



MANTOVA  
CITTÀ D'ARTE E DI CULTURA



# INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN MANTOVA



URBACT



Co-funded by  
the European Union  
Interreg

This report was prepared by the **European Projects and Fundraising Office of the Municipality of Mantova**. In particular, the following contributors were involved in its drafting: Caterina Salvo, Emanuele Salmin, Michela Mauriello and Maria Giulia Longhini.

# Greetings from the Municipality

*This Integrated Action Plan represents a project of great relevance and strong contemporary significance for the Municipality of Mantova.*

*Over the past years, **the municipal administration has invested considerable effort in creating the conditions for a city that is increasingly attractive, inclusive, and welcoming**, capable of responding to social, economic, and urban challenges with a long-term and integrated vision. Many important results have already been achieved thanks to this commitment. At the same time, we are fully aware that much remains to be done. Urban transformation is an ongoing process that requires constant reflection, learning, and collaboration.*

*In this context, the **Residents of the Future** project has provided a valuable framework for reflection and action, supporting the city in addressing current challenges while keeping a strong focus on the needs and expectations of present and future residents. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the opportunity offered by this project to work within a European network understanding, experimentation, and shared learning. **The exchange and dialogue promoted within the URBACT programme are particularly precious.** Comparing experiences, sharing practices, and engaging with other European cities represent fundamental resources for improving local policies and strengthening our capacity to respond effectively to future challenges.*

*With this **Integrated Action Plan**, Mantova reaffirms its willingness to continue along this path with determination, openness, and a strong European perspective.*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adriana Nepote', with a vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Adriana Nepote

*Councillor for University, Research and Innovation, and Coordination of the European Projects and Fundraising Office*

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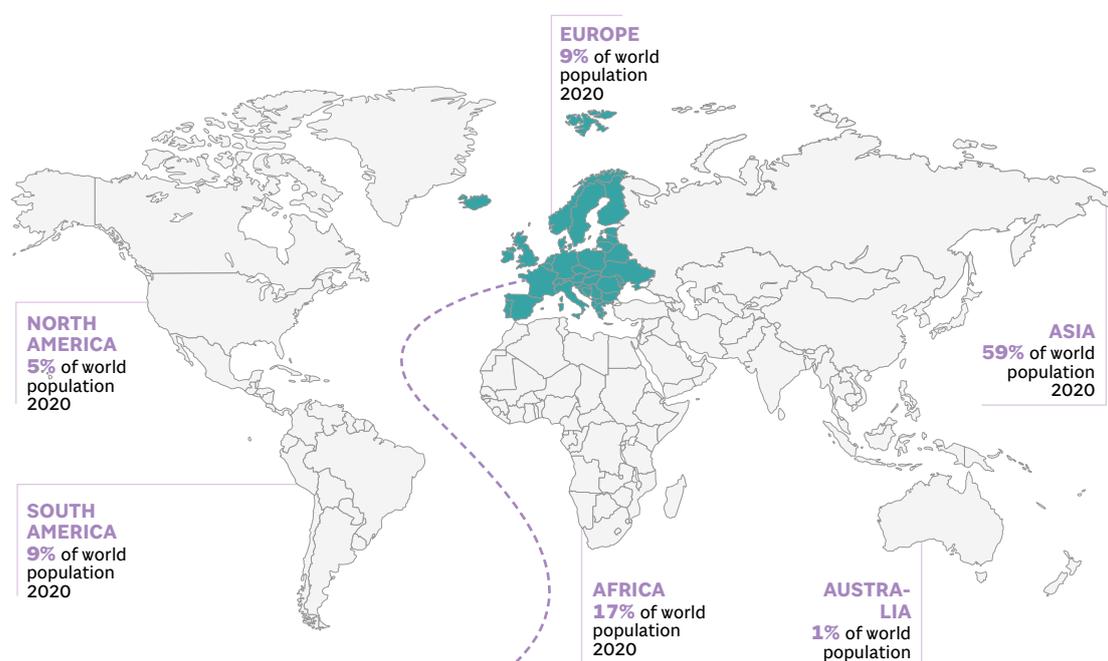
# IS URBAN SHRINKAGE REALLY AN ISSUE FOR US?

## HOW DEMOGRAPHY WILL IMPACT OUR FUTURE

**SHRINKING CITIES** refers to urban areas experiencing a substantial **DEPOPULATION TREND**, often accompanied by social, economic, climate and infrastructural challenges.

Although the world's population is increasing, Europe has been experiencing unfavorable demographics trends for the last decade.

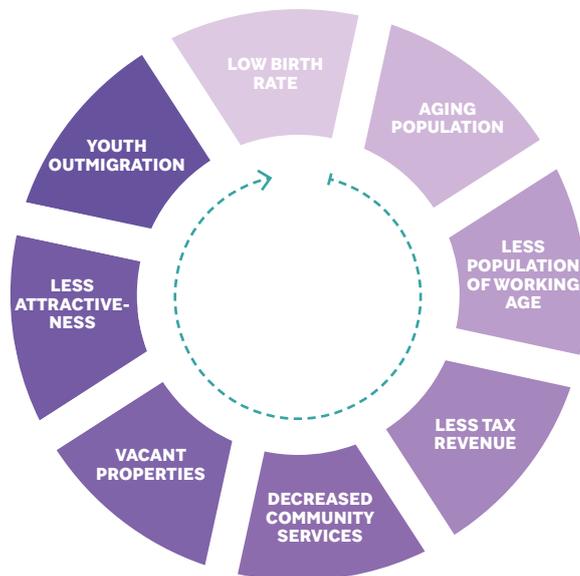
Shrinking cities have become a **EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL CHALLENGE**.



### FOCUS ON EUROPE

- **1.46 live births** per woman in the EU in 2022
- **Women** in the EU are becoming mothers later in life > In 2022, women in the EU who gave birth to their first child in 2022 were on average aged 29.7 years
- In 2019, the median age of the EU-27 population was **43.7 years**
- **The very old** (people aged 85 years or more) is growing at a faster pace than any other age group. Between 2019 and 2050, the number of very old people in the EU-27 is projected to more than double, up 113.9 %. To give some idea of the magnitude of this change, the number of people aged 85 years or more is projected to increase from 12.5 million in 2019 to 26.8 million by 2050, while the number of centenarians (people aged 100 years or more) is projected to grow from 96 600 in 2019 to close to half a million (484 000) by 2050. In 2019, there were more than twice as many very old women in the EU-27 as very old men, a ratio of 2.09 : 1.
- **Population aged 20-64** in the EU 27 counts 259.2 million people in 2022. Among them 205.7 million people are employed.

## SHRINKING IN SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES



**Shrinking is a complex process** that affects multiple dimensions.

Depopulation appears as a **vicious circle**. Some of the aspects that intervene as causes are:

- housing costs are becoming too expensive;
- lack of career opportunities;
- average salary lower than national one.

## LET'S FACE THOSE CHALLENGES TOGETHER!



The **URBACT program** enables the cooperation and idea exchange amongst cities within thematic networks, by building the skills of local stakeholders in the design and implementation of integrated and participatory policies, and by sharing knowledge and good city practices.

**RESIDENTS OF THE FUTURE NETWORK** includes the city of Plasecia (Spain), Mangualde (Portugal), Saint Quentin (France), Iisalmi (Finland), Saldus (Latvia), Alba Iulia (Romania), Trebinjie (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sibenik (Croatia) and Mantova

# **Section 1** City Context & Challenges

# 1.1 Who Lives in Mantova? A Look at the City's Population

**Mantova** is located in the far southeastern part of the Lombardy region, in northern Italy, and has been a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 2008 as an outstanding example of the Renaissance period.

The historic city center is surrounded by **three artificial lakes**, formed by wide bends of the Mincio River, while the suburbs and industrial areas have developed on the opposite bank. The richness of Mantova's historical and cultural heritage stands in stark contrast to its more recent **industrial past**, marked by the presence of major facilities, sites that are now undergoing redevelopment and environmental rehabilitation.



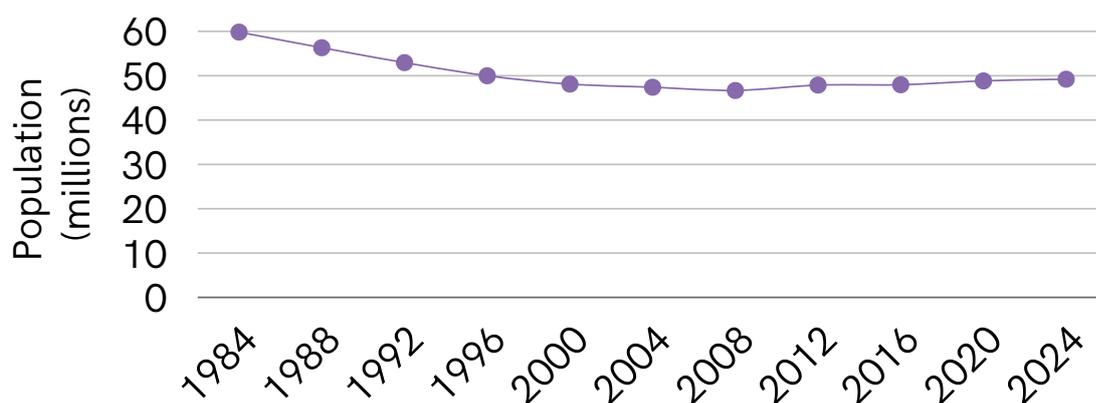
**Mantova has seen a steady decline in its resident population, particularly since the early 1980s.**

The reasons behind this phenomenon lie in a number of interconnected factors, which we will attempt to explore in the SWOT analysis. Here, we provide a brief overview:

- **Deindustrialization:** the closure or downsizing of major industrial facilities - including a petrochemical plant, a paper mill, and an oil refinery - resulted in significant job losses. This triggered an outmigration of residents, particularly younger workers and families, in search of better employment opportunities elsewhere.
- **Urban sprawl:** many former residents have relocated to surrounding municipalities where housing is more affordable and public services more accessible. This has led to a gradual depopulation of the city center and a dispersal of the population throughout the metropolitan area.
- **Environmental image:** the long-standing presence of heavy industry, combined with Mantova's location in the Po Valley - one of the most polluted areas in Europe - has negatively impacted the city's environmental reputation, potentially discouraging new residents and investors.

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

As the Graph 1 shows, till the first decade of 2000 the resident population in Mantova constantly decreased, losing **over 13.000 inhabitants over the last 20 years**, corresponding to -18,8% off the average population of the period, while both at regional and national level the population have increased, as Graph 2 emphasises.



GRAPH 1 • Resident population in Mantova from 1984 to 2024

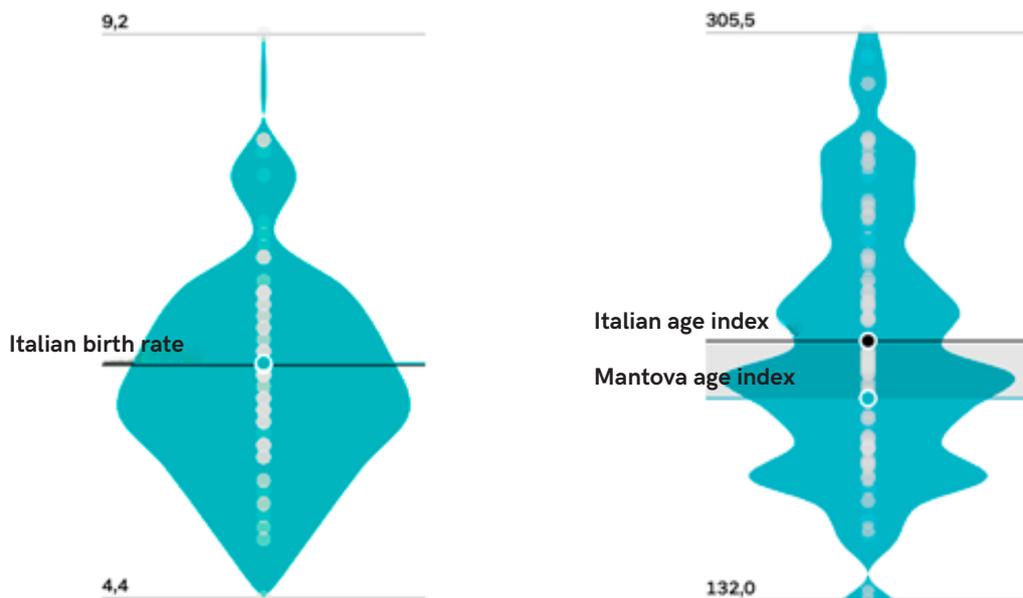
Data from ISTAT - Italian Institute of Statistics, elaboration made by the authors

YEAR	MANTOVA CITY	LOMBARDY REGION	ITALY
<b>2024</b>	49.218	10.020.528	58.989.749
<b>2020</b>	48.835	10.027.602	59.641.488
<b>2016</b>	47.968	9.958.447	60.163.712
<b>2012</b>	47.892	9.811.011	60.105.185
<b>2008</b>	46.677	9.517.477	59.001.769
<b>2004</b>	47.406	9.173.501	57.611.990
<b>2000</b>	48.112	8.971.154	56.923.524
<b>1996</b>	49.996	8.881.351	56.844.197
<b>1992</b>	52.961	8.860.344	56.772.923
<b>1988</b>	56.322	8.818.278	56.609.375
<b>1984</b>	59.844	8.852.500	56.565.117

GRAPH 2 • Resident population in Mantova, Lombardy region and Italy, between 1984 and 2024

Data from ISTAT - Italian Institute of Statistics, elaboration made by the authors

Mantova has one of the **oldest populations in Lombardy**, with more than 26% of residents aged 65 or older. The old-age index in Mantova is lower than the national average with 193,8 elderly people every 1000 inhabitants compared to 211,4 at the Italian level. This demographic trend contributes to a natural population decline, as the number of deaths consistently exceeds the number of births. Over the past two decades, the **city's birth rate has fallen sharply**. The number of births per 1000 inhabitants dropped from 9,5 in 2004 to just 6,1 in 2024 — a decrease of nearly 36%. The birth rate in Mantova reflects the national average of 6,4 live births per 1000 inhabitants.



**GRAPH 3 • Birth rate and old age index in Mantova compared to national level**  
*Data from Data from 24Lab*



**“The City of Mantova for the first time after 30 years finally exceeded the 50 thousands inhabitants”**

After three decades, Mantova has surpassed the 50,000-resident mark, a significant milestone highlighting the city's renewed appeal, particularly among younger demographics. The under-36 age group constitutes the largest segment of new residents, indicating a trend of young individuals and families choosing Mantova as their home. This population growth is attributed to the city's strategic initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining young people, including housing incentives and employment opportunities.

*Source: Gazzetta di Mantova, “Mantova returns above 50,000 inhabitants: among the new residents, those under 36 are the largest group” (21 December 2024).*

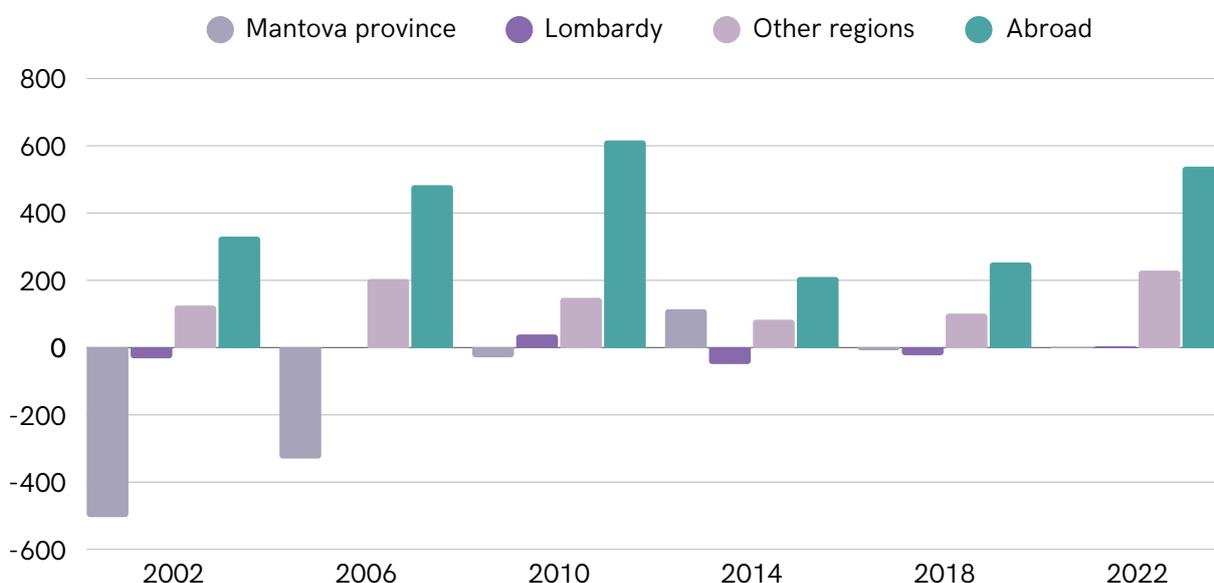
**Forecasts to 2080** predict that central and southern Italy will be decisively depopulated. Part of these migrations will be internal, and the north will remain stable in terms of number of residents, despite the fact that the national population will decrease by 50,000 by 2050 and fall exponentially to 2.6 million by 2080.

## MOBILITY AND MIQRATION TO AND FROM MANTOVA

**Net migration** refers to the difference between the number of people entering a country or region (immigrants) and the number leaving it (emigrants) over a specific period of time. A positive net migration indicates more people are arriving than leaving, while a negative net migration means more people are leaving than arriving.

Graph 4 shows **registrations and cancellations from the city of Mantova**, highlighting changes of residence from and to other municipalities in the province of Mantova, municipalities in other provinces in Lombardy, other Italian regions and abroad.

Is interesting to note that **in the period 2002-2010 the main outflow of population from the city of Mantova** was directed to neighbour cities/villages **within the province**. While the emigration was decreasing, immigration from foreign countries increased, reaching its peak around 2010.



**GRAPH 4- NET MIGRATION IN MANTOVA FROM 2002 TO 2022**

*Data from ISTAT - Italian Institute of Statistics, elaboration made by the authors*

What is not immediately apparent from the net migration figure is the number of people who left Mantova for abroad, as immigration outweighed emigration during the period. However, for the purposes of our analysis, it is important to consider this data as well. At the city level, figures are available for the years 2019 to 2021, showing a **gradual increase in the number of residents who moved abroad: 286 in 2019, 380 in 2020, and 426 in 2021**.

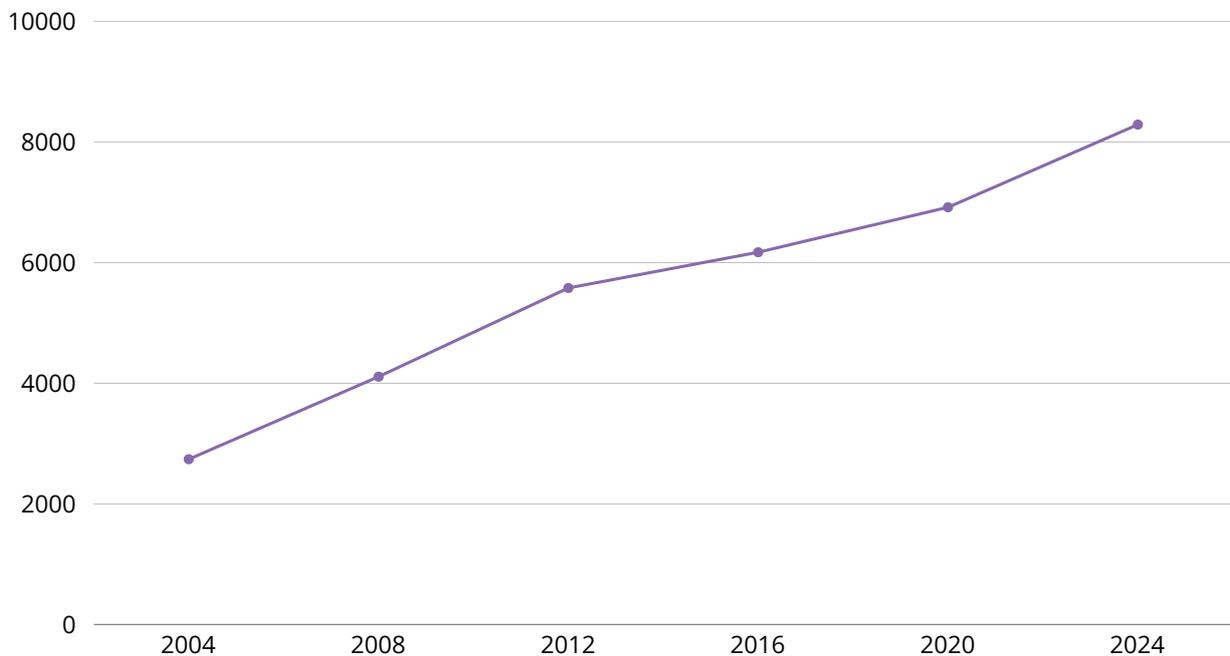
These numbers echo the provincial-level analyses, which identify the province of Mantova as the leading area in Italy for **brain drain**. **The number of residents registered in the AIRE** (Register of Italians Residing Abroad) increasing from 28.734 in January 2019 to 40.325 in January 2023, a **40,3% rise**. This trend, which began before the COVID-19 pandemic, indicates that nearly one in ten Mantovans has moved abroad.



*The province of Mantova within Lombardy*

According to 24Lab, **Mantova ranks 5th among Italian cities in number of non-Italian residents**. In twenty years, the number of foreign residents, as shown in Graph 5, has risen from 2.740 (2004) to 8.289 (2024): an **increase of 202,5%**!

Foreign citizens in Mantova account for **13% of the population**, a third more than the national average of 8,1%.



**GRAPH 5 - FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN MANTOVA FROM 2004 TO 2024**

*Data from ISTAT - Italian Institute of Statistics, elaboration made by the authors*

According to 2024 data, the most represented nationalities, in order, are **Morocco, Brazil, Romania, Ukraine, Tunisia, Albania, and China** (each with over 400 residents).



As for **mobility within the Mantova metropolitan area and the city itself**, data show that the urban area experiences approximately 210.000 one-way trips per day, including 108.000 internal, 73.000 incoming, and only 27.000 outgoing trips. Focusing on the municipality of Mantova alone, there are 52.000 internal trips, 94.000 incoming, and 19.000 outgoing. The **higher number of incoming compared to outgoing trips** indicates that Mantova functions as a central point within its metropolitan area, with a net inflow of daily commuters. This pattern underscores the city's role as a key destination for daily activities, highlighting the importance of efficient transportation infrastructure to accommodate the substantial movement of people.

## RESIDENZA V.S DOMICILIO: DIFFERENT SHADES OF BEING A CITIZEN

In theory, each person should reside in the country where they habitually live, typically defined as staying there for at least 183 days per year. However, **the EU lacks a harmonized definition of residence, and registration practices vary across Member States.** According to an EU Task Force, it is not possible to have legal residence in two Member States simultaneously. Residence should be registered in the country where the person habitually stays or where their main source of income is located. For example, in Germany, residents must register their main residence (Hauptwohnsitz), and a secondary residence (Nebenwohnsitz) is only permitted if the person is already registered elsewhere in Germany. In Austria, individuals can choose to register either a main or a secondary residence.

In contrast, Italian law distinguishes between "*residenza*" - the habitual place of living, where is located the private life (family for instance) - and "*domicilio*" - the center of personal or economic interests, namely work. Italy does not allow for dual residence; one can have only one official residence and one domicile. In the municipality of residence, individuals choose their general practitioner, vote, complete procedures related to marriage, and request official registry certificates. Having legal residence is also essential for obtaining an identity card - the main form of identification in Italy - which is issued by the municipality where the person resides. Additionally, transferring residence abroad for more than 12 months requires registration with AIRE, which automatically cancels the registration from the domestic civil registry (APR), making dual residence legally impossible. This applies to students as well, who are not exempt from these rules.

In an era characterized by hyper-mobility and multi-locality, individuals frequently relocate for study, work, or personal experiences, often without a predetermined duration of stay. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among younger generations, who may reside in one country for six months doing an Erasmus exchange, move to another for a couple of years to follow a Master course, and so on, without a fixed plan. Such fluid living arrangements **challenge traditional notions of residence and necessitate new methods of tracking actual habitation patterns.**

The rise of digital nomadism exemplifies this trend. In Italy, the introduction of the **Digital Nomad Visa in 2024** has attracted remote workers from outside the EU, facilitating their stay for extended periods.

In response to these evolving mobility patterns, **traditional residence registration systems are proving inadequate.** Institutions like ISTAT - Italian Institute of Statistics are exploring alternative data sources, such as mobile phone connectivity, utility consumption, and Wi-Fi usage, to better understand actual presence in territories. These indicators, often held by private companies, offer a more accurate reflection of habitation than conventional registration methods.

Recognising these shifts, there is a growing call to rethink residence registration systems. Adapting to the realities of hyper-mobility and multi-locality is essential for informed urban development and public policy formulation.

# 1.2 SWOT analysis

**Mantova** is a place of great historical and cultural attractiveness, a **true example of the Italian lifestyle...**

## STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Mantova is recognised as a place of culture, heritage and gastronomy. The city was the **Italian Capital of Culture in 2016** and of **Gastronomy in 2017**, and it has been hosting every year since 1997 a very renowned event around literatures and books, called "Festivaletteratura". The **UNESCO** site covers the great majority of the city center and its core is pedestrian, making the perfect location for experiencing the "**Italian lifestyle**", walking through cafes and typical tavern where to try the famous pumpkin tortelli, hidden gardens and well preserved palaces and churches. The cultural offer is extremely rich, and different exhibitions take place in the city all over the year, having their main venues in Palazzo Te and Palazzo Ducale, the two best preserved and iconic examples of the Renaissance period linked to the Gonzaga family.

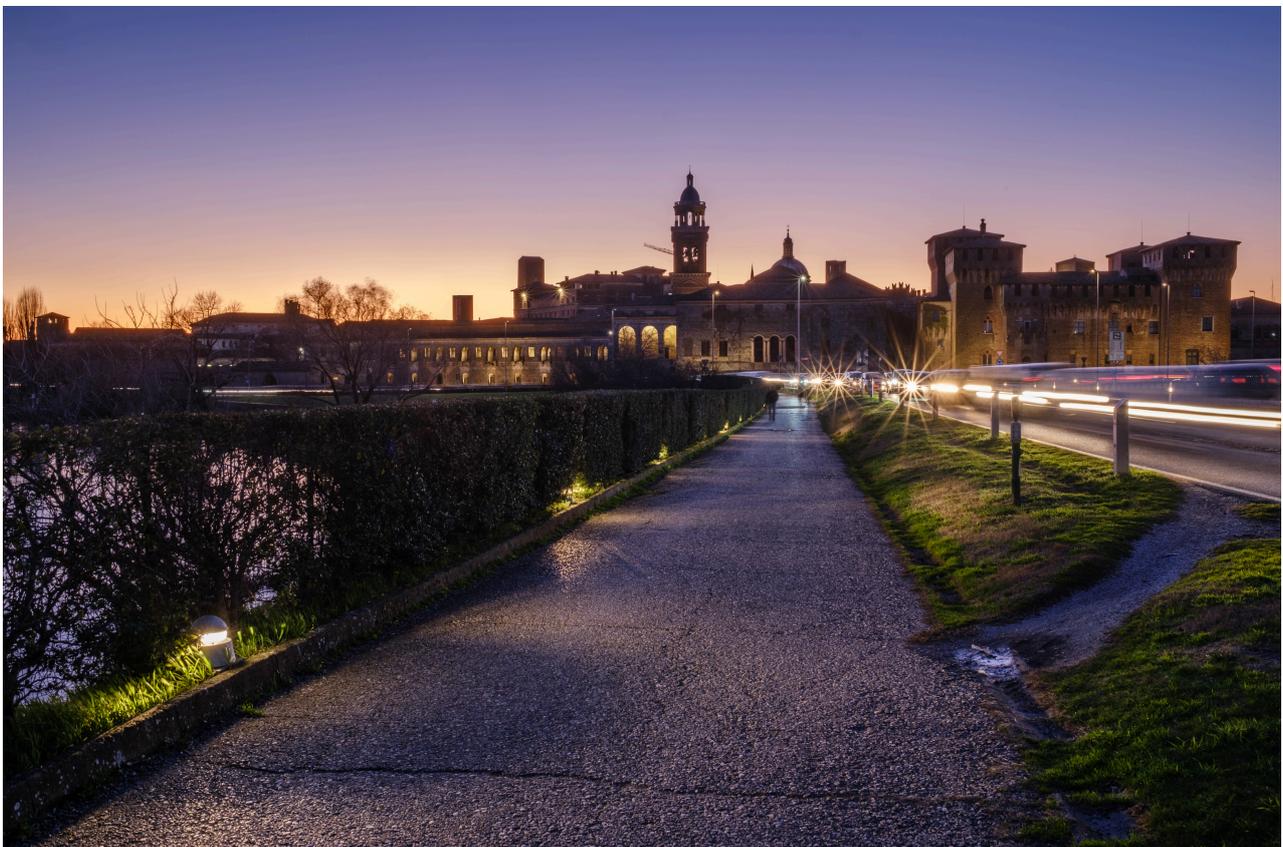


Photo Credits - Unsplash

Despite being in the middle of the Po Valley, one of Europe's most polluted sites, **in 2023 Mantova** gained the silver medal in the ranking of **best urban ecosystems** according to Legambiente and Ambiente Italia. Considering 19 parameters that capture environmental performances in five macro- areas (air, water, waste, mobility and environment), Mantova is second only to the mountainous city of Trento. Some interesting data are: there are 95 trees and 40,5 meters of cycle paths every 100 inhabitants, 14,9% of water dispersal in the system and 84,4% of the waste produced is recycled.



The surrounded area is historically devoted to agriculture and farming, with many **local products** considers **excellences** worldwide, just to name few, parmesan cheese, salami, wine, rice, melon and pumpkin. Mantova occupies a strategic position being almost at the center of the northern part of Italy: Verona is less than 50 km away, Bergamo around 80km, and Milano and Bologna around 150km. This strategic location undoubtedly represents a significant opportunity to shift the current mobility trend which, as previously noted, sees Mantova functioning more as an attractive hub for its surrounding metropolitan area rather than as a place of residence and commuting toward nearby medium-to-large cities.



Photo Credits - Unsplash

In 2023, the **province of Mantova** recorded approximately **684.000 overnight stays**, marking a steady recovery and growth in tourism following the pandemic. The main international markets were Germany (27,96% of foreign arrivals), followed by France (9,6%), Switzerland-Liechtenstein (6,46%), the Netherlands (4,94%), and Austria (4,91%). Tourist flows showed a clear seasonal pattern, with **peak periods in spring and summer**. April saw the highest monthly number of arrivals with 36.055 visitors, while July, August, and September recorded the highest overall presence, in line with summer trends in nearby Lake Garda area.

Most tourists preferred hotel accommodations: 61,15% of Italians and 53,29% of foreigners chose hotels. An additional 29,88% stayed in complementary facilities, while 11,28% opted for private non-commercial lodgings like B&Bs and vacation homes.

**The average length of stay in Mantova in 2023 was 2,13 days per visit**, with foreigners staying longer (2,69 days) than Italian tourists (1,89 days). On a provincial level, the average was 1,76 days, with the highest figures recorded in the Upper Mantova area, where international visitors stayed for an average of 3,95 days, probably due to the attractiveness of Garda Lake.



*Photo Credits - Unsplash*

Around **2000 students** arrived in Mantova **every year**. The city has several **universities delegations**, among which the Polytechnic of Milan which has an UNESCO chair dedicated to Architectural Design and History attracting many international students. The carts in the Annex I display a full list of the training opportunities available in the city of Mantova.

For the 2023-2024 academic year, over **1.300 students were enrolled in universities** based in Mantova, with more than half being first-year students enrolled in undergraduate programmes. Among these, approximately 8% are international students. The presence of students at various stages of their academic journey represents a significant opportunity for the city to reposition itself as a place capable of retaining the skills and expertise developed locally. However, it is important to note that, according to the financial report of the UniverMantova Foundation - which represents the city's university centres - there was a 25% relative decrease in the number of graduates between 2022 and 2023.

Mantova exhibits several **sectors that are outperforming both Lombardy and national averages**. Notably, the **agricultural** sector stands out as a primary strength, with its added value reaching five times the regional average. This represents a significant asset for the provincial economy, holding substantial development potential that could further stimulate employment, especially in areas related to sustainability and new agricultural technologies.

Furthermore, Mantova demonstrates robustness in the **construction sector**, maintaining growth rates consistent with regional trends. While the **services sector** is experiencing slower growth compared to other regions, this scenario also presents an opportunity for innovation and diversification of offerings, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of local businesses.

At the provincial level, a positive indicator observed in 2023 is the **increased stabilisation of employment contracts**. Despite 53% of new hires being on fixed-term contracts, there's a noticeable improvement in the types of stable employment. Permanent contracts have increased by 3%, while temporary contracts have decreased by 2% (with a 9% reduction in agency work).

Specifically, among young people aged 18 to 29, there has been a 1% rise in permanent contracts and a 5% decrease in flexible contracts. This indicates increasing stability in youth employment, a sign that companies are striving to offer greater job security.

These figures demonstrate that, despite some challenges, there are signs of improvement and greater stabilisation in the labor market, particularly for young people and in sectors that have successfully adapted to new demands.

Moreover, Mantova Province is navigating a significant demographic shift, characterised by a decrease in the active population (particularly among young people) and an increase in the population segment over 65 years old. While this transformation presents a challenge, it also opens up new opportunities: healthcare professions, such as nurses and social-healthcare workers (OSS), will be among the most in-demand in the coming years, and shortage of young labour can incentivise businesses to prioritise talent attraction and retention. Mantova's enterprises have an opportunity to invest in training and professional development policies, not only to address the demand for specialised qualifications but also to attract young people, who are increasingly a scarce resource.

Salary remains an important factor in job choice, but a new priority is emerging: **quality of life**. The reconciliation between free time and work is becoming a decisive criterion for workers, especially for young people, who are increasingly interested in jobs that not only offer adequate pay but also allow for a good balance between private and professional life. The economic aspect is significant, but a new model of "work-life balance" is evolving, one that also includes psychological and physical well-being.



Photo Credits - Unsplash

...however, it struggles on holding potential new residents

## WEAKS AND THREATS

The historic centre has an **old building stock**, subject to UNESCO protection and therefore sometimes difficult to renovate and with high prices where compared to neighbouring cities. This reality boosted the outmigration of residents from the city increasing commuting practices.

According to Immobiliare.it, rental prices in Mantova have risen by 15% compared to December 2023, reaching an average of €9,2 per square meter by December 2024 . This surge is partly attributed to the expansion of short-term rentals, which have become more attractive to property owners due to higher yields compared to long-term leases. Nationally, the number of short-term rental units has increased by 147% over the past decade.

Consequently, residents, workers, and students face significant **difficulties in finding long-term rental housing at affordable prices**. This issue is further exacerbated by the insufficient availability of student accommodations, with many students struggling to secure affordable housing options.

These dynamics underscore the need for strategic planning and regulation to balance the interests of the tourism sector with the housing needs of residents and students, ensuring that the city's growth benefits all its inhabitants.



Photo Credits - Unsplash

The municipality supported over a period of 6,5 years – from September 2017 to January 2024 – an independent **mapping of vacant shops in the historical center**. As the study has showed, the number of vacant shops has steadily increased over time, rising from 232 to 320 from the first survey in 2017 to the latest one at the beginning of 2024, for a total of 88 new abandoned shops. The COVID period saw a peak in closures of commercial establishments in the city center, with 124 closures from June 2020 to June 2021. However, it also sparked a moment of strong recovery, as by December 2021, there were 41 new openings compared to only 294 closures (the lowest number throughout the entire mapping period). This recovery, however, was merely a temporary phase that could not reverse the overall trend, and from May 2022 to January 2024, vacancies began to rise again.

The average **unemployment rate** in the province of Mantova reached a peak in 2018 with a total of 6,7%, while from 2019 is stable between 4 and 5 percent. What is particularly striking is the gender gap: the level of female unemployment is always significantly higher than that of men, and last year, 2023, it was almost twice as high at 6.2 per cent against 3.8 per cent for men.

If we look at the **entrepreneurial landscape** in the Mantova province, we see a constant decrease. The data provided by the provincial Chamber of Commerce in 2022 show a decrease rate of -0.4%, with 37216 registered companies, of which 33283 are active. An average well below the regional (+1.2%) and national level (+0.8%) - Mantova lacks fully developed innovation hubs, business accelerators, or start-up incubators, which are essential for fostering entrepreneurship and attracting new economic actors.

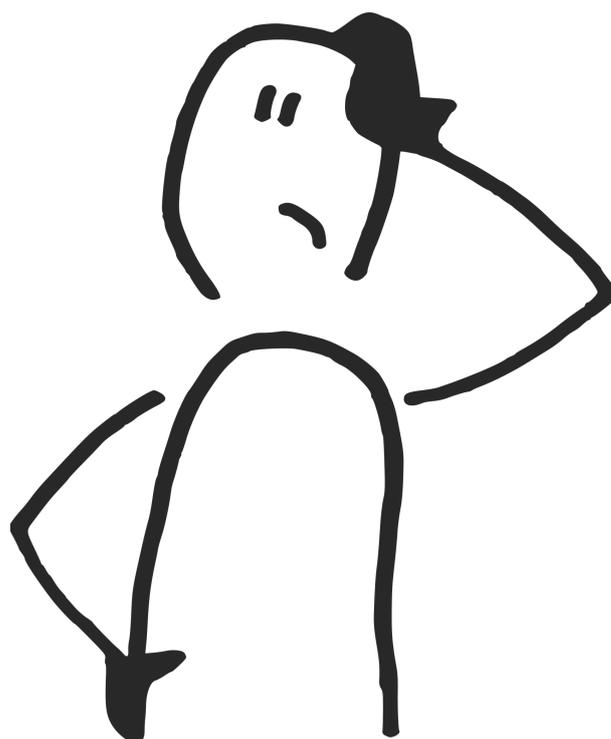
With respect to the type and composition of enterprises in the province of Mantua, 54,4% are one-person business. **19,1% of the total number of enterprises are active in the agricultural sector**, the highest number among all Lombardy provinces.

Of the total number of companies, **21.1% are classified as female enterprises, 7,2% as youth companies and 10,4% as foreign enterprises.**

In Mantova, **49% of job vacancies are for hard-to-fill positions**, particularly in technical and specialised roles. This indicates a significant skills mismatch, with many job seekers lacking the necessary qualifications. Italy faces a broader issue, with a 2,5% GDP loss due to skill mismatches. This is attributed to a lack of alignment between education systems and labor market needs, particularly in STEM fields. Experts emphasise the need for targeted training to bridge the skills gap, highlighting the importance of aligning educational outcomes with industry requirements.

Despite being an attractive center for its metropolitan area, Mantova suffers from **weak public transport infrastructure**. Rail and bus connections are limited making commuting challenging, and the city lacks proximity to a major airport which represents a major limitation in positioning the city as an attractive destination for smart-workers and digital nomads.

Mantova has developed **guidelines for climate adaptation** to increase resilience against climate change impacts. These include strategies to address flooding, heatwaves, and other climate-related challenges. The province of Mantova has identified various environmental vulnerabilities, including groundwater pollution and flood risks, which are critical for urban planning and resilience efforts. However, its location in the heart of the Po Valley, one of the main climate hotspots in the Mediterranean area, constitutes a significant barrier to attracting new residents interested in medium- to long-term settlement and investment in the area



# 1.3 Policy Context

## NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

When addressing the issue of **depopulation** and **formulating policies aimed at attracting new residents**, it is crucial to highlight that Italy is currently experiencing a particularly challenging period concerning this phenomenon. According to ISTAT, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, the country is entering a phase termed the "*demographic winter*," characterised by a significant decline in birth rates and an aging population. In 2023, Italy recorded only 379.000 births, a decrease of 3,6% compared to the previous year, and the fertility rate fell to 1,20 children per woman, approaching the historic low of 1,19 observed in 1995 . Concurrently, the average age of the population has increased to 46,6 years, with nearly a quarter of the population aged over 65 . This demographic trend poses significant challenges to Italy's economic and social structures. Projections indicate that, without intervention, the population could decrease from approximately 59 million in 2023 to 46,1 million by 2080 . Such a decline would impact the labor force, economic productivity, and the sustainability of social welfare systems.

In response, the Italian government has initiated several national and regional policies to counteract these trends. One notable initiative is the **National Strategy for Inner Areas** (SNAI), launched in 2013 by the **Agency for Territorial Cohesion**. This strategy focuses on revitalising remote and rural areas by improving access to essential services, enhancing infrastructure, and promoting local development. The SNAI aims to mitigate demographic decline by fostering conditions that attract and retain residents in these areas.

At the regional level, **Regione Lombardia** has implemented the "*Agenda del Controesodo*" (Reverse Exodus Agenda), a strategic framework aimed at revitalising 14 identified internal areas characterised by geographical isolation, demographic decline, and limited access to essential services.

For this report, it is essential to frame the Residents of the Future project and its strategic directions within the broader context of national and regional policies addressing demographic challenges. By aligning local initiatives with these overarching strategies, the city of Mantova can contribute to and benefit from collective efforts aimed at reversing depopulation trends and promoting sustainable development. In this regard, it is important to highlight that one of the most recently identified Inner Areas under the SNAI framework - the *Oltrepò Mantovano* - is located in the flatlands south of Mantova and represents one of the few non-mountainous Inner Areas in Italy. The Oltrepò Mantovano Consortium, the local authority responsible for coordinating the area's SNAI strategy, is part of our Urban Local Group (ULG). Opportunities for dialogue and exchange have already taken place with them, laying the groundwork for a broader, area-wide reflection on the issue of demographic and territorial development.

## ONGOING INITIATIVES

The Municipality along with local stakeholders - many of them ULG members - have been addressing the above mentioned challenges through innovative projects at different levels.

Regarding **mobility and local transportations**, Mantova launched a shuttle service from parking lots to the city center, reducing the traffic in the center and increasing the pedestrian roads. Moreover, within the UNESCO site Mantova and Sabbioneta, the new service Bike&Bus allow tourists to explore the two cities and the nearby environment in a slow and sustainable way.

The "**Generare il Futuro - dalla Scuola alla Città**" - Building the Future: from Schools to the City - project planned the restoration of various school buildings, which, together with the policy of having municipal kindergartens at no cost for all and private ones in agreement to guarantee reduced prices for families, certainly represents an incentive.

Regarding **innovative training and support for business creation**, there are several experiences present in the city. LTO - Territorial Laboratory for Employability has been offering students career guidance activities and training opportunities in the world of digital innovation since 2016. In the peripheral neighbourhoods of Lunetta and Frassino, Creative LAB and R84 Multifactory are respectively dedicated to offering a place for creative and cultural production and spaces for professionals who want to work collaboratively, fostering the knowledge exchange. In the city center, HUB Sant'Agnes and Eutopia provide meeting places, in the first case in the form of co-working for self-employed and freelancer, while in the second a meeting place for young people and students.

To what concern **sustainability, anti-pollution practices** and **climate change adaptation**:

- *C-Change Urbact project* transferred the best practices developed by the Manchester Arts Sustainability Team (MAST) to local groups in the partner cities, among which Mantova, where the ARC3A group has been created with the aim of raising awareness and mobilise the cultural sector on issues related to the climate crisis;
- *Lungo le Vie dell'Acqua project*, realised in collaboration with the cities of Bolzano (Trentino Alto Adige) and Cuneo (Piemonte) and with the support of Center for International Cooperation, aimed at establishing hub for global citizenship education
- The local Confederation of Industries is active on many levels in promoting local enterprises and increasing the employability of the area by: supporting the creation of a big logistic hub through the regeneration of the port of Valdaro on the Mincio river, providing training in schools to present job opportunities in collaboration with local companies, supporting the creation of Corporate welfare (sustainable mobility, canteen services, gender equality, training for unemployed), assessing the level and need of companies digital innovation, facilitating the creation of and Hydrogen Valley in the area.
- Actions by the environmental sector to make Lake Superior suitable for swimming

## THE FUTURE LIVES HERE: MANTOVA BEST PRACTICE ON HOUSING

“Qui Abita il Futuro - The Future Lives Here” is the housing project launched by the Municipality of Mantova in 2024. It encompasses two measures: “Welcome to the city - Benvenuti in città” and “Experience Life in Borgochiesanuova - Abitare Borgochiesanuova”.

**Welcome to the city** provides a monthly **contribution of €150.00, as a rent bonus for 12 months**, for singles and families who transfer their residence to Mantova in a rental property on the open market or in a SAS (Social Housing Service) accommodation. This measure also pays special attention to young people under 36 already residing in Mantova who wish to move out of their family home. For them, the monthly contribution of 150 euro will be extended to 24 months instead of 12. In 2024, Welcome to the city will enter its second edition, strongly backed by the administration following the success of the first year, both in terms of the number of applications and the interest it garnered at national and international level.

**Experience Life in Borgochiesanuova** offers the opportunity to rent social housing in the Borgochiesanuova neighborhood. These housing units, owned by the Municipality of Mantova, are designed to provide affordable housing solutions for individuals with an income and an ISEE between 14.000 and 40.000 euros.

Various types of housing are available: one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom, and duplex apartments, for a total of **67 new units**. Each housing unit is equipped with modern amenities, such as a shared green area, security doors, double-glazed windows, air conditioning systems, and a shared parking space, ensuring a high standard of living. The price is **below the market price** with an average cost depending on the housing size between 350 and 630 euros per month.

At the moment we have the data referred to the first phase. We received **400 applications**, of which 375 were formally correct. Among those 375 applications, 54% from people residing outside Mantova. Of these 54%, 70% coming from nearby municipalities or within the Lombardy region and 30% from other Italian regions, mainly from the south (Puglia, Calabria, Campania, Lazio, Sicilia). 44% of the 375 applications meets the requirements for allocation, having 67 apartments around 100 requests will remain unfulfilled.

Among the preferred **categories**, there is a significant prevalence of people from outside the area, except for the under-36 new households category, where 70% are residents of Mantova. 95% are Italian, while 5% are foreigners. In any case, simulations show that over 80% of the housing will go to individuals from outside the municipality.

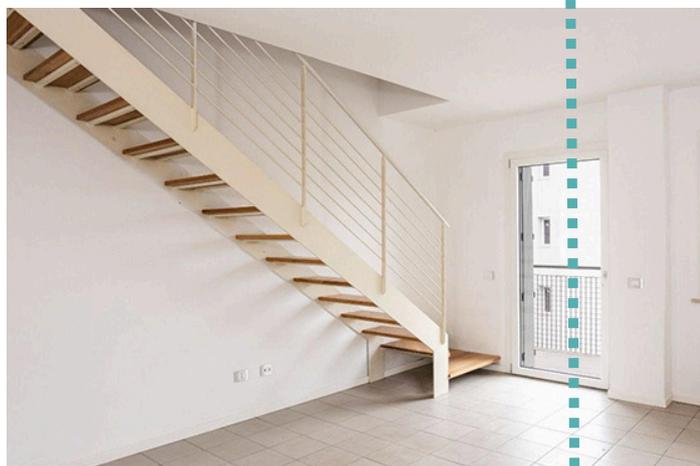


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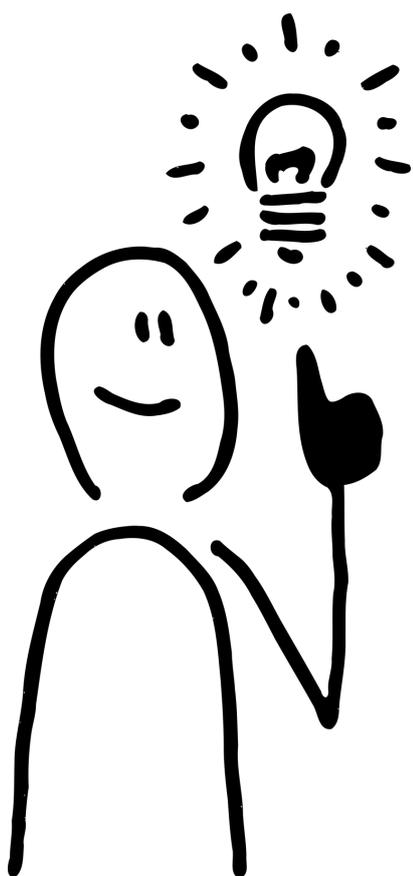
# **Section 2**

## Vision & Methodology

## 2.1 Vision

The overarching goal of IAP Mantova is to develop a strategic plan to **enhance the city's attractiveness**, for the different resident profile that lives in the city.

Special attention will be given to **temporary residents** and **transitional populations** - individuals who live in Mantova for extended periods, such as out-of-town or international students and interns, but who do not officially register as residents - with the aim of encouraging them to settle permanently in the city.



*Mantova is an attractive, inclusive, and vibrant city, capable of retaining current residents and attracting new ones by offering high quality of life, innovative services, and a welcoming community*

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To reach this ambitious goal, we decided to focus on specific areas of intervention and to define few strategic objectives for each area. This structure and what has been developed is detailed in Section 3.

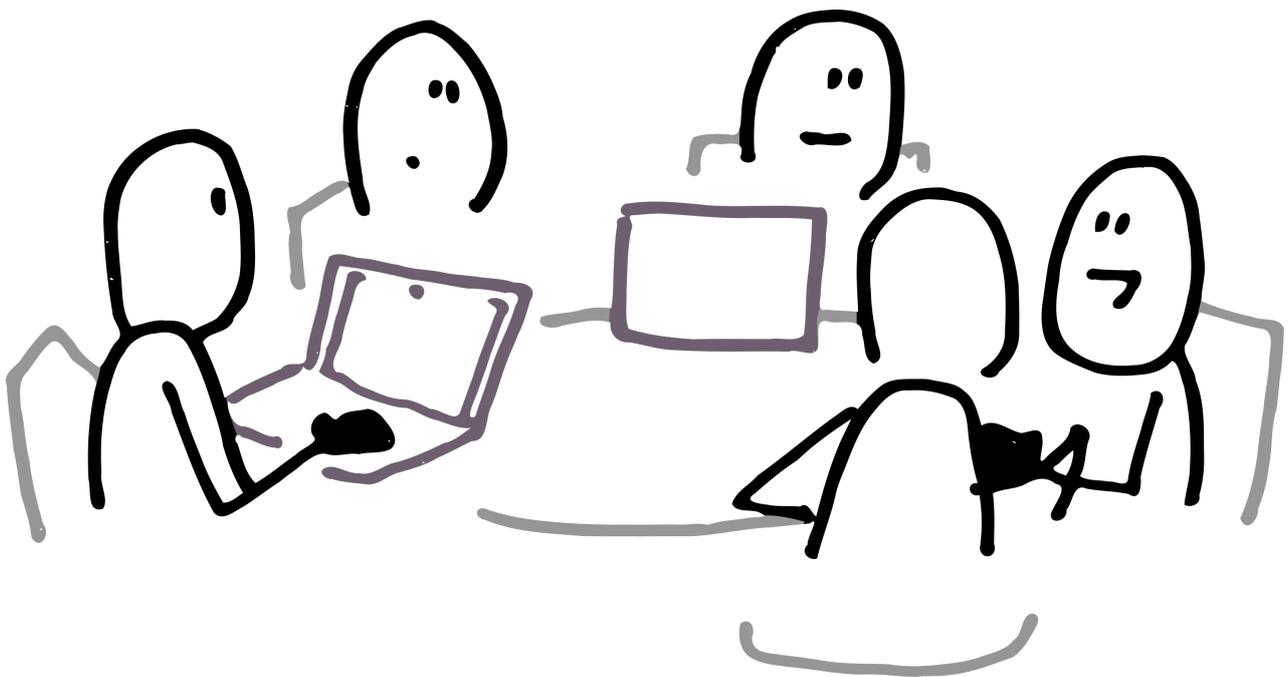
Measuring the impact of medium-to-long-term goals requires specific tools and methods, such as scenario tools and foresights methods. We further develop this aspect in Section 5.

## 2.2 Participatory approach the key to Integrated Urban Development

The integrated approach is a core pillar of the URBACT programme and serves as a key methodology for addressing urban challenges in an effective and sustainable way. This approach is based on the understanding that urban issues - from public space regeneration to social cohesion, from sustainable mobility to ecological transition - are deeply interconnected. As such, tackling them requires moving beyond fragmented interventions and embracing a systemic vision. The integrated approach promotes not only cross-sectoral collaboration within public administrations, but also active cooperation among different actors - institutions, civil society, the private sector, and engaged citizens.

For the Municipality of Mantova, this principle has guided its work within the URBACT framework, serving as a tool to bring coherence to a wide array of initiatives already underway in the city. These initiatives, led both by the local authority and third-sector organisations, have been addressing issues related to depopulation and the city's attractiveness for new residents. However, **many of these actions have often developed in parallel, without a shared strategic direction. The URBACT process enabled the creation of a collaborative and co-design space** where these diverse projects could align, **facilitating the development of a common strategy** and shared objectives capable of generating a lasting impact on urban attractiveness.

### COMPOSITION OF ULQ AND ITS ROLE IN THE PROCESS



## MUNICIPALITY DEPARTMENTS

- Educational Services and Public Education
- Mayor's Office
- Culture, Tourism and City Promotion
- Territory and Environment
- Welfare, Social Services and Sports
- Public Services Access Point
- Youth Information Center

## NGOS

- LTO - Territorial Laboratory for Employability
- BAG Magazine
- Bosco Potst-industriale
- R84 Multifactory
- Hike Cooperative
- Mantova Student Network
- WeGino

- Confindustria (General Confederation of Italian Industry)
- Oltrepò Mantovano Consortium
- ALOT Consulting
- Start-up Geeks

## PRIVATE SECTOR

The **creation of the Urban Local Group (ULG)** initially aimed to bring together a wide range of stakeholders - from both the profit and non-profit sectors - as well as other territorial governance bodies, higher education institutions, and various municipal departments. The goal was to gather meaningful contributions for drafting the IAP and defining the nature of the Testing Actions (TAs). However, from the outset, it became clear that engaging such a diverse group of actors and finding common spaces for dialogue that accommodated everyone's needs would be challenging.

It is important to highlight that Mantova is a relatively small yet highly active community, both in terms of civil society initiatives and city-wide activities, as well as through working groups focused on consultation and co-design alongside the municipal administration. The challenge of ensuring active involvement and participation of ULG members was therefore addressed by organising smaller, focused groups centered on the key themes identified as functional to pilot actions such as the TAs.

As a result, the initially broad ULG composition was gradually narrowed during the second year of the project, concentrating specifically on the definition of the Testing Actions. This approach was further strengthened by the intention to align and integrate with other ongoing local initiatives sharing similar goals to those of Residents of the Future (RoF), fostering close collaboration with the proposing organisations. This was particularly evident in the cooperation with two projects: *BAG Magazine and the Professions of the Future* and *Transparent and Sustainable Communities*.

**BAG Magazine and Future Professions** is an initiative aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of the Mantova area in comparison to neighbouring regions, while directly addressing the issue of youth depopulation. The project focuses on **strengthening educational pathways and career orientation for younger generations**, with a particular emphasis on connecting local opportunities to future-oriented professional trajectories.

Led by a local editorial start-up, the Municipality of Mantova initially joined the project as a partner during the **mapping phase**, which involved assessing the current state of local services across multiple dimensions, including housing, mobility, employment, and leisure. The working group formed for this phase included a diverse range of local actors. Alongside the Municipality, the process actively involved the **HIKE social cooperative** - which supports labour market inclusion - , the informal youth group **Mantova Student Network** that collects mainly university students and young professionals, the **Start Up Geeks** business accelerator, and the cultural student collective **WeGino**, affiliated with the city library and composed of high school students.

The mapping phase was characterised by a high level of engagement and continuity, with meetings taking place approximately every two weeks. Several of these meetings evolved into opportunities for Urban Local Group (ULG) gatherings, enabling broader dialogue and coordination among stakeholders involved in the Residents of the Future project.

Given the strong thematic alignment between the two initiatives, the Municipality established a close and ongoing collaboration with the project lead. This cooperation laid the groundwork for the co-design of the Testing Actions, which are further detailed in the section 4.

**Transparent and Sustainable Communities** is a project centred on the **co-design and realisation of an open-air classroom in a public green space**, freely accessible to all citizens and conceived as a tool for inclusive and participatory urban regeneration. The initiative places strong emphasis on civic engagement, educational innovation, and the multifunctional use of public space as a means to strengthen social cohesion and spatial equity.

The project is led by **Bosco Post Industriale APS**, a local civic association that began its collaboration with the Municipality of Mantova through participation in the URBACT Local Group. This partnership was significantly reinforced within the URBACT framework, enabling the association to align more closely with municipal priorities and strategic planning. In this sense, Transparent and Sustainable Communities can be considered a **preliminary Testing Action**, as it fully reflects the values and objectives of the Residents of the Future project, particularly in terms of participatory governance, territorial inclusion, and innovative reuse of underutilised spaces.

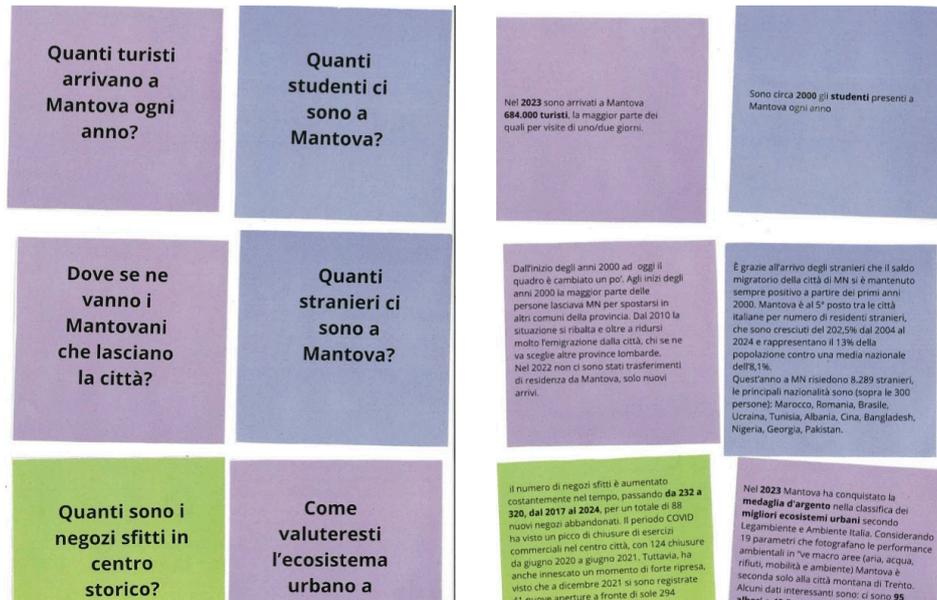
One of the first concrete needs to emerge during early ULG meetings was the demand for an open and inclusive space that could connect the historic city centre with the first urban periphery, while also serving as a hub for local associations and grassroots initiatives. In response to this shared vision, the Municipality chose to support Bosco Post Industriale's application to a public call aimed precisely at activating this kind of space.

The project partnership includes the Municipality of Mantova as well as several key local stakeholders: the Mantova campus of the **Politecnico di Milano**, **FORMA**, the provincial training body for vocational education, **LTO – Laboratorio Territoriale per l'Occupabilità**, focused on youth employability and skills development, **Mantua Farm School**, an alternative educational centre for adolescents with specific physical and behavioural needs, **Landesi**, a cultural and artistic collective; **R84 Multifactory**, an association that manages a co-working and creative space within former housing units of the ex-refinery executive complex - whose garden will host the open-air classroom; and **CSES – Centro Studi sull'Economia Sistemica**, which brings expertise in systems thinking and sustainable economic models.

The methods applied during the ULG meetings were diverse and carefully adapted to the number of participants expected, the topic under discussion, and the stage of progress of the project.

At the beginning, given the challenge of mobilizing stakeholders, we mainly relied on targeted **one-to-one meetings**, sometimes in the form of semi-structured interviews. These allowed us to gather information on what was already happening locally, particularly on the side of private companies.

As the process evolved, we organized **thematic focus groups**, often involving selected groups of stakeholders already engaged in specific projects. In one of these sessions, for example, we experimented with a quiz-style game to involve participants in discovering demographic data about Mantova while at the same time reviewing together and collecting feedback on the analytical work carried out for the first chapter of the IAP.



*The tools used for the quiz game around Mantova's demography*

We are particularly pleased to have also experimented with a more informal format: a **Sunday morning event with brunch offered**, designed for ULG members but also open to citizens and selected local actors. The event, called *Brunch dei Policy Makers* and organized in collaboration with BAG Magazine, took place within a well-known city festival and attracted many of the participants who had previously joined the Filo del Futuro Talks (Testing Action 1). Over the course of two hours, we jointly reviewed the project analyses, presented the first complete draft of the IAP together with the results of the Testing Actions, and facilitated three parallel thematic tables using the World Café method. The aim was to refine and further develop the specific projects proposed in the IAP and to showcase the various projects the city is doing in order to become more attractive.



# **Section 3**

## Objectives & Action Plan

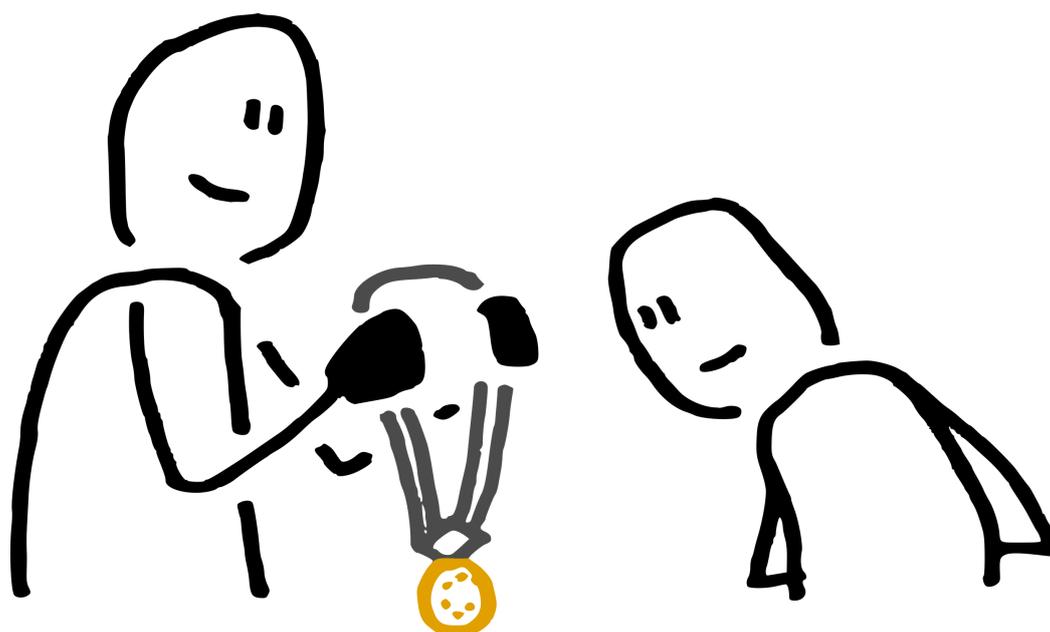
# 3.1 Strategic Objectives and areas of intervention

The scope of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) developed by the Municipality of Mantova is to **establish a coherent and forward-looking policy framework to address the ongoing challenge of urban depopulation, with a specific focus on temporary and transitional populations.** The IAP adopts a place-based and integrated approach, recognising the complexity and interdependency of the socio-economic and spatial dynamics involved.

In recent years, the municipality has activated a number of policy instruments aimed at reversing negative demographic trends. These include both direct measures - such as the Qui abita il Futuro programme, which supports access to affordable housing through rent subsidies (check page 16) - and indirect incentives - like, for instance, support schemes for start-ups and newly relocated businesses in the Valdaro area or free day care centres for children. These actions have contributed to making the city more attractive, particularly for young families and entrepreneurs.

Despite these positive results, **current interventions remain largely sectoral**, addressing specific aspects of the city's development. The IAP represents an effort to look at the complexity of this phenomenon in an integrated way, **bringing together different dimensions** that, while not the direct focus of RoF interventions - such as climate change adaptation, accessibility, gender and digitalisation - are cross-cutting issues that always need to be considered.

In this sense, the **IAP aims to complement and expand upon existing municipal planning documents, such as the Piano di Governo del Territorio (PGT)**, by integrating its objectives and actions into a broader, cross-sectoral framework that connects ongoing initiatives, mobilises local stakeholders, and strengthens institutional capacity to co-design and implement place-sensitive solutions.



# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1

**Enhance the tracking of actual inhabitants within the city**

### OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Optimal use of existing registration tools
- 1.2 Involvement of temporary residents

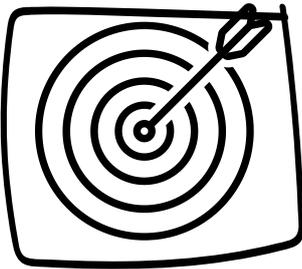


## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2

**Support the retention of students, young families and young professionals/entrepreneurs by strengthening public welfare services and tailored support system**

### OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Develop initiatives and integrated housing policies
- 2.2 Implement targeted welfare tools for specific demographics
- 2.3 Define joint strategies with Universities



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3

**Address the mismatch between educational pathways and labor market needs**

### OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Develop specialised training programs to build a skilled workforce aligned with the needs of current and emerging local businesses
- 3.2 Create tailored support mechanisms to actively engage recent graduates in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem
- 3.3 Promote business innovation, start-ups, and incubators by fostering an enabling environment that attracts new capital and investments.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4

**Develop a marketing strategy and visual identity**

### OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Develop a contemporary brand identity rooted in retro-innovation.

## SO #1 - ENHANCE THE TRACKING OF ACTUAL INHABITANTS WITHIN THE CITY

- Support solutions that enable a better understanding, both qualitatively and quantitatively, of the people living in the city, regardless of whether they have official residency or not.

As outlined in the first chapter, relying solely on official residence status to define who inhabits a territory can be limiting - especially in today's context of hyper-mobility and multi-locality. In such a dynamic urban landscape, it becomes essential to adopt new approaches when designing development policies and strategies to counter depopulation.

This requires the creation of tools capable of capturing who is truly living and engaging with the city. These tools should **combine both quantitative and qualitative dimensions**. On the one hand, this means collecting data on, for instance, temporary residents, their length of stay, and their spatial distribution. On the other hand, it involves understanding their needs, aspirations, and expectations, which are crucial for shaping more inclusive services and opportunities.

### 1.1 OPTIMAL USE OF EXISTING REGISTRATION TOOLS

The Municipality of Mantova has implemented the **Temporary Population Register** (Registro della Popolazione Temporanea), a tool established by Article 32 of D.P.R. 30 May 1989, No. 223, which provides municipalities across Italy with the legal framework to register individuals residing temporarily in a locality without changing their official residence. This mechanism is particularly relevant for Italian citizens, EU nationals, and legally residing non-EU nationals who remain officially registered in another municipality but are temporarily living in Mantova for reasons such as study, work, health, or family care.

**Registration is voluntary** and can be requested by individuals who have been living in the city for at least four months (three months for EU citizens). It allows them to remain officially registered in their municipality of origin while informing Mantova's authorities of their temporary presence. After one year, including the period prior to registration, the municipality may assess whether to proceed with permanent residence registration. However, individuals listed in this register cannot request official residency certificates from Mantova.

Despite its potential to provide more accurate population data, **this tool is rarely used in practice**, limiting its effectiveness. There remains a strong need to strengthen and better integrate such instruments into local data strategies to ensure urban policies are informed by the real dynamics of population presence.



## PROPOSED PROJECTS

### 1.1.1 Data visualisation and data analytics

Develop a system for the visualisation and analysis of both static and dynamic urban data, with a focus on capturing the presence and movement of temporary populations. This project aims to support evidence-based policy-making by enabling the Municipality and stakeholders to better understand demographic trends, urban flows, and service usage across different areas of the city.

### 1.1.2 Experimenting with New Tracking Models (e.g., mobile network data)

Pilot the use of innovative data sources - such as anonymised mobile phone cell data - to trace the presence and movement patterns of individuals within the city. This would allow for more accurate and real-time mapping of urban dynamics, particularly in relation to non-resident and transient populations, supporting more adaptive urban planning and service provision.

## 1.2 INVOLVEMENT OF TEMPORARY RESIDENTS

In the context of designing urban development policies and counteracting depopulation, it is essential not only to understand who currently lives in the city, but also to involve those who may return or settle in the near future. Engaging non-residents - or not-yet residents - provides valuable insight into their perceptions, needs, expectations, and barriers they face in choosing whether or not to live in Mantova. These are aspects that cannot be captured through quantitative data alone.

Collecting **qualitative data** from these groups is therefore a key step in developing inclusive and forward-looking strategies. An example of this approach was implemented during Testing Action #1 - Sul Filo del Futuro, that highlighted a strong emotional connection to the city, as well as a shared belief that returning to Mantova represents not only a personal opportunity, but also a way to give back to the community. Many respondents expressed a desire to contribute to a broader movement of young people who are actively trying to renew and re-energise the city, and, in their view, are already succeeding.

## PROPOSED PROJECTS

### 1.2.1 Informal Gathering Spaces

There is a clear and recurring need in Mantova for accessible, informal gathering spaces that can foster social interaction, encourage community engagement, and connect different parts of the city - particularly the historic centre and the surrounding neighbourhoods. Such spaces are essential for strengthening local networks, supporting youth participation, and creating opportunities for civic and cultural activities outside of formal institutions.

As mentioned above, the *Comunità Trasparenti e Sostenibili* project represents an initial step in this direction. The initiative, made possible through the collaboration between the Municipality of Mantova and Bosco Post Industriale APS, emerged directly from discussions within the URBACT Local Group (ULG). By combining institutional support with grassroots vision, the project lays the groundwork for a broader strategy aimed at activating inclusive, community-led spaces throughout the city.

**SO #2 - SUPPORT THE RETENTION OF STUDENTS, YOUNG FAMILIES, AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS/ ENTREPRENEURS BY STRENGTHENING PUBLIC WELFARE SERVICES AND TAILORED SUPPORT SYSTEM** - Promote integrated measures that enhance opportunities and provide concrete incentives to remain in Mantova and establish permanent residency



## 2.1 DEVELOP INITIATIVE AND INTEGRATED HOUSING POLICIES

The Municipality is committed to developing innovative and integrated housing policies that respond to the needs of a diverse and evolving urban population. One example is the initiative *Qui Abita il Futuro* (The Future Lives Here), which is detailed in Chapter 1. This measure aims to create accessible and sustainable housing solutions, particularly for young people, students, and families, promoting social cohesion and long-term urban vitality.

### PROPOSED PROJECTS

#### 2.1.1 Qui Abita il Futuro

Building upon the foundations laid by the Residents of the Future project, the Municipality of Mantova is committed to continuing and expanding the *Qui Abita il Futuro* initiative. This programme aims to attract new residents to the city by offering financial incentives, such as rent subsidies, to individuals and families relocating to Mantova. By aligning housing policies with employment opportunities and urban regeneration efforts, the programme seeks to reverse demographic decline and foster a vibrant, sustainable community.

#### 2.1.2 Regulations on Short-Term Rentals in the UNESCO Historic Centre

In response to the growing trend of short-term rentals, particularly in the UNESCO World Heritage-listed historic centre, the Municipality of Mantova is exploring regulatory measures to balance tourism with the needs of permanent residents. These measures aim to prevent the displacement of local populations, maintain the residential character of the area, and ensure that tourism contributes positively to the city's economy and social fabric. The development of these regulations is informed by best practices from other historic cities and ongoing consultations with stakeholders.

## 2.2 IMPLEMENT TARGETED WELFARE TOOLS FOR SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHICS

To support the well-being of young students, workers, and families, the Municipality has been promoting tailored welfare services for several years. These include the initiative *Psicologo in Comune* (Municipal Psychologist), which provides free psychological support to residents as a tool for mental health prevention and early intervention. Another key service is the *Centro per le Famiglie* (Family Center), which offers free guidance, educational support, and counseling services to families, fostering a more inclusive and supportive community environment.

### PROPOSED PROJECTS

#### 2.2.1 Connected Care Points - Blended Digital and Local Support for Well-Being and Care Careers

This project proposes the creation of Connected Care Points: hybrid spaces combining telehealth access (e.g. psychological and family counseling) with in-person support in schools, libraries, and community hubs. These spaces will offer digital consultations alongside peer support groups and local activities, fostering stronger social ties and reducing isolation. The initiative also aims to introduce young people to care-related professions, responding to growing demand in the health and social sectors due to demographic change. By merging well-being support with career orientation, the project promotes both personal resilience and future employment pathways.

#### 2.2.2 "Life Skills Lab" - Empowerment Workshops for Students and Young Workers

This project focuses on equipping young people—particularly students, job seekers, and early-career professionals—with the soft skills and emotional tools needed to navigate life transitions, work-related stress, and social change. Through a series of co-designed workshops and peer-learning sessions held in schools, universities, co-working spaces, and youth centers, the Life Skills Lab would offer training in areas such as emotional resilience, digital well-being, conflict management, and life planning. Facilitated by psychologists, educators, and young mentors, the initiative complements traditional mental health support with a proactive, community-building approach to individual empowerment and social inclusion.

## 2.3 DEFINE JOINT STRATEGIES WITH UNIVERSITIES

Establishing stronger cooperation with universities is essential to better engage students and respond to their needs and aspirations. In this direction, the *Tavolo Politiche Giovanili* (Youth Policy Roundtable) - already active within the Municipality - is working to strengthen dialogue with academic institutions and student communities. Its role can be further enhanced to serve as a strategic platform for co-designing policies that improve student life and encourage long-term settlement in the city.

### PROPOSED PROJECTS

#### 2.3.1 University Living Lab - Co-Designing a Student-Friendly City

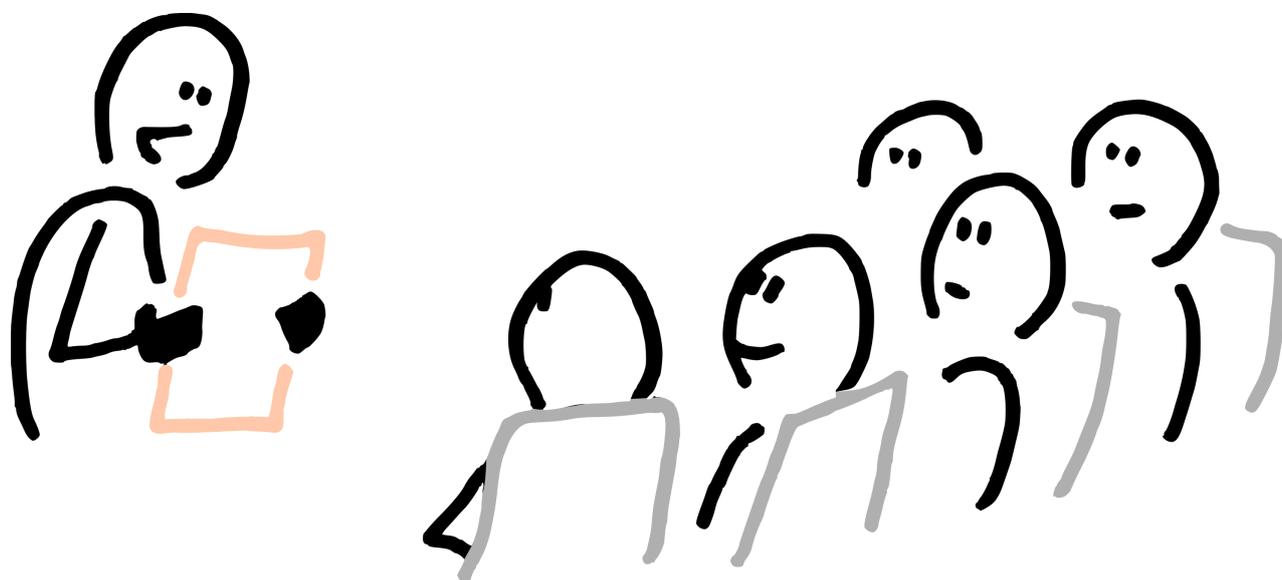
This project establishes a permanent collaborative platform between the Municipality, local universities, and student communities. Operating through the Youth Policy Roundtable, the Living Lab will co-design pilot actions focused on improving student life - housing, mobility, cultural participation, and social inclusion - while also exploring long-term strategies to retain graduates. It promotes students as active urban actors and supports stronger institutional cooperation.

## SO #3 - ADDRESS THE MISMATCH BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS AND LABOR MARKET NEEDS - Fostering dialogue between the education/training sector and the business community, promoting the development of highly specialised courses, and supporting entrepreneurship and business innovation initiatives

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the mismatch between labor supply and demand increased from 43% in 2022 to 49% in 2023, highlighting a need for targeted training to meet specific skill requirements. Mantua can leverage innovation and specialisation to develop a more highly qualified workforce. Such mismatch is one of the main causes of brain-drain in the city, as young people move away to study where there are better opportunities for a first employment.

### 3.1 SUPPORT THE CREATION OF HIGHLY SPECIALISED COURSES TO DEVELOP A SKILLED WORKFORCE CAPABLE OF MEETING THE NEEDS OF BOTH EXISTING AND EMERGING LOCAL BUSINESSES

In line with the strategic objective of fostering regional economic resilience and innovation, it is essential to support the development of highly specialised training programmes tailored to the evolving needs of the local labour market. In the province of Mantova, particular attention should be given to aligning vocational and higher education pathways with the skills demanded by both established enterprises and newly emerging sectors. The expansion of the **Valdaro industrial zone** presents a significant opportunity to catalyse sustainable economic growth, particularly in green and circular economy sectors. In this context, the upcoming launch of a **Green and Sustainable Chemistry course** represents a key initiative aimed at equipping the future workforce with cutting-edge competencies in environmentally responsible production processes. Such targeted educational interventions are instrumental in enhancing local employability, fostering innovation, and ensuring that Mantova remains competitive within the broader regional and European industrial landscape.



## PROPOSED PROJECTS

### 3.1.1 Sector-Specific Skills Labs (Green & Circular Economy Focus)

This project proposes the establishment of hands-on, sector-specific "Skills Labs" designed in close collaboration with companies operating in the Valdaro industrial zone and other key local economic actors. The focus will be on emerging sectors, particularly green and circular economy, logistics 4.0, and sustainable manufacturing. These Labs—implemented within vocational training centres or through mobile, on-site modules—will provide learners with real-world technical skills using industry-standard equipment and processes. By fostering a continuous dialogue between education providers and businesses, the Labs will help align training content with current and future labour market needs, reducing skills mismatches and supporting a more resilient local workforce.

### 3.1.2 Dual Education Pathways in Strategic Sectors

Building on the introduction of the Green and Sustainable Chemistry course, this project will promote the development of dual education models (work-based + academic learning) in sectors identified as priorities for Mantova's economic transition. These may include sustainable logistics, eco-design, industrial biotechnology, and renewable energy systems. The project will support structured partnerships between higher education institutions, local employers, and public authorities to create coherent, long-term training pathways that lead to high-quality employment. Emphasis will be placed on including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that often lack the resources to engage with traditional training systems, thereby strengthening their innovation potential and anchoring skilled youth in the local economy.

## 3.2 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT TAILORED SUPPORT MECHANISM FOR RECENT GRADUATES, WITH A VIEW TO FOSTERING THEIR ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

One of the key challenges for Mantova lies in the competitiveness of other urban and regional contexts, which often draw young people away for educational opportunities. Many students leave to pursue higher education elsewhere and do not return, resulting in a persistent brain drain. This trend was clearly identified in the Testing Action (TA) made in collaboration with BAG Magazine (see Chapter 4), where the most successful group was that of the "returnees" - those who had studied outside but came back to Mantova. This highlights the importance of creating the right conditions locally to retain and attract young talent. It is essential to ensure that students who study in Mantova have real prospects for starting their careers within the city. At the same time, Mantova should facilitate pathways for those who have studied elsewhere but wish to gain their first professional experience in the city. This could be supported by fostering international exchange programs, professional internships, and hybrid training opportunities that connect local institutions with broader, global networks.

## PROPOSED PROJECTS

### 3.2.1 Student-Work Positions

Establish structured "student-work" positions that create a bridge between local education and the world of work. These positions would be developed in close collaboration with local businesses, cultural institutions, public services, and the third sector, allowing students enrolled in local universities or training centers to gain meaningful, part-time work experience in their field of study. The goal is twofold: to help students build professional skills while still studying, and to strengthen their connection to Mantova's local economy and community. Such opportunities would also position the city as a place where education is closely tied to employment, making it more attractive for students to remain after graduation

### 3.2.2. Local Talent for Local Transition – Graduate Retention Programme

To maximise the impact of investments in new training programmes, this project aims to design a "Graduate Retention Programme" focused on keeping highly trained young professionals in the local area after completing their studies. The programme would offer incentives such as scholarships tied to in-territory employment, job-matching services for graduates in green and innovation-related fields, and support for collaborative thesis projects with local companies. Special attention will be given to attracting students into the new Green and Sustainable Chemistry track and ensuring they are connected with career opportunities in the Valdarò zone and beyond. By doing so, the project supports both regional resilience and a just transition toward a greener economy.

### 3.2.3 Entry-Level Career Support Programme

To support young people at the critical stage of entering the workforce, this project proposes the introduction of targeted incentives for interns and first-time employees. These may include financial support (e.g. stipends, housing assistance), mentorship programs, or priority access to local services. The aim is to reduce the initial barriers young people face when starting their careers, particularly those returning to Mantova after studying elsewhere.

## 3.3 SUPPORT BUSINESS INNOVATION, START-UPS, AND INCUBATORS BY FOSTERING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE ATTRACTION OF NEW CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT FLOWS

At present, Mantova already benefits from several valuable initiatives aimed at fostering youth entrepreneurship and innovation. These include the activities of LTO Mantova, the co-working and project development space at R84, and events such as StartUp Week, which offer visibility and networking opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs. However, what is still lacking is a fully-fledged incubator - ideally connected with local businesses - that could act as an external research and development hub, supporting the transformation of ideas into viable enterprises. Additionally, Mantova has yet to implement targeted incentives to attract and retain smart workers and digital nomads who operate in innovative sectors. These professionals could find in Mantova an ideal environment to live and work, thanks to its high quality of life, cultural vibrancy, and emerging ecosystem of creative and technological talent.

## PROPOSED PROJECTS

### 3.3.1 Territorial Innovation Incubator (TII)

This project envisions the creation of a Territorial Innovation Incubator in Mantova, with LTO Mantova (Laboratorio Territoriale per l'Occupabilità) at its core as the operational and strategic driver. Building on LTO's established role in connecting education, training, and employment, the incubator will consolidate and expand the existing local ecosystem supporting youth entrepreneurship, innovation, and career orientation.

Rather than replicating existing services, the incubator will act as a coordination and capacity-building hub, enhancing the visibility and impact of current initiatives while equipping them with new tools, resources, and collaborative frameworks. It will offer structured support for early-stage entrepreneurs, start-ups, and creatives, including mentorship programmes, business development services, and access to financing channels.

A key feature will be the establishment of a research and development (R&D) platform in close collaboration with universities and higher education institutions. This will enable the co-creation of applied research projects responding to local challenges, while also opening pathways for advanced training and knowledge transfer, including research-based positions (e.g. PhDs, postdocs).

In doing so, the incubator- anchored by LTO Mantova's territorial expertise - will serve as a dynamic bridge between academic research, labour market needs, and entrepreneurial innovation, reinforcing Mantova's capacity to retain and attract young talent and to support a just and sustainable local transition.

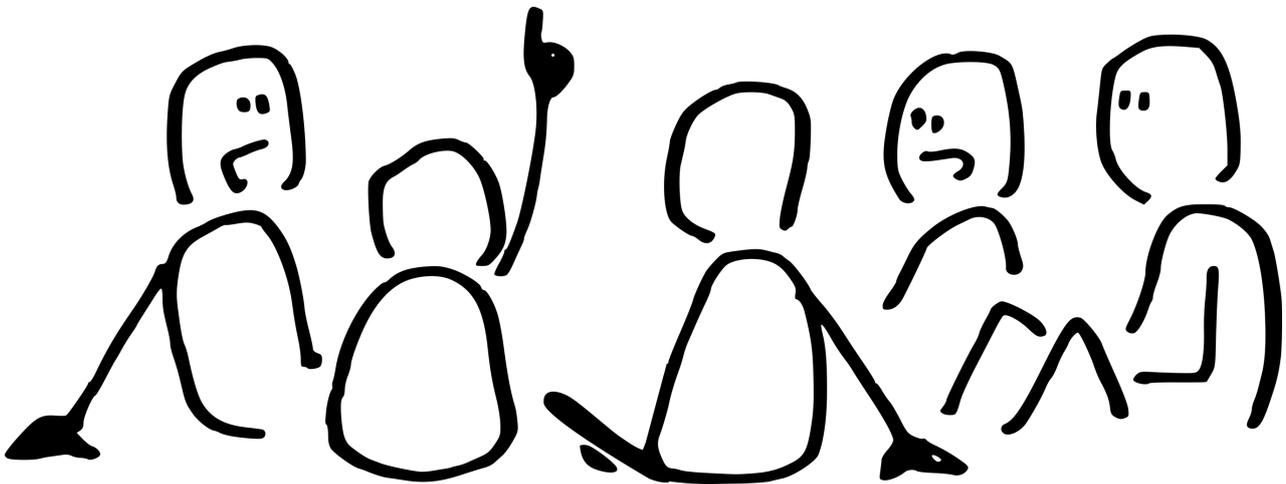
### 3.3.2 Smart Work & Digital Nomad Attraction Package

This project aims to position Mantova as an attractive destination for smart workers and digital nomads operating in innovative sectors such as technology, design, media, and digital services. It proposes a comprehensive support package that includes access to subsidised co-working spaces, temporary housing solutions, relocation assistance, and facilitated integration into local professional and social networks. The initiative goes hand in hand with Strategic objective 4, which focuses on rethinking the city's branding and external image. By aligning with a renewed narrative of Mantova as a forward-looking, livable, and innovation-friendly city, the project contributes to attracting new professional profiles that can enrich the local economy and stimulate knowledge exchange. The high quality of life, cultural heritage, and growing innovation ecosystem make Mantova a uniquely positioned small city to welcome remote professionals seeking both creative inspiration and a balanced lifestyle.

## SO #4 - DEVELOP A MARKETING STRATEGY AND VISUAL IDENTITY -

Repositioning the city's appeal from primarily cultural and tourist attractiveness to one centered on innovation and quality of life.

To support the repositioning of Mantova's urban identity, this objective focuses on the creation of a coherent brand strategy and visual identity that communicates the city not only as a place of historical and cultural excellence but also as a forward-looking hub of innovation, creativity, and sustainable living. This brand identity will serve as a unifying framework across institutional communication, economic development strategies, and city marketing efforts - targeting young talent, entrepreneurs, and smart workers, while reinforcing civic pride among residents.



### 4.1 DEVELOP A CONTEMPORARY BRAND IDENTITY ROOTED IN RETRO-INNOVATION

The aim is to craft a narrative of retro-innovation, in which Mantova's rich heritage is reinterpreted as a source of inspiration for new forms of technological, social, and cultural experimentation. It will highlight Mantova as a place where tradition meets transformation, and where the past actively informs a vibrant, future-oriented urban culture.

#### PROPOSED PROJECTS

##### 4.1.1 Co-create Communication Tools and Materials with Local Stakeholders

Design and implement inclusive communication materials - such as Welcome Kits, brochures, storytelling videos, and targeted social media campaigns - in collaboration with local stakeholders, including residents, students, creatives, and businesses. This participatory approach ensures that the emerging brand identity reflects Mantova's authentic character while promoting it as a city where heritage and innovation co-exist. These tools will also serve to welcome new residents, entrepreneurs, and smart workers, reinforcing their connection to the local community.

#### 4.1.2 Develop a Cross-Sector Brand Narrative Integrating Culture, Innovation, and Sustainability

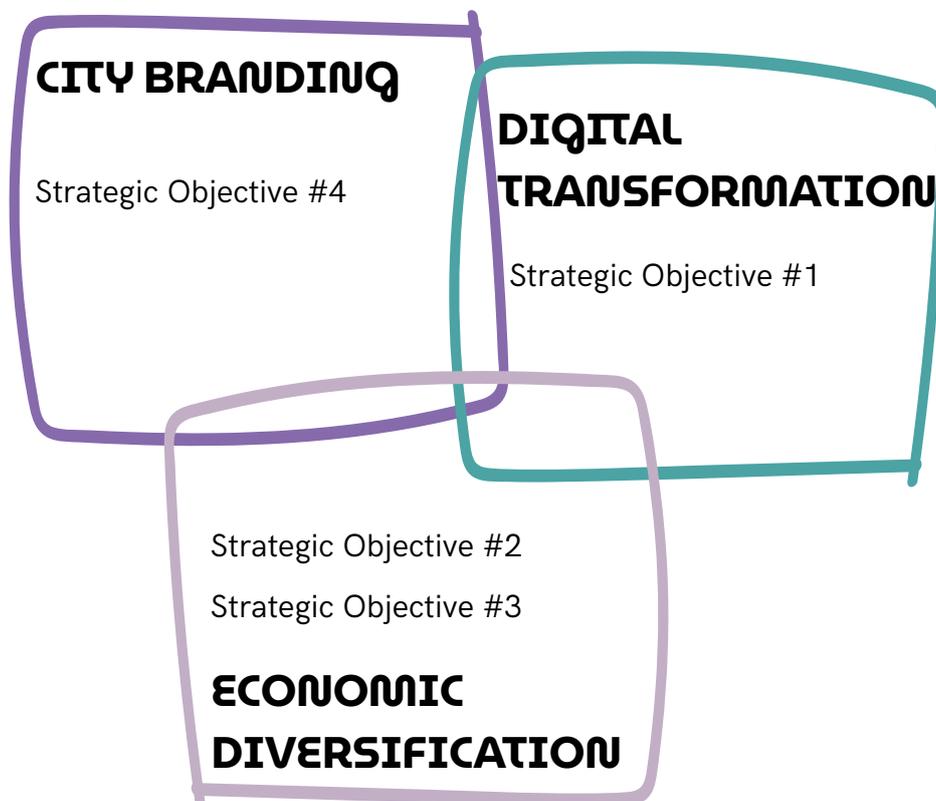
Formulate a unified narrative framework that positions Mantova as a city of retro-innovation, where cultural heritage inspires contemporary solutions in technology, design, sustainability, and creative industries. This narrative will guide all public communications and branding efforts—from tourism promotion to economic development—and will be adopted across sectors (education, culture, business, environment) to build a consistent, recognisable urban identity aligned with the city's strategic vision.

#### 4.1.3 Launch a Visibility Campaign Targeting Young Talent and Remote Workers

Implement a multi-channel visibility campaign aimed at repositioning Mantova as an ideal place to live, work, and create. The campaign will target young professionals, students, digital nomads, and entrepreneurs looking for a balanced lifestyle, combining innovation opportunities with high cultural and environmental quality. Content will highlight success stories, local innovation hubs, quality of life indicators, and opportunities in sectors such as green economy, creative industries, and research.

## AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The strategic objectives of Mantova's IAP align closely with the areas of intervention established by the Residents of the Future project, declining them accordingly to the city's vision.



The integration of different thematic areas within this IAP is crucial to addressing the complex phenomenon of urban depopulation and creating the conditions for a more attractive, inclusive, and vibrant city. By connecting actions in the fields of digital transformation, economic diversification and city branding, we can generate systemic change and make Mantova a more desirable place to live, work, and stay.

In particular, the digital transformation projects (such as Data Visualisation and Data Analytics and Experimenting with New Tracking Models) aim to overcome current limitations in understanding who actually lives in and moves through the city, especially temporary residents and transient populations. Through the development of advanced data visualisation tools and the piloting of innovative sources such as anonymised mobile network data, these actions will provide a more accurate and real-time picture of urban dynamics. This will allow the Municipality and local stakeholders to plan and deliver more adaptive, responsive, and evidence-based services.

These interventions are closely linked with actions under the economic diversification theme, which seek to support the retention of students, young families, and young professionals by reinforcing welfare systems and creating tailored support structures. Equally important is the commitment to bridge the gap between educational pathways and the local labour market, ensuring that the skills being developed are aligned with the real needs of the territory and local businesses. By strengthening local opportunities and reducing the disconnect between training and employment, the city becomes more attractive for younger generations considering long-term settlement.

Once we gain a clearer picture of who inhabits the city and put in place strong welfare, educational, and employment services, we can then focus on actively attracting new residents. This is where city branding becomes essential. Targeted strategies aimed at specific groups - such as smart workers and digital nomads - will promote Mantova as a city that offers not only a high quality of life but also a supportive and innovative environment for remote work and creative living.

Altogether, these interconnected interventions directly support the IAP's overarching vision: to make Mantova an attractive, inclusive, and vibrant city, capable of reversing depopulation trends while building a stronger, more resilient urban community.

While detailed indicators and targets will be presented in the chapter on expected results, we anticipate a gradual increase in resident retention rates, a more balanced age structure, and a growth in short- and medium-term urban dwellers contributing to the vitality and resilience of the city.

# 3.2 Timeline

The timeline below refers to the periods of political mandate. The current Executive Board will complete its term in June 2026 and will not be eligible for re-election, having already served two consecutive terms, including a one-year extension granted due to the Covid emergency.

	BY 2026	2026-2030	2030-2035
1.1.1 Data visualisation and data analytics			
1.1.2 Experimenting with New Tracking Models (e.g., mobile network data)			
1.2.1 Informal Gathering Spaces			
2.1.1 Qui Abita il Futuro			
2.1.2 Regulations on Short-Term Rentals in the UNESCO Historic Centre			
2.2.1 Connected Care Points – Blended Digital and Local Support for Well-Being and Care Careers			
2.2.2 “Life Skills Lab” – Empowerment Workshops for Students and Young Workers			
2.3.1 University Living Lab – Co-Designing a Student-Friendly City			

3.1.1 Sector-Specific Skills Labs (Green & Circular Economy Focus)			
3.1.2 Dual Education Pathways in Strategic Sectors			
3.2.1 Student-Work Positions			
3.2.2. Local Talent for Local Transition - Graduate Retention Programme			
3.2.3 Entry-Level Career Support Programme			
3.3.1 Territorial Innovation Incubator (TII)			
3.3.2 Smart Work & Digital Nomad Attraction Package			
4.1.1 Co-create Communication Tools and Materials with Local Stakeholders			
4.1.2 Develop a Cross-Sector Brand Narrative Integrating Culture, Innovation, and Sustainability			
4.1.3 Launch a Visibility Campaign Targeting Young Talent and Remote Workers			

**The first set of interventions** we expect to implement builds on projects and pilot actions already launched, particularly those developed during the Testing Actions. This continuity ensures both the feasibility of the actions and the consolidation of existing local engagement.

Specifically, we aim to further develop the housing support system introduced through the Qui abita il Futuro programme, which has already laid the groundwork for improving access to housing for specific target groups. We also plan to expand the number and quality of informal gathering spaces, building on the ongoing Comunità Trasparenti e Sostenibili project, which includes the creation - by 2026 - of an open-air classroom designed to serve local organisations and communities.

In parallel, we will continue to co-create communication tools and materials with local stakeholders, starting from the work carried out through the Mantova Soon platform, which played a central role in disseminating the Welcome Kit for newcomers. Lastly, we intend to activate a Life Skills Lab and a University Living Lab, to promote soft skills development, applied research, and stronger connections between students, academia, and the local community. Those actions represent **quick wins** in retaining the inhabitants already living the city, giving practical response to manifested needs.

In **the next five-year period (2026-2030)**, we expect to complete the majority of the planned interventions, following a phased approach that prioritises actions based on their strategic relevance and level of readiness. Particular attention will be given to projects related to digitalisation and data collection on residents, as these are foundational for the design and implementation of all other measures. Strengthening our knowledge of who lives, works, and moves through the city will be essential to ensure that services and policies are targeted and effective.

In parallel, we will focus on the development of innovative welfare tools, such as the Connected Care Points, and on initiatives specifically aimed at supporting students and easing the transition from university to the labour market. This includes the Entry-Level Career Support Programme and the creation of student work positions, which are designed to retain talent and foster meaningful professional pathways within the local context.

We also intend to address the housing issue in more depth, particularly by tackling the impact of short-term rentals in the UNESCO area, which have become a growing challenge in balancing tourism with residents' needs.

Projects that require more solid preconditions and long-term commitment - such as the Graduate Retention Programme and targeted City Branding strategies - will be **scheduled for a later implementation phase**. These actions are crucial to sustaining demographic and economic growth in the long run, but depend on the successful completion of the foundational steps in the early stages of the IAP.

# Section 4

## Testing Actions

# Testing Actions

## small-scale interventions to test the feasibility of proposed projects

### 4.1 TA #0 - APPLICATION TO THE OPEN CALL STeP | Participatory Territorial Development



**LINK TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1 - Enhance the tracking of actual inhabitants within the city** - Concerning the Operational Objective 1.2 Involvement of temporary residents

#### CONTEXT

The Municipality of Mantova supported the lead organisation in submitting a project proposal in response to a call issued by the **local banking foundation, Cariverona**. As mentioned earlier - both the description of the ULG constitution in Chapter 2, and in the detailed explanation of the referred Operational Objective (page 26) - this action went in the direction of answering the need expressed by the ULG members from earlier stages of **having informal gathering spaces**, also in the peripheral quarters of the city, to allow youths and local cultural and social innovative organisations to meet and carry out their activities.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE TESTING ACTION

Without repeating the objectives of the project or detailing the partners already presented, we would like to **highlight the origin of the application**, as this aspect makes it particularly relevant as a preliminary testing action. The lead organisation, Bosco Post Industriale - a recently established civic entity in Mantova - began collaborating with the Municipality during a previous initiative, *Lungo le Vie dell'Acqua*, a translocal project involving three Italian medium-sized cities (Cuneo in Piedmont, Rovereto in Trentino-Alto Adige, and Mantova), aimed at safeguarding the environmental and cultural heritage of local rivers through the lens of **Global Citizenship Education (GCE)**. Promoted by the Centro per la Cooperazione Internazionale, the project established Local Action Groups (LAGs) to co-design a shared GCE manifesto. Bosco Post Industriale became an active local GCE hub by participating in the LAG.

Given the **strong alignment between the goals of GCE and those of Residents of the Future** - particularly in terms of livability, well-being, high quality of life, civic awareness, and environmental transition - we decided to involve members of the LAG in the URBACT Local Group and to support Bosco's proposal for the Cariverona call. Several needs that emerged in the early ULG meetings were directly integrated into the project. While the construction of the open-air classroom is the tangible output, one of the proposal's greatest strengths lies in its **intangible outcomes**: the intention to deepen collaboration among diverse stakeholders and to invest in the role of a *community connector*, a figure capable of sustaining the network and activities beyond the duration of the funding.

## IMPACT AND LEARNING

The call for **proposals closed on 10 July 2024**, and the project was shaped through a **close collaboration between the Municipality of Mantova, the lead organisation (Bosco Post Industriale), and all involved partners**. This joint effort in the ideation, drafting, and submission of the proposal marked a significant first step in building a model of collaboration and co-design among institutional and civic actors.

The application was **positively evaluated in late October 2024**, and the **project officially began in January 2025**. As of June 2025, the first six months of activities have been completed, with tangible and meaningful results. Highlights include:

- **Three co-design workshops for the open-air classroom**, open to the public and centred on collaboratively addressing design constraints and opportunities;
- A **Post-Industrial Market** focused on themes of recycling, reuse, and sustainability, with talks, workshops and exhibitors;
- The launch of a **"Repair Café Tournée"**, bringing this community-based repair format to different neighbourhoods in the city, encouraging the repair of everyday items instead of discarding them;
- An **Open Day** connecting the local InformaGiovani service with entrepreneurs and freelancers, creating networking opportunities for young people.

To date, **over 600 people** have taken part in the project's various initiatives, all of which have been met with strong interest and positive feedback from the community.

**What we have learned so far** is that there is a clear appetite for participatory, sustainability-driven projects that blend environmental awareness, social connection, and practical skill-building. The inclusive nature of the activities has made it possible to engage a wide range of audiences - from young people and students to families and senior citizens. Moreover, the Repair Café format has proven to be a powerful entry point for deeper conversations on responsible consumption and circular practices.

Looking ahead, this first phase confirms the project's potential to act as a **long-term catalyst** for civic innovation and territorial cooperation. The strong response validates the importance of designing spaces and programmes that foster both community ownership and cross-sector collaboration.

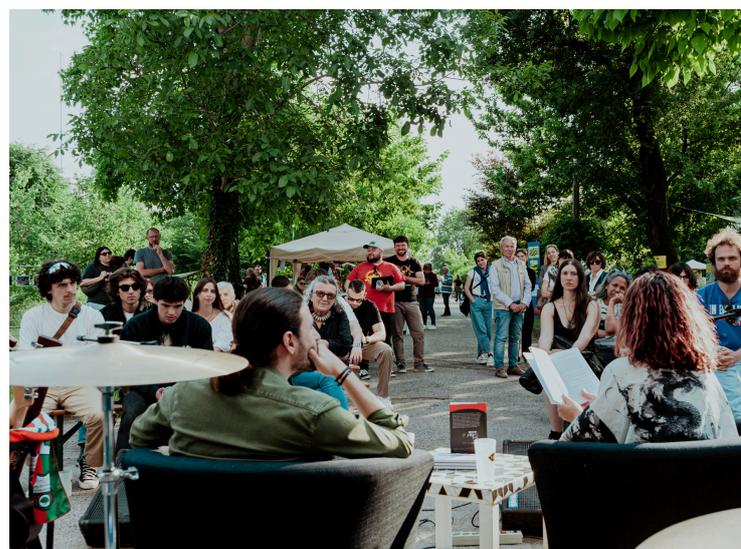
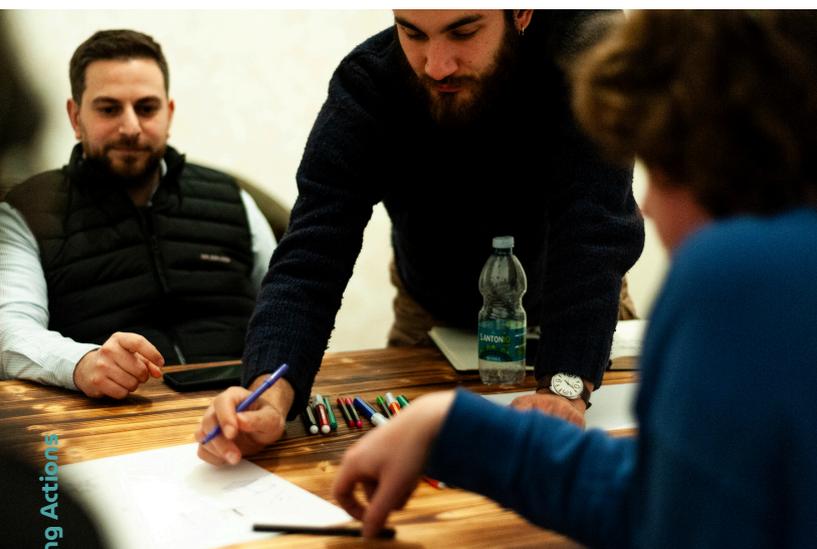


Photo Credits - Luca Di Noia

## 4.2 TA #1 - SUL FILO DEL FUTURO



**LINK TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1 - Enhance the tracking of actual inhabitants within the city** - Concerning the Operational Objective 1.2 Involvement of temporary residents

### CONTEXT

As part of the URBACT Residents of the Future project, the City of Mantova launched its first Testing Action to explore urban attractiveness from the perspective of young people. The events, titled *On the Edge of the Future*, aimed to activate reflective, participatory dialogue on three common life paths observed among the city's youth: staying, leaving, or returning. The main objective was to **listen deeply to the experiences and aspirations of Mantova's younger generations** and to **incorporate their voices into the city's urban transformation process**.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE TESTING ACTION

TA #1 is a cycle of three events in three different day and location:

- 9th of May 2025 at Creative Lab Mantova, located in the multicultural Lunetta district
- 10th of May 2025 in the historic centre of Mantova during the Centro in Festa event
- 13th of July 2025 in the green area on the opposite side of the Mincio River during Arci Festa

The format chosen was the *Oxford-Style Debate*, curated by the editorial and communication startup **BAG Magazine**. An Oxford-Style Debate is a structured format in which two or more opposing teams present arguments for or against a specific motion, with an audience voting before and after the debate to determine which side was more persuasive. BAG Magazine is an emerging organization that has proven to be a significant success story within the process activated by the ULG. It was discovered during the course of the project, engaged in collaboration with the local administration thanks to the ULG, and has since developed into a fruitful partner on multiple levels - one of which was the co-design and implementation of this Testing Action.

Three groups of young people represented the following positions:

- **Stay**
- **Leave**
- **Return**

Each group debated its position in front of a public audience, which voted both at the beginning and end of the event to determine which viewpoint was most convincing. The debates revealed a rich spectrum of motivations, concerns, and personal stories related to young people's relationships with Mantova.

#### **Return - Key Motivations:**

- Desire to give back to the community where they grew up
- Rebuilding emotional and professional networks
- A conscious choice to create value locally

### Stay – Key Motivations:

- Willingness to contribute to the city’s development
- Preference for a more sustainable and accessible lifestyle
- Belief in the potential of local opportunities despite systemic challenges

### Leave – Key Motivations:

- Access to better career and research opportunities
- Easier upward mobility abroad
- Need for independence and exploration

## IMPACT AND LEARNINGS

The two events involved around **60 participants**, attracting an intergenerational audience with a particularly strong presence of people **under the age of 35**. Both meetings showed a **high level of emotional and intellectual engagement**, demonstrating the participants’ genuine interest in the topics discussed and their desire to contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

The group that emerged as the relative winner was that of the **returnees**, meaning those who support the choice of returning to Mantova or moving there after gaining experience elsewhere. This result is particularly interesting for us, not only because it shows the willingness - especially among young people - to take part in the life of a city that, in their own words, “is experiencing a particularly lively moment,” but also because it illustrates how the audience, after listening to their motivations, became convinced that investing in Mantova represents a successful vision.



Photo Credits - BAG Magazine

## 4.3 TA #2 - SURVEY "HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE MANTOVA?"



**LINK TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1 - Enhance the tracking of actual inhabitants within the city** - Concerning the Operational Objective 1.1 Optimal Use of Existing Registration Tools

### CONTEXT

As part of a broader reflection on how to make medium-sized cities more attractive places to live and work, this survey was designed to gather input directly from those who experience Mantova on a daily basis. Recognising that each city has its own unique context - and that one-size-fits-all solutions are rarely effective - this **local consultation** aims to inform tailored strategies grounded in the real needs and aspirations of residents. The initiative focuses in particular on those who **work in Mantova**, with special attention to **young professionals**.

The idea for the survey also stemmed from an interest expressed within the ULG by several local businesses wishing to collaborate with the Municipality to collect data on employees' perspectives and needs. The first pilot distribution took place at **Opto Engineering S.p.A.**, a Mantova-based company specialising in advanced optical technologies for industrial vision systems. Founded in 2002, the company employs around 80 staff members. This pilot marked the beginning of a strategic dialogue between public administration and the local private sector, laying the groundwork for more data-informed and collaborative urban planning.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE TESTING ACTION

The questionnaire is structured into ten sections. Beyond a **standard demographic profile**, the survey opens with questions exploring **family background**, including whether the respondent has foreign origins. The second section focuses on place of **domicile**, asking respondents to specify their municipality - whether within the province of Mantova, elsewhere in Italy, or in the city of Mantova - and, if applicable, which city district they live in. It also investigates whether they consider themselves temporary residents. The third section delves into the **official place of residence**, examining whether it differs from the domicile and, if so, the reasons for not transferring their legal residency. Respondents are also asked if they are aware of the option to register with Mantova's Temporary Population Register. The fourth section looks at **educational background and employment status**, including the highest qualification obtained, current role within the company, and type of employment contract. Section five explores the **housing situation**, covering the type of accommodation, the number and type of cohabitants, and awareness of the municipal initiative "Qui abita il Futuro". The sixth section investigates **well-being and self-esteem**, including perceptions of personal health and wealth. The seventh section focuses on **leisure time**, asking what activities are pursued, in which parts of the city, and how satisfied respondents are with aspects of public space such as parks. The eighth section explores **spaces and services**, asking which social venues are known, what types of physical places or services are missing in Mantova, and interest in participating in workshops on selected topics. Section nine invites respondents to **rate the city** on a five-star scale and describe it briefly in their own words. The final section explores the **relationship with local government**, asking whether respondents would like to be consulted on public matters and on which topics, as well as their preferred channels for staying informed about events and youth-related initiatives promoted by the Municipality. The complete questionnaire can be found in Annex II. **The pilot survey was conducted between June and August 2025.**

## IMPACT AND LEARNING

The survey reached a small but diverse group of 12 young employees from a local company, offering a first glimpse into the perceptions of a target group rarely engaged so far in the project.

Two thirds of respondents were men, all Italian citizens, and two of them reported having one or both parents with a non-EU background. Seven participants live in Mantova - one of them only temporarily - with living arrangements varying between one third who still live with their family of origin and another third who own their home. Awareness of municipal policies is very limited: eight out of twelve had never heard of The Future Lives Here, the local programme supporting access to housing. All respondents, however, spend their free time within the city, with the majority declaring that most of it takes place at home.

When asked what they appreciate most, participants highlighted the city's green areas, such as parks and gardens. At the same time, even though most of those living in Mantova are based outside the historical centre, none were aware of the neighbourhood libraries, mentioning only the main one in the city centre. The picture that emerges on what is missing is more fragmented, yet particularly interesting: one in four respondents pointed to the lack of nightlife venues and free spaces to meet, while 16.7% called for more family- and child-friendly areas. Looking at services, a third of participants felt that more initiatives of active citizenship are needed, such as shared care for common spaces; others expressed a wish to be more engaged in roundtables or noted the lack of orientation opportunities.

**The responses provide a rich overview of how young workers under 35 perceive Mantova.** The diversity of their educational and professional backgrounds is striking given the small sample size, and the feedback collected already points to useful directions for refining the IAP. Perhaps most encouragingly, six respondents shared their email addresses to stay in touch, offering six new young voices ready to be involved in the next steps of the project and future activities.



## 4.4 TA #3 - DISSEMINATION OF THE STUDENT WELCOME KIT



**LINK TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2 and #4 - Support the retention of students, young families and young professionals/ entrepreneurs by strengthening public welfare services and tailored support system, and Develop a marketing strategy and visual identity-** Concerning its Operational Objective 2.3 Develop joint strategies with Universities and 4.1 Develop a contemporary brand identity rooted in retro-innovation.

### CONTEXT

In an effort to better support university students settling in the city, **Informagiovani Mantova** (Mantova Youth Center), in collaboration with the **University of Mantova** and the **Mantova Student Network**, has developed *Welcome to Mantova* - a new **practical guide tailored especially for international and non-local students**. The guide offers useful information and tips to help students navigate university life in Mantova, covering key aspects such as housing, mobility, services, and local culture. The document is available as a downloadable PDF at the following link: [Welcome to Mantova - Comune di Mantova](#).

While initially designed for students, many of the contents are **equally valuable for new residents more broadly**, offering practical guidance for anyone approaching life in the city for the first time.

However, the current format and distribution - as a downloadable PDF hosted on the municipal website - limit the document's accessibility and outreach potential. For this reason, the guide is now being considered for broader dissemination as a first step in a new city positioning strategy, aimed at presenting Mantova as a welcoming, attractive, and inclusive place to live, study, and work.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE TESTING ACTION

To enhance the guide's visibility and reach, a proposal that emerged during several ULG meetings - particularly those held as part of the mapping phase of the project "BAG Magazine and Future Professions" - was taken up and developed further. In May 2025, BAG Magazine launched a new platform called Mantova SOON, designed to centralise and promote cultural events and activities across Mantova and its province. The **Mantova SOON web-app** is accessible via both mobile and desktop devices at [mantovasoon.it](http://mantovasoon.it), offering a user-friendly interface with a simple search bar and a homepage listing events chronologically. Users can explore events by category- such as concerts, exhibitions, or dance performances - or use the interactive map to discover what is happening around them in real time. A particularly innovative feature of the platform is the ability to create **thematic playlists**, which curate articles and content around specific topics.

In less than a month, the platform recorded over **3,000 visits, 90 registered event partners, and 200 events uploaded**, demonstrating strong early interest and potential.

Building on this momentum, the idea is to publish dedicated articles for each theme covered in the Welcome to Mantova guide - such as housing, education, employment, and leisure - and to group these into a dedicated playlist within the Mantova SOON platform. This approach will allow key information to reach a wider and more diverse audience, including those who may not actively be searching for such resources, thus supporting the broader objective of positioning Mantova as an attractive and welcoming city.

## IMPACT AND LEARNING

We are still at the early stage of this pilot action, as we decided to involve a wider range of local actors in drafting the articles. The value of the activity lies not only in the output it will produce - making key information about Mantova more accessible to new or prospective residents - but also in the process itself, which creates opportunities for different organizations providing such services to meet, connect, and cooperate.

For example, the article on the new university programme in Green Chemistry was developed through collaboration between the university and local businesses. It was written directly by the lecturers involved and coordinated by the youth centre Informagiovani, demonstrating how this approach can foster synergies and strengthen local partnerships while **producing content that is both accurate and engaging**.

# MANTOVA SOON

Eventi Playlist Organizzatori Articoli

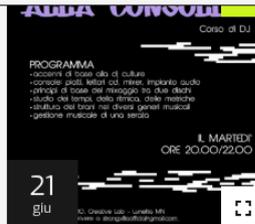
ACCEDI

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**JUMP FEST**  
Due giorni di sport, musica e street culture nel cuore della città.  
📍 Parco Te Mantova



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**ALLA CONSOLLE**  
Corso di DJ by Strongvilla  
📍 Creative Lab



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**MAKING BEATS**  
Corso di Produzione Musicale Elettronica by Strongvilla  
📍 Creative Lab



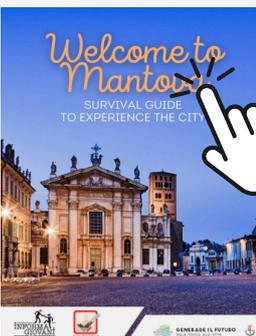
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**GENERARE STORIE - PRIMO PREMIO LETTERARIO E FOTOGRAFICO "DOVE SEI TU"**  
-  
Mantova e Sabbioneta  
📍 Heritage Centre - Peschiere di Giulio Romano, Mantova



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**"COSMOGONIE. NARRAZIONI VISIONARIE"**  
INAUGURAZIONE DELLA MOSTRA SABATO 31 MAGGIO ALLE 11  
Atmosfera oniriche in mostra a Suzzara dal 31 maggio al 19 luglio  
📍 Museo Galleria del Premio Suzzara



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**WELCOME TO MANTOVA**  
SURVIVAL GUIDE TO EXPERIENCE THE CITY



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**ARTISTI 5+1**  
Inaugurazione sabato 7 giugno ore 18.00  
📍 Galleria Arianna Sartori



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**9° MEMORIAL "MICHELE LA FATA"**



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**FRANCA D'ALFONSO. KOSMOS GEOMETRICO**



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**ARENA MIGNON: IL CINEMA D'ESTATE**

# **Section 5**

## Implementation, Monitoring & Risk

# 5.1 Cost and funding

Projects	Lead/ Partners	Potential Resources/ Call	Expected costs
<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1 - ENHANCE THE TRACKING OF ACTUAL INHABITANTS WITHIN THE CITY</b>			
<b>1.1 Optimal use of existing registration tools</b> <b>1.2 Involvement of temporary residents</b>			
1.1.1 Data visualisation and data analytics	Municipal One-Stop Shop Department for Businesses and Citizens; Political Office for Innovation, Project Planning and Fundraising Coordination, European Citizenship, Digital Agenda, Smart City	PNRR – Mission 1 Digitalisation and Innovation; ERDF regional calls for smart city development; Horizon Europe or Digital Europe Programme	€100.000 - €300.000
1.1.2 Experimenting with New Tracking Models (e.g., mobile network data)	Municipal One-Stop Shop Department for Businesses and Citizens; Political Office for Innovation, Project Planning and Fundraising Coordination, Digital Agenda, Smart City	PNRR – Mission 1 Digitalisation and Innovation; regional smart mobility programmes; Horizon Europe (Cluster 5: Climate, Energy and Mobility); Living-in.EU	€80.000 - €250.000
1.2.1 Informal Gathering Spaces	Eu Project Office; local NGOs and Third Sector Organisations	regional and private foundation calls for social innovation/cultural spaces (Cariplo, Cariverona)	€30.000 - €80.000

Projects	Lead/ Partners	Potential Resources/ Call	Expected costs
<b>SO #2 - SUPPORT THE RETENTION OF STUDENTS, YOUNG FAMILIES, AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS/ ENTREPRENEURS BY STRENGTHENING PUBLIC WELFARE SERVICES AND TAILORED SUPPORT SYSTEM</b>			
<b>2.1 Develop initiatives and integrated housing policies</b> <b>2.2 Implement targeted welfare tools for specific demographics</b> <b>2.3 Define joint strategies with Universities</b>			
2.1.1 Qui Abita il Futuro	Department of Welfare and Social Services; Political Office for Public Works, Neighborhoods, and Housing Policies; Political Office for Innovation, Project Planning and Fundraising Coordination	National housing support schemes, PNRR Mission 5 (Inclusion and Cohesion), or ERDF regional programmes	€150.000 - €400.000
2.1.2 Regulations on Short-Term Rentals in the UNESCO Historic Centre	Department of Culture, Tourism, and City Promotion; Department of Welfare and Social Services; UNESCO Chair PoliMi	National housing funds, PNRR Mission 5 (Urban Cohesion and Housing), EU programmes on sustainable cultural tourism and heritage conservation (e.g. URBACT, UIA, or Horizon Europe - Cluster 2	€50.000 - €150.000
2.2.1 Connected Care Points - Blended Digital and Local Support for Well-Being and Care Careers	Department of Welfare and Social Service, schools, libraries, and community centres	PNRR Mission 5 (Social Inclusion and Health), FSE+ regional programmes, and national/private funds targeting youth employment and health innovation	€100.000 - €250.000

<p>2.2.2 "Life Skills Lab" - Empowerment Workshops for Students and Young Workers</p>	<p>Department of Educational Services and Public Education; schools, universities, co-working spaces, LTO and training centres, youth centres</p>	<p>Erasmus+ (Youth and Education strands), FSE+, dedicated mental health and youth empowerment calls from national/regional authorities and private fund</p>	<p>yearly €60.000 - €150.000</p>
<p>2.3.1 University Living Lab - Co-Designing a Student-Friendly City</p>	<p>Department of Educational Services and Public Education, university campuses, student associations (such as Mantova Student Network), and the Tavolo Politiche Giovanili (Youth Policy Roundtable)</p>	<p>Erasmus+ (KA220 and Alliances for Innovation), FSE+ (education and youth inclusion axes), PNRR education and territorial cohesion programmes</p>	<p>pilot phase €80.000 - €200.000</p>

Projects	Lead/ Partners	Potential Resources/ Call	Expected costs
<b>SO #3 - ADDRESS THE MISMATCH BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS AND LABOR MARKET NEEDS</b>			
<p><b>3.1 Develop specialised training programs to build a skilled workforce aligned with the needs of current and emerging local businesses</b></p> <p><b>3.2 Create tailored support mechanisms to actively engage recent graduates in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem</b></p> <p><b>3.3 Promote business innovation, start- ups, and incubators by fostering an enabling environment that attracts new capital and investments.</b></p>			
3.1.1 Sector-Specific Skills Labs (Green & Circular Economy Focus)	Department of Educational Services and Public Education, Department of General Affairs, Political Office for Economic Development, vocational training providers, LTO, companies (i.e. Valdaro industrial zone)	FSE+ (Youth and Employment priorities), PNRR Mission 4 (Education and Research), ERDF Smart Specialisation Funds, especially for green and digital transition goals, private foundations	pilot phase €150.000– €300.000,
3.1.2 Dual Education Pathways in Strategic Sectors	Department of Educational Services and Public Education, Department of General Affairs, Political Office for Economic Development, universities, vocational training centres, and local business	FSE+ (Youth Employment and Skills), Erasmus+ (Alliances for Innovation / Centres of Vocational Excellence), and PNRR (Mission 4 - Education and Research), private contributions from businesses and foundations	pilot phase €200.000– €400.000

3.2.1 Student-Work Positions	Department of Educational Services and Public Education, Political Office for Economic Development, universities, training centres, businesses, cultural institutions, and third-sector organisations	ESF+ priorities on youth employment and education-to-work transitions, national PNRR funding on work-based learning and youth engagement, regional funds and private foundations	pilot €150.000- €250.000.
3.2.2. Local Talent for Local Transition - Graduate Retention Programme	Economic Development and Education Departments, university career offices, local industry consortia, and innovation hubs	ESF+, Erasmus+, or regional development funds (ERDF)	first phase €200.000- €300.000
3.2.3 Entry-Level Career Support Programme	Department of Educational Services, chambers of commerce, Department of Welfare and Social Services, local employers	ESF+ Youth Guarantee schemes, national youth policy instruments, and municipal co-financing	€250,000- €350,000
3.3.1 Territorial Innovation Incubator (TII)	Department of General Affairs, Political Office for Innovation, Project Planning and Fundraising Coordination, local innovation hub, university campuses, local business networks	ERDF (innovation & SME support), national recovery funds (PNRR), and university partnerships through Horizon Europe or Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions	€400.000- €600.000
3.3.2 Smart Work & Digital Nomad Attraction Package	Political Office for Innovation, Project Planning, Fundraising Coordination and Smartcities, Chamber of Commerce, coworking spaces, local real estate and tourism networks	National and regional innovation attractiveness schemes, ERDF (urban regeneration & digitalisation), and even private-public sponsorships (e.g. local foundations or real estate developers)	one year pilot €250.000- €350.000

Projects	Lead/ Partners	Potential Resources/ Call	Expected costs
<b>SO #4 - DEVELOP A MARKETING STRATEGY AND VISUAL IDENTITY</b>			
<b>4.1 Develop a contemporary brand identity rooted in retro-innovation.</b>			
4.1.1 Co-create Communication Tools and Materials with Local Stakeholders	Office of the Mayor, local Youth Center universities, cultural organisations (e.g. BAG Magazine) and youth networks (e.g. Mantova Student Network)	Local funding (Municipal communication budget), EU Creative Europe, Interreg, or national digitalisation and civic inclusion schemes	€80.000- €120.000
4.1.2 Develop a Cross-Sector Brand Narrative Integrating Culture, Innovation, and Sustainability	Office of the Mayor, Department of Culture, Tourism, and City Promotion, Mantova and Sabbioneta UNESCO Office, educational institutions, Chamber of Commerce	ERDF branding and attractiveness funds, regional smart specialisation strategies (RIS3), national culture and innovation initiatives, regional funds	€100.000- €150.000
4.1.3 Launch a Visibility Campaign Targeting Young Talent and Remote Workers	Office of the Mayor, Department of Culture, Tourism, and City Promotion, Mantova and Sabbioneta UNESCO Office, Chamber of Commerce, innovation hubs, universities, creative agencies, and local employers.	URBACT Transfer Networks, ERDF (place branding, innovation), or national tourism and talent attraction programmes	€150.000- €200.000

# 5.2 Risk & Forecasting

To build a realistic and strategic roadmap towards our vision of Mantova as an attractive, inclusive, and vibrant city, we adopted a **backcasting approach** - starting from the future we want to achieve and working backwards to identify the concrete actions, systems, and conditions needed to get there.

## 1. Current State and SWOT-Based Assessment

Our starting point was a comprehensive analysis of the city's current situation, conducted through a participatory SWOT analysis involving institutional actors, civil society, and the URBACT Local Group (ULG). This highlighted key challenges such as youth outmigration, limited alignment between education and labour market, and data fragmentation. However, it also revealed valuable assets: a strong cultural identity, active civil society, and a growing commitment to innovation and experimentation, factors that form the foundation of our action plan.

## 2. Building the Roadmap

From this shared analysis, we developed a multi-phase roadmap anchored in short-, medium-, and long-term priorities. Initial actions (2024-2026) focus on scaling up pilot projects and reinforcing digital infrastructure for data-driven governance. The following phase (2026-2030) aims to consolidate services and expand impact - particularly in welfare innovation, housing, and youth retention. A third phase will address systemic actions such as city branding and attraction of new residents, which require stronger institutional coordination and established foundations.

## 3. Barriers, Uncertainties, and Adaptive Management

Throughout the backcasting process, we identified potential barriers and uncertainties - including limited institutional capacity, resistance to change, data privacy concerns, and volatile housing dynamics (e.g., short-term rentals). To address these, we are developing contingency plans, such as phased implementation, pilot-based scaling, and cross-sector partnerships. Moreover, a crisis management framework will be designed to respond to unforeseen disruptions, especially those linked to economic or demographic shocks.

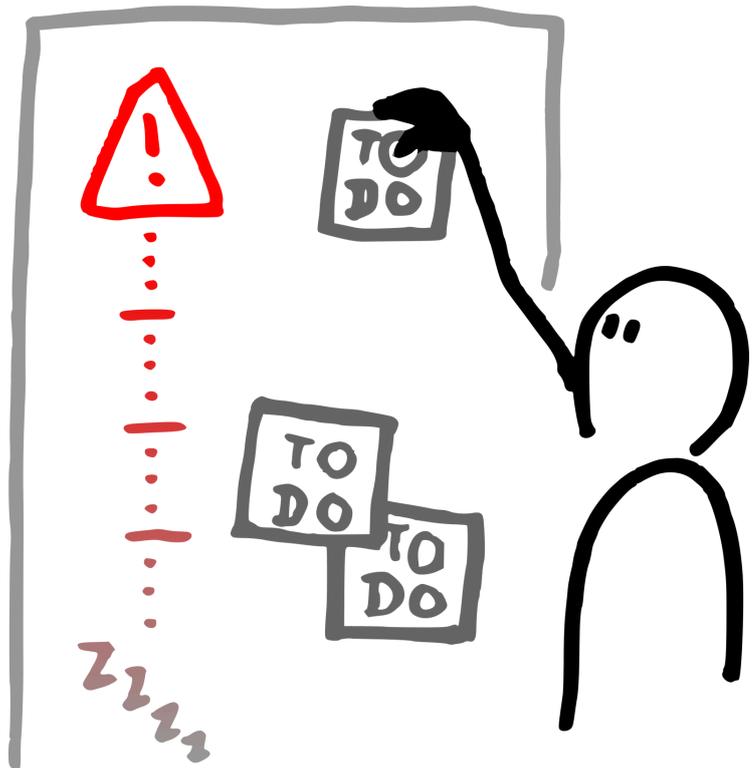
Importantly, our strategy includes mechanisms to track progress and adjust over time. We are committed to establishing a monitoring and feedback system, combining quantitative indicators with qualitative insights from stakeholders. This adaptive approach will allow for mid-course corrections and support evidence-based decision-making.

## 4. Governance Structure

Successful implementation requires a clear and accountable governance structure. The Eu project and Fundraising team will be in charge of implement the IAP within future projects, supported by cross-sectoral staff with expertise in data management, social policy, and youth engagement. Technical support will be ensured through partnerships with local universities and external experts, especially for actions involving digital tools and urban analytics.

## 5. Ongoing Role of the ULG

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) will continue to play a key role in the implementation phase. Building on its experience and active contribution during the planning process, the ULG will evolve into a permanent consultation and co-design body, with a focus on youth and student engagement. In particular, it will align with and strengthen the existing Youth Policy Roundtable, transforming it into a strategic asset for innovation and democratic participation in local policymaking. This will ensure continuity, local ownership, and a sustained capacity for civic dialogue throughout the life of the IAP.



# 5.3 Expected Results and Indicators

Strategic Objective	Expected Results	Key Indicators
<b>SO #1 - ENHANCE THE TRACKING OF ACTUAL INHABITANTS WITHIN THE CITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of an integrated digital dashboard for urban data visualisation and analysis.</li> <li>• Improved institutional capacity to monitor demographic trends and urban flows in real time.</li> <li>• Data-driven insights available to inform policy decisions.</li> <li>• Enhanced stakeholder engagement through accessible, interpretable visual data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dashboard/platform developed and operational by 2031</li> <li>• At least 3 departments using the platform in policy-making processes</li> <li>• Number of visualisations generated per month</li> <li>• Stakeholder satisfaction rate with the dashboard</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful piloting of an anonymised mobile network data model to monitor population flows.</li> <li>• Identification of high-impact areas in terms of temporary or non-resident population pressure.</li> <li>• Evidence-based planning of mobility, events, and temporary services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pilot project implemented in collaboration with a telecom provider</li> <li>• Real-time presence maps covering at least 70% of city</li> <li>• Data reports produced and shared with relevant departments</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of accessible and inclusive informal gathering spaces in key urban areas</li> <li>• Strengthened community engagement</li> <li>• Pilot implementation of co-designed public spaces</li> <li>• Creation of a scalable model for community-driven spatial activation within the city.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of informal gathering spaces created or revitalised</li> <li>• Number of community-led activities hosted in the new spaces</li> <li>• Percentage of participants reporting improved access to inclusive public spaces</li> <li>• Number of partnerships or co-design processes activated with local associations</li> </ul>

<p><b>SO #2 - SUPPORT THE RETENTION OF STUDENTS, YOUNG FAMILIES, AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS/ ENTREPRENEURS BY STRENGTHENING PUBLIC WELFARE SERVICES AND TAILORED SUPPORT SYSTEM</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attraction of new residents, particularly young individuals and families.</li> <li>• Improved access to affordable housing in strategic urban areas.</li> <li>• Strengthening of the local community and neighbourhood revitalisation.</li> <li>• Greater integration between housing, employment, and urban regeneration policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new residents supported by the programme.</li> <li>• % of beneficiaries under 40 years old.</li> <li>• % of supported residents employed locally after 12 months.</li> <li>• Number of housing units activated through the scheme.</li> <li>• Resident satisfaction rate (survey-based)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced use of housing stock between tourism and residential needs.</li> <li>• Protection of the social fabric and residential character of the historic centre.</li> <li>• Reduced pressure on long-term rental market.</li> <li>• Improved governance and transparency of the short-term rental sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of short-term rental units registered and monitored.</li> <li>• Ratio of short-term vs. long-term rentals (pre- and post-regulation).</li> <li>• Number of consultations with stakeholders (e.g., residents, tourism operators).</li> <li>• Resident population stability or growth in the UNESCO area.</li> <li>• Implementation of new regulatory framework by defined deadline</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access to psychological and social support services.</li> <li>• Reduction in social isolation, especially among young people and families.</li> <li>• Awareness and interest in care-related professions among youth.</li> <li>• Stronger partnerships between digital and local welfare systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of active Connected Care Points.</li> <li>• Number of users accessing services (digital and in-person).</li> <li>• % of users aged 14–35.</li> <li>• Number of awareness events or career orientation activities conducted.</li> <li>• % of participants reporting improved well-being (based on surveys)</li> </ul>

<b>SO #2 - SUPPORT THE RETENTION OF STUDENTS, YOUNG FAMILIES, AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS/ ENTREPRENEURS BY STRENGTHENING PUBLIC WELFARE SERVICES AND TAILORED SUPPORT SYSTEM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved soft skills and emotional resilience among young people.</li> <li>• Increased ability to cope with stress and life transitions.</li> <li>• Creation of peer-learning communities around well-being and empowerment.</li> <li>• Stronger links between youth spaces, schools, and mental health professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of workshops delivered and participants engaged.</li> <li>• % of participants completing the full cycle of workshops.</li> <li>• Pre/post assessment of life skills (self-evaluation or facilitator scoring).</li> <li>• Number of youth centres/schools involved.</li> <li>• % of participants who report applying learned skills in daily life</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased student engagement in urban co-design and local policy processes.</li> <li>• Improved quality of life for students in housing, mobility, culture, and social life.</li> <li>• Stronger institutional collaboration between Municipality and universities.</li> <li>• Foundation for long-term strategies to retain graduates locally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of co-designed pilot actions launched.</li> <li>• Level of participation of student representatives (by university).</li> <li>• Number of ULG/Youth Policy Roundtable meetings addressing student needs.</li> <li>• Student satisfaction rate (based on dedicated surveys).</li> <li>• Number of graduates choosing to remain in Mantova post-graduation (tracked annually)</li> </ul>

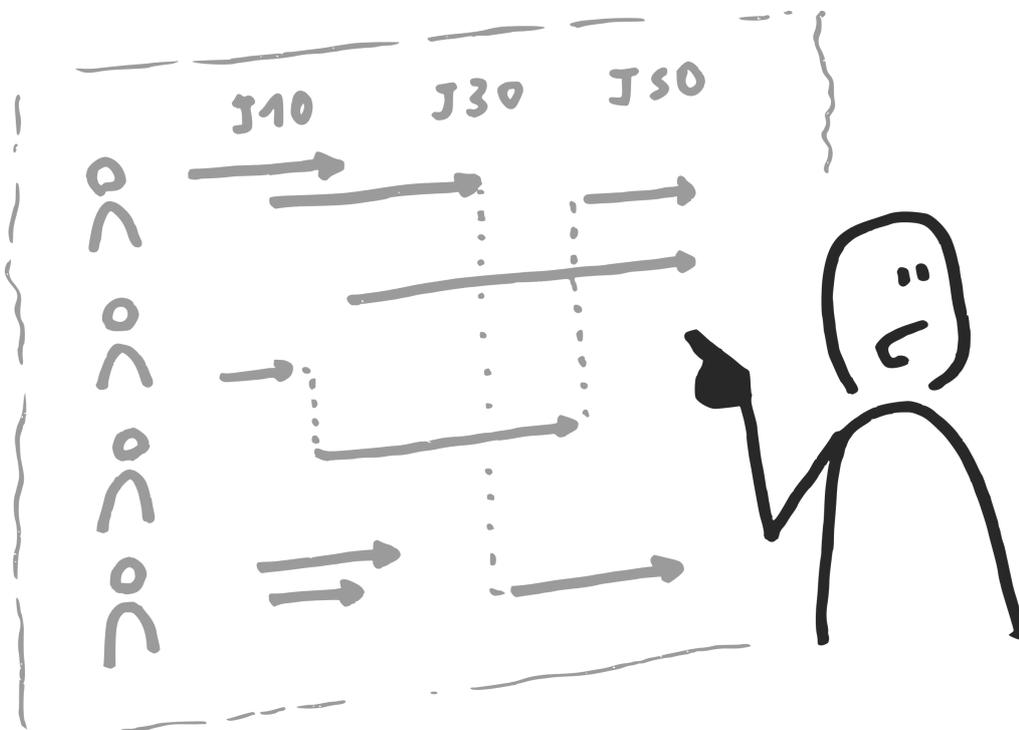
<b>SO #3 - ADDRESS THE MISMATCH BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS AND LABOR MARKET NEEDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened alignment between vocational training and labour market needs in strategic sectors.</li> <li>• Increased technical skill levels among students and job seekers.</li> <li>• Enhanced cooperation between education providers and companies, particularly in Valdaro.</li> <li>• Reduced skills mismatch and improved employability in green and sustainable industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Labs established and operational.</li> <li>• Number of learners completing training programmes.</li> <li>• % of learners employed in related sectors within 6 months.</li> <li>• Number of companies involved in co-design and delivery.</li> <li>• Satisfaction rate from both learners and employers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of work-based learning opportunities in emerging fields.</li> <li>• Stronger integration of SMEs into vocational and higher education ecosystems.</li> <li>• Better career outcomes for students in sustainability-focused sectors.</li> <li>• Institutionalised partnerships between education, public sector, and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of dual education pathways activated.</li> <li>• % of students participating in dual pathways.</li> <li>• Number of SMEs involved in training programmes.</li> <li>• Retention rate of graduates in local companies.</li> <li>• Increase in job placement rates in target sectors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater exposure of students to real-life work environments.</li> <li>• Strengthened links between education and local employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Increased attractiveness of Mantova as a place to study and work.</li> <li>• Enhanced local social capital through cross-sector collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of student-work positions created annually.</li> <li>• % of students participating who are enrolled in local institutions.</li> <li>• Sectors and types of organisations hosting placements.</li> <li>• % of participants continuing to work locally after graduation.</li> <li>• Employer and student satisfaction rates</li> </ul>

<b>SO #3 - ADDRESS THE MISMATCH BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS AND LABOR MARKET NEEDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased retention of highly skilled graduates in Mantova.</li> <li>• Stronger connection between training and local employment in green and innovative sectors.</li> <li>• Development of collaborative R&amp;D and thesis projects with local companies.</li> <li>• Reinforcement of Valdaro and related innovation clusters as talent anchors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of graduates supported by the programme.</li> <li>• % of graduates employed in the local area after 12 months.</li> <li>• Number of thesis projects co-developed with local businesses.</li> <li>• Participation rates in targeted fields (e.g., Green Chemistry).</li> <li>• Increase in graduate stay rate in Mantova.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smoother transition from education to employment for young people.</li> <li>• Reduction of financial and social barriers for early-career professionals.</li> <li>• Strengthening of local workforce with young talent.</li> <li>• Increased attractiveness for returnees and former students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of beneficiaries receiving support (financial, mentoring, services).</li> <li>• % of participants securing employment within 6 months.</li> <li>• Number of mentorship matches created.</li> <li>• % of returnees to Mantova among programme participants.</li> <li>• Participant satisfaction and retention rate.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidation of Mantova's innovation ecosystem around youth employment and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• Increased capacity of LTO Mantova to act as an innovation hub.</li> <li>• Growth of early-stage entrepreneurial activity and R&amp;D collaborations.</li> <li>• Stronger links between academia, labour market, and local development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of start-ups and early-stage projects supported.</li> <li>• Number of mentorship and business development sessions held.</li> <li>• Number of R&amp;D projects co-developed with universities.</li> <li>• Number of research-based positions activated (e.g., PhDs, postdocs).</li> <li>• Increase in young entrepreneurs establishing businesses locally.</li> </ul>

**SO #3 - ADDRESS THE MISMATCH BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS AND LABOR MARKET NEEDS**

- Positioning of Mantova as a welcoming city for remote professionals.
- Attraction of new residents with high human capital and mobility.
- Activation of underused housing and co-working assets.
- Enrichment of the local innovation ecosystem through new networks.

- Number of smart workers/digital nomads relocated annually.
- Number of co-working spaces participating in the scheme.
- Average length of stay of programme participants.
- Number of professional integration events organised.
- Participant satisfaction and perceived quality of life



<b>SO #4 - DEVELOP A MARKETING STRATEGY AND VISUAL IDENTITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of communication materials that reflect the city's identity and values.</li> <li>• Increased engagement of local stakeholders in defining and promoting Mantova's image.</li> <li>• Strengthened sense of belonging for new residents and community members.</li> <li>• Improved visibility of Mantova as a city where tradition meets innovation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of co-created materials produced (e.g. Welcome Kits, videos, brochures).</li> <li>• Number of stakeholders involved in co-creation processes (e.g. workshops, consultations).</li> <li>• User satisfaction with Welcome Kits (survey to new residents/smart workers).</li> <li>• Reach and engagement metrics of digital/social campaigns.</li> <li>• Number of downloads/views of promotional materials online.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of a unified city narrative across public, private, and civic actors.</li> <li>• Strengthened internal and external perception of Mantova's strategic identity.</li> <li>• Increased coherence and recognisability in institutional communication.</li> <li>• Enhanced positioning of Mantova in regional, national, and international contexts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion and formal adoption of the narrative framework by key institutions.</li> <li>• Number of organisations using the brand narrative in their communication.</li> <li>• Consistency index of messaging across sectors (based on content analysis).</li> <li>• Number of training or dissemination sessions held with local stakeholders.</li> <li>• Improvement in city brand perception (based on pre/post campaign survey).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raised awareness of Mantova as a livable, creative, and innovation-friendly city.</li> <li>• Attraction of remote professionals, young talents, and new economic actors.</li> <li>• Strengthened talent pipeline in strategic sectors (green economy, creative industries).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach and engagement of campaign across key platforms and target groups.</li> <li>• Number of newcomers (digital nomads, remote workers, professionals) citing the campaign as a motivation.</li> <li>• Increase in website/social media traffic on city-related info hubs.</li> <li>• Media coverage related to the campaign</li> </ul>

# Conclusions

Thanks go to all members of the **URBACT Local Group (ULG)**, to those who took part in the Sul Filo del Futuro events, to the various Testing Actions, and to everyone who, in different ways, contributed to the project by sharing perspectives, opinions, and ideas.

**Your commitment, active participation, and enthusiasm were essential in building a truly participatory process**, one that is genuinely oriented towards the real needs of the city.

To ensure that the content of this IAP does not remain a dead letter or a report gathering dust in a drawer, it is essential that it is embraced by everyone as a **dynamic tool**: a means to align what data tell us today with the vision we want for Mantova's future. This implies continuing to propose ideas, maintaining an open dialogue with the administration so that these strategic directions are pursued, and, above all, participating actively.

As emerged during one of the most recent public meetings, there is a **strong willingness to be involved**, to make one's voice heard, and to turn ideas into concrete actions. We therefore invite you to contact us by email at [progetti@comune.mantova.it](mailto:progetti@comune.mantova.it), stay informed about upcoming activities, and contribute to ongoing processes of reflection and co-design. We are working to structure these moments so that they become an integral and stable part of our way of operating, transforming citizen participation into a consolidated, everyday practice.

**Thank you all for making this journey possible and for continuing to build, together, a more inclusive, attractive, and vibrant Mantova.**

# ANNEX I

## UNIVERSITIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION

University / Institution	Courses Offered
<b>SSML - Mediazione Linguistica</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA in Language Mediation, Translation and Interpreting</li><li>• BA in Language Mediation and International Relations</li><li>• BA in Language Mediation and Tourism Management</li></ul>
<b>University of Brescia (UniBs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA in Business and Management (focus: Cultural Activities Management)</li><li>• MA in Marketing for Made in Italy</li><li>• BA in Professional Education</li><li>• BA in Physiotherapy</li><li>• BA in Nursing</li></ul>
<b>Politecnico di Milano</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA in Architectural Design</li><li>• MA in Architectural Design and History</li></ul>
<b>University of Milan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA in Midwifery</li><li>• BA in Speech and Language Therapy</li></ul>
<b>University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UniMore)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA in Computer Engineering</li><li>• BA in Green and Sustainable Chemistry</li></ul>
<b>University of the Republic of San Marino</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA in Construction and Land Management</li></ul>
<b>Unicollege Mantova</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA in Language Mediation – Criminology and Cybersecurity</li><li>• BA in Language Mediation – Marketing and Communication</li><li>• BA in Language Mediation – Fashion &amp; Luxury Management</li><li>• BA in Language Mediation – Tourism, Arts and Culture Management</li><li>• BA in Language Mediation – International and Diplomatic Relations</li><li>• BA in Language Mediation in Three Languages</li></ul>
<b>School of Restoration and Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Santa Paola</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3-Year Course: Technician in Cultural Heritage Restoration</li><li>• MA in Cultural Heritage Restoration</li></ul>
<b>Lucio Campiani Conservatory of Music</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undergraduate and Master's Degree Programs in Music</li></ul>
<b>San Francesco Institute of Religious Sciences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BA and MA in Religious Sciences</li></ul>

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTERS

Training Entity	Courses Offered
<b>For.Ma Mantova</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional training courses</li> <li>• Short courses</li> <li>• Free courses for the unemployed (e.g. hairdressing, cooking, waiting staff)</li> </ul>
<b>IFOA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional training courses</li> <li>• Short-term and free courses for the unemployed (e.g. baking, healthcare assistant)</li> <li>• Paid specialisation courses with industry links</li> </ul>
<b>CESVIP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional training courses</li> <li>• Short courses</li> <li>• Free courses for the unemployed</li> </ul>
<b>ENAIP Lombardia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional training courses</li> <li>• Short courses</li> <li>• Free courses for the unemployed (<i>content being</i></li> </ul>

## POST-DIPLOMA TECHNICAL INSTITUTES (ITS)

Institution	Courses Offered
<b>Fondazione ITS per l'Agroalimentare Sostenibile – Territorio di Mantova</b>	<p>- Higher Technician for the Digital &amp; Green Transition in Agro-Food Production and Processing- Higher Technician for the Food Supply Chain</p>