of the year 2024 has been dedicated to pursuing the generation of ideas and the testing of actions. Indeed, those 2 sequence are, in the roadmap, critical for the success and quality of an action-planning process. A good process of generation of ideas is key if we wish to come up with innovative and original ways of responding to our given challenges. The more we invest in creative problem-solving, the more we ensure to go beyond classic, readymade, simplistic ideas. And it is well known that 'for any complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong'. The network has therefore be invited by both Lead Expert and Lead Partner to invest time and resource in this critical creative phase.

All cities therefore multiplied iterations, either with their ULG, meaning hosting 2 or 3 ULG meetings to this ideation phase, or by conducting parallel activities with extra stakeholders

(beyond ULG only). It's the case of the City of Agen (France), for example, where Nicolas Castet repeated the ideation tools with a group of young people, an elderly one and finally elected officials of the City Council.

What is difficult is not to find ideas, but to find good ones. This is why partners of the network were invited, in the transnational meeting held in Roman (Romania) to share their ideas with the others, so as to ensure peer-to-peer exchange and mutual inspiration. It is also interesting to note that several partners found ideas from the inspiring practices collected in the Baseline study during study visits in each city.

Finally, if ideation matters, experimentation also does. At least for all the ideas and concepts which are unusual enough to deserve a proof of concept before being considered for future implementation.

Testing Actions is therefore also considered a critical phase for partners who wish to go beyond conventional action ideas.

By testing actions, cities can test out the validity, relevance,, pertinence and added-value of an action idea. It is also a very efficient tool to motivate the troops (troops = ULG members).

Indeed, an action planning process can sometimes be perceived as a rather intellectual and slightly abstract process, whereas testing actions becomes real, concrete, tangible.

The Testing Actions are subject to change but here are the ideas that our 10 cities wish to test out:

POMBAL, PORTUGAL

1. **Bringing spaces to life** – Living streets as a way to stimulate social encounter and neighbourhood-based social life
2. **Technical home support team**

SERRES, GREECE

1. **Neighbourhood social events** – bringing people together and out of their homes through music, art, etc.
2. Designing a platform to enable better **coordination of social actors** but also **making help-finding easier for citizens**
2. **Elderly and kids sharing** skills and problems

ISERNIA, ITALY

1. Questionnaire - **Isolated people identification**
2. **City nature walk**
3. **Social pop-up events**
4. Workshop - **skill building workshop** like art, cooking, technology, or mental health/ social isolation awareness
5. **Community tea** or aperitif session
6. **Urban Gardening event** (social gardens)
7. **Book or film club night**
8. **Intergenerational event** : pair younger & older people
9. **Skill-swap event** : skill marketplace style event (ie. lacework)
10. **Creative competition** : launch a (art) contest inviting people to express themselves and connect through creativity -> parcours d'artistes / museum at home
11. **Play area for families**
12. CROS : plan like well-being ronda - **solidarity taxi**

FOT, HUNGARY

1. Using the **World Day for Elderly people to highlight the issue of isolation**
2. Using the Christmas market to highlight the issue of isolation
3. Setting up a **Breaking Isolation café** within the public library
4. Roots – **Using gardening as a social leverage** – partnering with gardening NGO
5. **Shared piano on the local market** – using music as a way to bring people

together

6. Knock on the next door - setting up and facilitating a process of **meeting your neighbours**

SKOFJA LOKA, SLOVENIA

1. GARAZA – Setting up a **public tool library** – an open space with tools to be used by everyone (and in particular bring together isolated men) – space for repairs and exchange of experience
2. Srečevalnica 2.0 – expanding a **day care center for elderly**
3. **Cultural events together** – free tickets for elderly/people with mobility issues to cultural events/visits
4. **Social workers on bikes** – mobile social workers would visit isolated people
5. **Anti-bullying** and digital awareness workshops

ROMAN, ROMANIA

1. Online & offline workshops: **skill sharing and discussion** (art, cooking, education)
2. Translating the Breaking Isolation songs in Romanian for **group singing**
3. Online and/or offline courses : **manage emotions and anxiety** caused by isolation with psychologists and nurses
4. **Virtual book clubs** : reading days forming groups to read & discuss books to encourage socialization
5. **Q&A sessions with experts** : increasing skills and knowledge on social isolation
6. **Community volunteer projects**

AGEN, FRANCE

1. Application for **reporting isolated people**
2. Organize **delocalized coffee meetings** led by health professionals
3. Free **student accomodation in sernior residence** for services
4. Create **citizen teams to offer personalized support**
5. **Helping people at home** to do small jobs
6. **Electric solidarity transport** : car to transport people isolated by pensioneers
7. **Set up video workshops** for people with distant family
8. **Create a self-test** to diagnose your level of isolation

TONDER, DANEMARK

1. **Social minister in all clubs** and voluntary organizations (social watch - a person in charge of identifying those who might be isolated)
2. **Companion friends** to tag along -> buddy
3. Activity platform, easy access to **information for existing activities**
4. **People college - themed around topics:** for example families of people with dementia

JUMILLA, SPAIN

1. **Isolation diagnosis:** How do you feel? How long it's been since you talked with your friend/cousin? When was the last time you laughed a lot ?
2. **Table cloth:** meeting point for conversation - piggy bank -> offer & request sheet (Name+phone)

BIJELO POLJE, MONTENEGRO

1. **Mutual visits between primary and secondary school students and elderly people** in schools and the Day Care Center for the Elderly in Bijelo Polje, socializing, social games, exchange of life experiences
2. Roma days- **Meetings with the isolated Roma population** with the others in the suburban settlements of the municipality of Bijelo Polje with the aim of overcoming the isolation of the Roma population in Montenegro.
3. **Expand the network of the Telecare virtual service**, which will include all organizations at the local level that provide social services, expand the base of identified socially isolated persons and network them all so that they can communicate with each other



TESTING ACTIONS PREP. PACK

What is it?

The Testing Actions Preparation Pack is composed of 3 tools, testing action idea sheets, testing action proposal sheets (which shall include a description of the experimentation, what, why, how, etc.) + a sketch of the testing action, and finally a self-assessment tool to review the proposals in order to identify the most promising ones.

Why to use it?

This pack is meant to help structure the Testing Action work with ULGs. It helps them move from an idea, to an experimentation concept to a more structured review of possible experimentations.

How to use it?

1. Find as many ideas as possible on the testing action idea sheets, then select the best ones and develop them in the testing action proposal, finally use the self-assessment tool to review all the proposals.

TESTING ACTION IDEA

TESTING ACTION IDEA

TESTING ACTION IDEA

TESTING ACTION PROPOSAL
Try to find two different ways to experiment a similar idea.

Describe your experimentation in a few lines
(what would you do? How long? Where? With whom?)

Describe your experimentation in a few lines
(what would you do? How long? Where? With whom?)

Sketch your experimentation

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Review the idea with regard to each of the 7 criteria. Discuss it and check the corresponding box.

	Yes, clearly!	So, so!	No, Not really.
1. At first glance, the idea provokes enthusiasm.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The idea seems promising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The idea responds to real needs of the city	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Stakeholders could be attracted by the proposal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The idea is user-centered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The idea has a chance of having high impact.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The idea is reasonable in terms of resources.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TOTAL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

BREAKING ISOLATION

Materials

At the top, missions cards, in the center a sheet for concepts picking (using the dice), on the bottom right, a cheat list for inspiration.



CAPITALIZATION TEMPLATE

What is it?

The Capitalization on Testing Actions template is a tool meant to ensure the archiving and documenting of each testing action made by cities. It is a simple 2 slides powerpoint template meant to tell what was the experimentation about, what it tried to reach/prove, what effects it produced (what was achieved), some key testimonials/verbatimims from participants then illustrative pictures.

Why use it?

The capitalization template is good to keep a short, light and quick memory of the testing actions of each city but also to create a catalogue of all testing actions at network level.

How to use it?

Answer the 4 questions in a concise and precise way and add pictures that best represent the testing action.

CITY NAME : XXX
TESTING ACTION N°2

TITLE/NAME OF YOUR TESTING ACTION :
Network challenge:
Describe your experimentation in a few lines (what did you do?)
Type your description here (5-8 lines)

Expected outcomes/results – what did you try to achieve? What were your initial objectives/hopes? What did you try to 'prove' through your testing action?
Type your description here (5-8 lines)

Add pictures here

CITY NAME : XXX
TESTING ACTION N°2

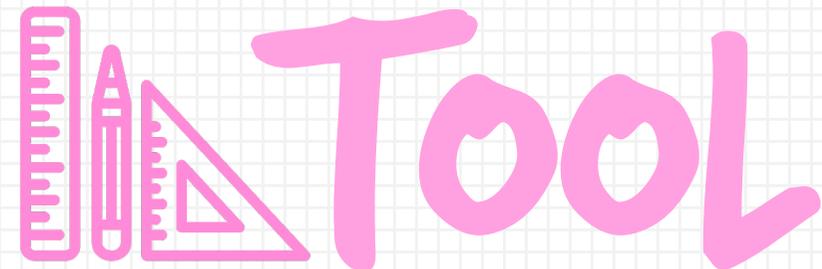
What were the effects produced by your Testing Action? What came out of the Testing Action? What did we learn from it?
Type your description here (5-8 lines)

Integrate here some verbatimims/quotes from people who took part to the Testing Action
Add 3-5 meaningful quotes

Add pictures here

Materials

Powerpoint slides to capitalize on each testing action in a light and easy way.



SONG BOOK



WRITING SONGS TO TALK ABOUT ISOLATION AND THE NETWORK

Telling stories through music. Christophe Gouache, URBACT lead expert of the Breaking Isolation network, has written the lyrics of 3 original songs then used AI for composition to spread the word about the Breaking Isolation network and its issue. Through the lyrics, he is telling us about the multiple factors and causes of social isolation, from the death of a loved one, break up, to domestic violence, addictions, and so on. The songs also tell us that isolation is not age-specific, nor religious-specific, etc. and that it may happen to anyone, your own parent, your neighbour or even yourself.

Besides raising awareness and knowledge about isolation, the songs are a call for action to end, reduce and prevent social isolation everywhere.

Of course, using AI was also part of an experiment for the network with new technologies and how they could be of use to spread knowledge and raise awareness...



LISTEN TO OUR BREAKING ISOLATION SONGS



It's high time we care again!



A call to break isolation



Together & care

TOGETHER AND CARE

(Verse 1)

7 o'clock, in Agen, France,
the police breaks the door,
she's laying down on the floor,
the doctor say she must have died 2
years ago.

9 o'clock, in Isernia, Italy,
the postman rings the bell
almost like breaking a spell,
the man's last visit must have been 3
months ago.

11 o'clock, in Bijelo Polje, Montenegro,
two children and single,
no extra time to mingle,
he left her with nothing about 4 years
ago.

12 o'clock, in Fot, Hungary
plays alone in the street,
each day feeling bittersweet,
not even one friend yet moved in 9
months ago.

(chorus)

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire**

**We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care
We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care**

(verse 2)

2 o'clock, in Serres, Greece,
she's shaking all over,
got beaten like life's over,
regretting to have married him 3 years
ago.

4 o'clock, in Tønder, Denmark,
he wakes up in distress,
feeling each day like a mess,
always together, lost his wife a year
ago,

6 o'clock, in Skofja Loká, Slovenia,
she looks at the window,
never out, she's in limbo,
distant, got PTSD 3 years ago.

(chorus)

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire**

**We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care
We must unite to break isolation
We must come together and care**

(verse 3)

8 o'clock, in Roman, Romania,
Daily Harassed in school,
he walks head down, that isn't cool,
Pushed and mocked, it all started a few
months ago.

10 o'clock, in Jumilla, Spain,
going out she might, but
to move her legs it's a fight,
got into a bad accident, 2 years ago.

Midnight, in Pombal, Portugal
coming home finally,
drunken inexorably,
never stopped since she left, that was
9 months ago.

(Chorus)

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire
Isolation is a social straitjacket
a social straitjacket**

**Isolation is not a choice
Isolation is not a retreat
Isolation is no one's desire
Isolation is a social straitjacket
a social straitjacket**

A CALL TO BREAK ISOLATION

(Verse 1)

Woke up this morning, the sun was up,
I felt no joy, no wish to get up,
Some say, my life is social blackout
Some say, more often I should go out

No phone call, no chat in the hallway
No true friend, no one to share
pathway
I'm not ok, but tell that I am
Feeling alone, dont tell that I am

Listen to the whisper in the air,
A call to reach out for mutual care,
In Jumilla and in Isernia,
To the mountains of Skofja Loka,

(Chorus)

It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
Its a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope

It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
Its a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope

(Verse 2)

The whisper is now getting louder
An unstoppable call in Tønder
It is now a chorus of voices
Singing together in all places

The call for breaking isolation
Echoes in Fot like an ovation
In Seres, or in Bijelo Polje,
Human connections are just toll-free

(Chorus)

It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
Its a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope

It's a call to break isolation
It's a call sent all around Europe
Its a call to break isolation
It's a call sent to re-new hope

(Verse 3)

No one should ever be left aside
Yet more and more folks are put aside
Opening up their arms in Roman
Relations are what makes us human

With the warmth of love and
tenderness
In Pombal or Agen, face to face
We break the walls of isolation
we need everyone to take action

(End)

We are Europe, we are URBACT
We are cities, we are citizens, we are
elected officials, we are civil servants,
we are here
Together to create change so that no
one
Is ever abandoned and left with no
connection

IT'S HIGH TIME WE CARE AGAIN

(Verse 1)

She's sixty seven and he's twenty three,
He's not even twelve, she just turned
eighty,
No one to talk to, no one to turn to,
Isolation? Freaking universal!

He's a catholic, she's an orthodox,
A buddhist, a muslim, an atheist,
Inside, he knows no one should be
alone,
But even she, believes they always will.

She is retired, he just dropped out of
school
He's Black, she is white, hetero, gay,
trans,
She lost her position, he lost his wife,
She ran out of money, he does
gambling.

(Chorus)

Breaking breaking isolation,
Breaking breaking isolation,
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again

(Verse 2)

He's your discreet neighbour, she's a
cousin,
He has been your friend, she's an ex
colleague,
once they might have been all former
school mates,
now, strangers avoiding one another.

We don't know he's here, or pretend
not to,
He lives in an apartment in Pombal,
She's stuck inside with a chronic disease
She lives in a house in Isernia,

No one hears, but her heart cries every

night,

She lives in a nursing home in Agen,
a bit each day, He drinks his life away,
He lives in a homestead in Jumilla.

(Chorus)

Breaking breaking isolation,
Breaking breaking isolation,
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again

(Verse 3)

Every single day she wakes up sorrow,
She lives in a remote farmhouse in Fot,
He spends his life on social media,
He lives in a flat in Skofja Loka.

She's never been taught how to behave
right,
She lives in social housing in Serres,
Weirdo or crazy are the names he's
given,
He lives in a flat in Bijelo Polje.

Beaten by her proper-looking husband,
she lives in a nice cottage in Tønder,
He got rejected like an old tissue,
He lives in a studio in Roman,

(Chorus)

Breaking breaking isolation,
Breaking breaking isolation,
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again
It's high time we re-connect
It's high time we care again

(End)

No family no more, no friends no more,
No relations, only deep emptiness,
A feeling of distress and nothingness,
Isolation? Freaking universal!



This report highlights and summarizes the different stages, progress and tools used during the third and fourth quarter of the Breaking Isolation URBACT network for the year 2024.

Published in January 2025
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