QUARTERLY REPORT #4

February 2025

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Virtual solutions
for real people
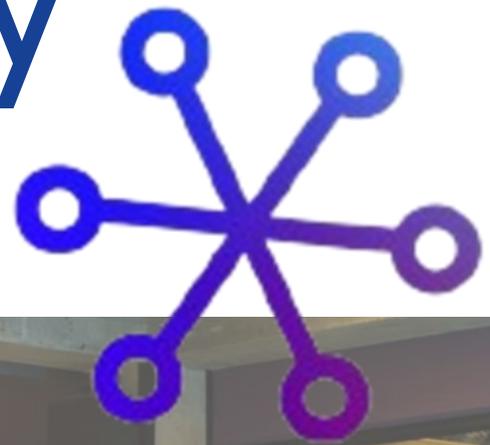
VIRTUAL SOLUTIONS FOR REAL PEOPLE

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METACITY

2-nd Masterclass Under MetaCity project
Digital Transformation of Education in the Municipality of Razlog, Bulgaria.
Use of AI and IT tools for education.

01

2ND MASTERCLASS LED BY RAZLOG + MTR

METACITY partners fly virtually to Razlog to see the future of tech-assisted education in the network 2nd Masterclass

The fourth quarter of 2024, and of the Planning Stage of the METACITY network, started with a glimpse of the future and a reflection on the (recent) past for the city partners, all in the same day.

On the 17 October, the city of Razlog in Bulgaria organized the network 2nd Masterclass on the topic of "Digital Transformation of Education". The theme of education has been a priority in Razlog agenda since several areas and the topic has been highlighted as a benchmark for the network during the activation stage. The municipality effort for a responsible use of technology within the schools under its management – including in particular its 11 secondary schools – has already been a good practice in a previous URBACT project, and this event was designed to showcase where the city stands in terms of digital education, including the integration of robotics, educational simulators, programming and other innovative technologies. The Masterclass, which was attended by all network partners and also some of its stakeholders concerned with education, was presented from the newly established Digital Lab for Livestream and Virtual Reality at 'Brothers Kanazirevi' High School, which was developed as a Testing Action within the METACITY network. It included a live broadcast from the lab, different classrooms and partners locations, together with pre-recorded films from two other schools in Razlog and live classes from local experts, creating an immersive and comprehensive learning experience.

1. 2ND MASTERCLASS LED BY RAZLOG + MTR

In the afternoon of the same day, the partners assembled once again in the same virtual space, but this time to reflect on the achievements and challenges of the network so far, and especially since the start of the planning stage at the start of the year.

Counting with the participation of the URBACT Secretariat, this was also an opportunity to look at the path ahead in order to prepare a successful entry into the preparing implementation stage, which will happen at the start of 2025.

The results of the MTR reflection have been prepared by the Lead Expert and shared with all partners.

The 2nd MetaCity Masterclass was an inspiring look at how Razlog's schools are embracing digital transformation.

From coding clubs to AI discussions, this event was all about giving students the tools they need to thrive in a tech-driven world!

02
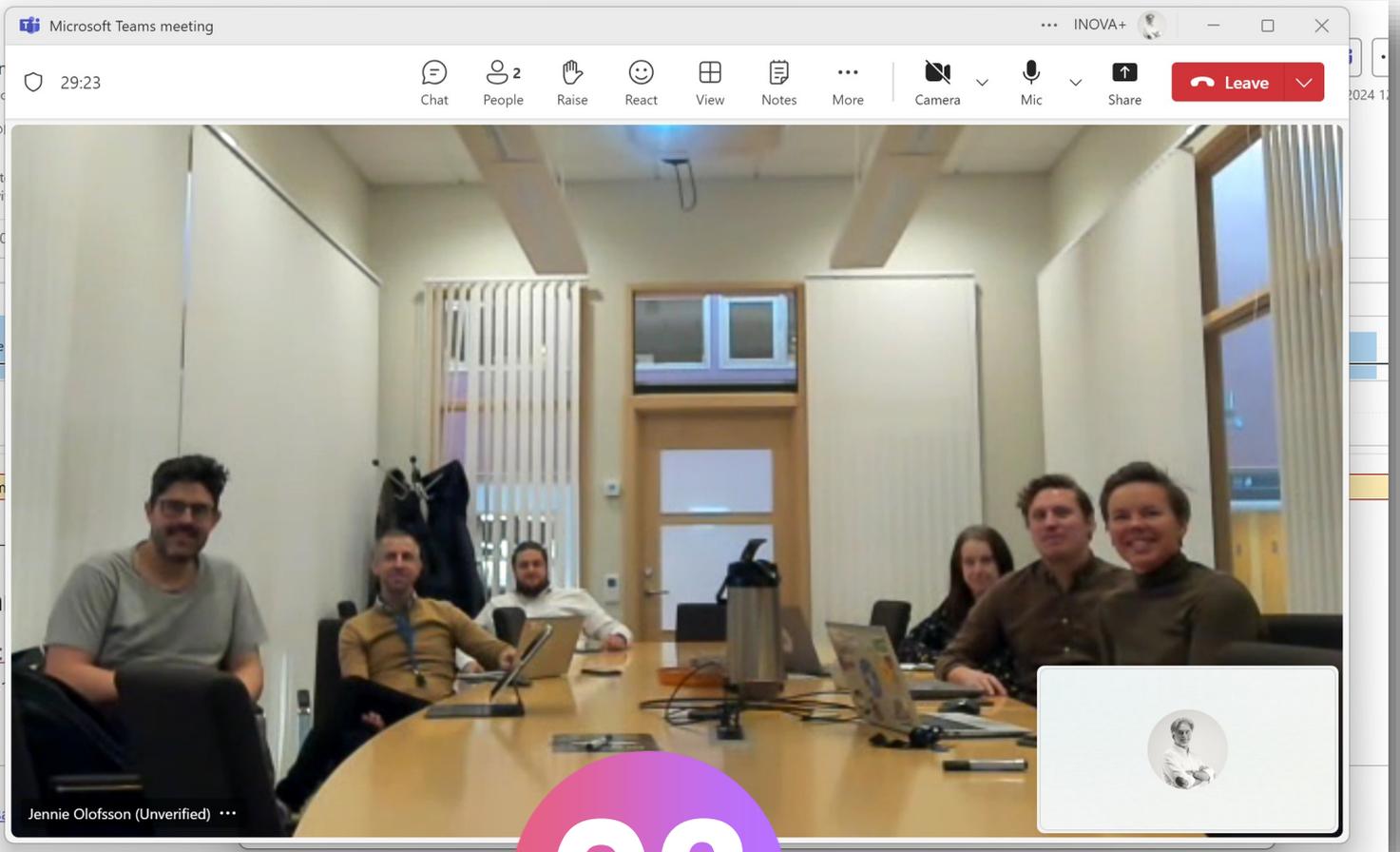
LEAD EXPERT'S VIRTUAL TOUR

A meta-virtual tour of Europe for the Lead Expert to follow up stakeholders in action

A major highlight of this period has been the intense work carried out by all partners with their local stakeholders, in particular within the URBACT Local support Groups (ULG), for the co-design of testing actions and first ideas for the future Integrated Action Plans. As the IAPs start to take shape, in preparation for their first peer review at the next Core Network Meeting end of march in Härnösand, in Sweden, so the local active participation and engagement of interested groups and individuals in the network activities and in the planning of future actions becomes more important, as a central element of the URBACT method.

To follow-up this crucial work and support cities in their engagement of local stakeholders, the Lead Expert has performed a virtual tour of Europe in this period and attended, in a remote way, ULG meetings in no less than 6 cities, this after already attending a similar meeting in Újbuda, Hungary back in May. Starting in Mostar, end of October, the Lead Expert then "travelled" to Razlog, Härnösand and then Písek in November, before concluding in Nykarleby in Finland and Arta in Greece in December, the two cities being supported respectively by the network partners Åbo Akademy and ISI Patras as knowledge centres. These participations allowed to present the URBACT methods and objectives and answer any questions that stakeholders could have, contributing to further involve them in the co-creation of new actions and to the development of more participated Action Plans.

More visits will now follow in early 2025 to the rest of the partners!
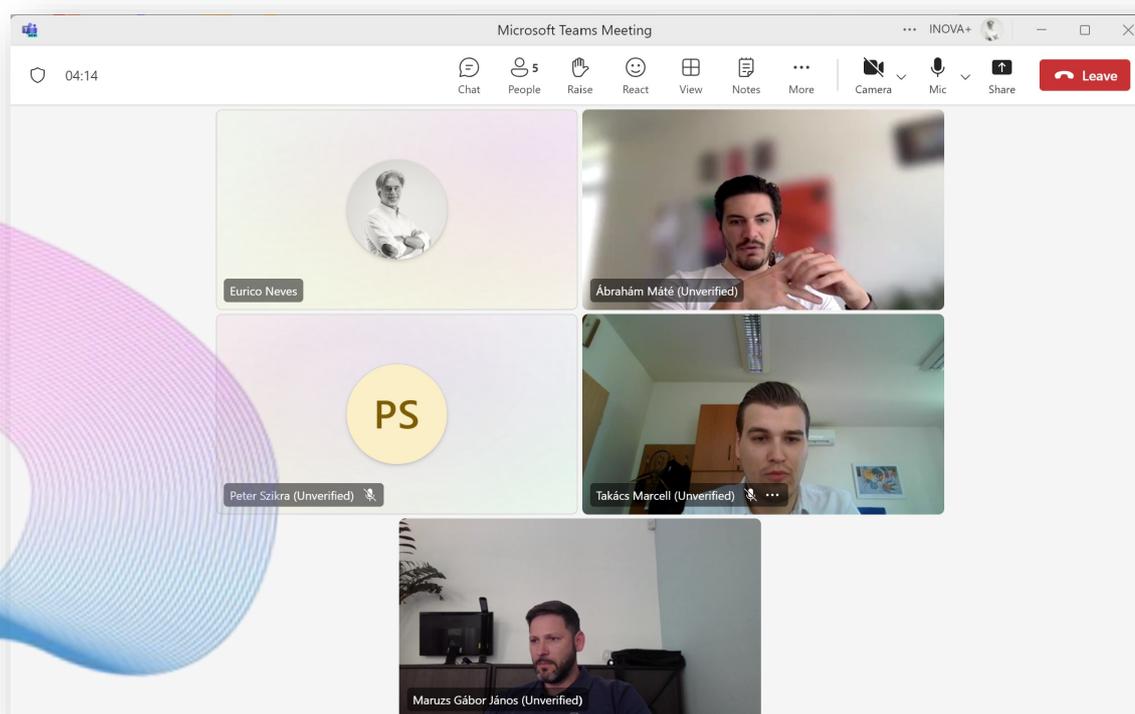
03

NEXT STOP
4TH CNM IN HÄRNÖSAND

What's Next? Heading North to Härnösand for the Next Core Network Meeting!

As winter sets in, METACITY is leaving sunny Italy behind and heading north for its next Core Network Meeting (CNM), taking place from 19 to 21 March 2025 in **Härnösand, Sweden.** This gathering promises to be an exciting milestone in our journey, bringing together project partners to exchange insights, assess progress, and take a deep dive into digital urban transformation.

A City at the Forefront of Digital Innovation

Härnösand, located in northern Sweden, is renowned for its forward-thinking approach to digitalisation and urban planning. A key highlight of the meeting will be the chance to experience the city's **Digital Twin**, a cutting-edge tool already being used to enhance urban development strategies. Additionally, we will explore the **new Virtual Centre lab at the public library,** an ambitious initiative aimed at making the Metaverse accessible to all city inhabitants. These experiences will undoubtedly serve as valuable inspiration as METACITY continues to refine its approach to digital urban ecosystems.
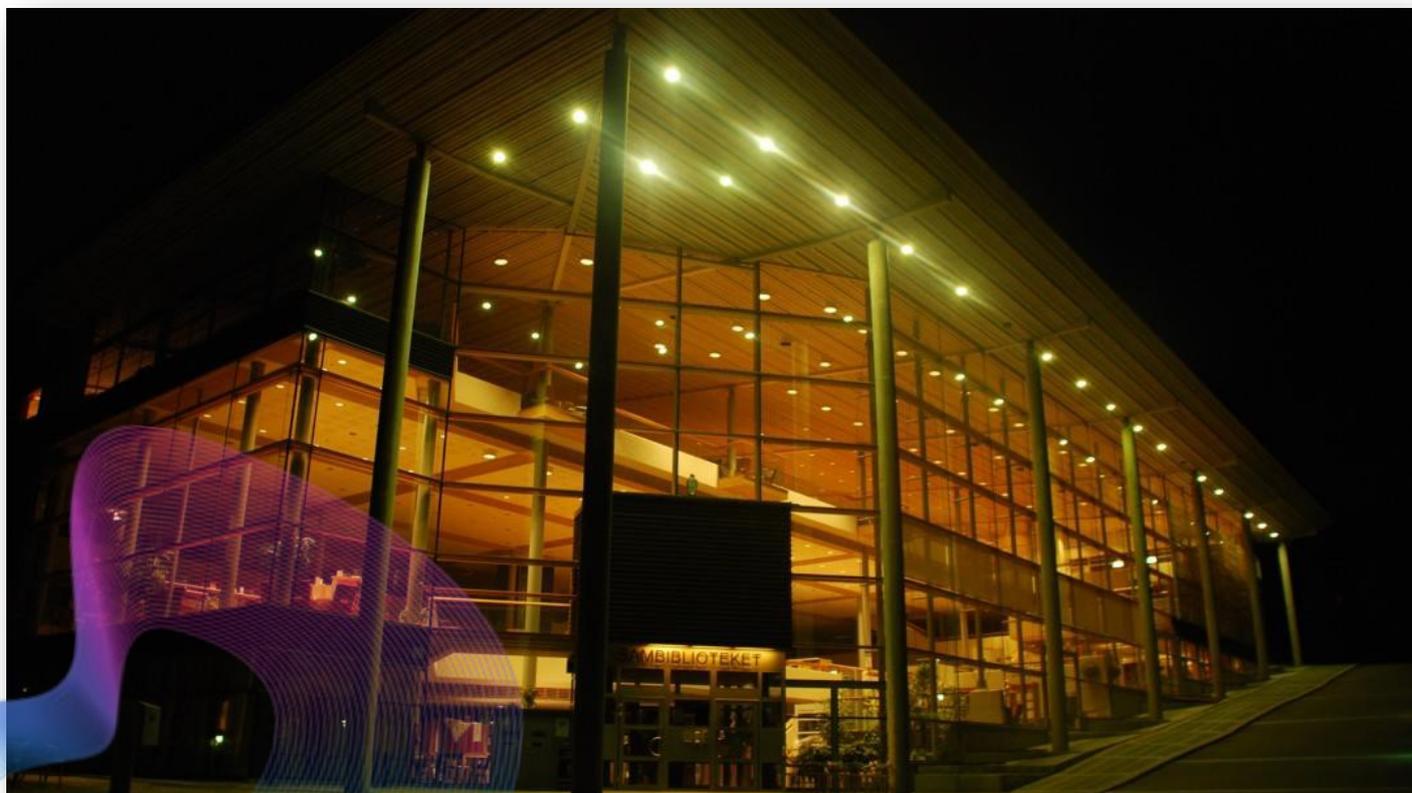
Draft IAPs: The First Peer Review

This **4th CNM** marks a crucial moment in the development of our **Integrated Action Plans (IAPs)**. Partners will engage in the **first Peer Review session**, where draft versions of the IAPs will be presented and analysed in greater depth. This collaborative exchange will provide an opportunity to **fine-tune strategies, gather feedback, and align actions** for the next project phase. With the support of **Lead Expert Eurico Neves and Ad-Hoc Expert Mª João Rauch**, the review session will help ensure that each city's plan reflects the best insights and methodologies gathered throughout the project.

Engagement, Learning, and Networking

Beyond structured discussions, the meeting will include several engaging activities, offering a mix of cultural exploration and hands-on digital experiences. On **Day 1**, after the **official welcome by the Mayor**, participants will gain first-hand insights into how Härnösand is using digital tools to foster citizen participation and governance. This will be followed by a **city tour, a visit to an art gallery, and an interactive experience at the VR studio of the Technichus Science Centre**, showcasing the latest advancements in immersive technology.

On **Day 2**, the focus will shift to **interactive workshops** on integrating IAPs effectively, discussions on administrative and communication issues, and preparations for the **5th Core Network Meeting**. The meeting will conclude with reflections from the **Mid-Term Review**, setting the stage for the next phase of the project.

A Glimpse Into the Future

With its blend of digital innovation and community-driven engagement, **Härnösand will provide the perfect setting for shaping the next steps of METACITY**. The insights gained from the city's approach to digital urbanism will feed directly into the project's broader mission—ensuring that the Metaverse and digital tools serve as inclusive and effective mechanisms for urban planning.

As we get ready for this exciting gathering, we look forward to seeing all partners in **Härnösand**—where technology, culture, and collaboration will pave the way for the future of METACITY!

More to follow on this on our next Quarterly Network Report, so stay tuned!

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