

Driving change for better cities

SMARTCITY
EXPO WORLD CONGRESS

HOW TO CREATE A GREENER URBAN ECONOMY? STORIES FROM URBACT CITIES.

Eileen Crowley – EcoCore LE

Jose Costero – In4Green LE

05.11.2025 / SCEWC / Barcelona

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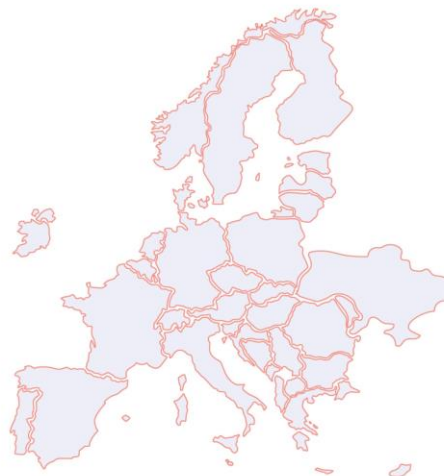
URBACT supports sustainable urban development in Europe through:

Networks of European cities

Capacity building activities & tools



Knowledge uptake and sharing



525 cities involved in 65 networks

URBACT



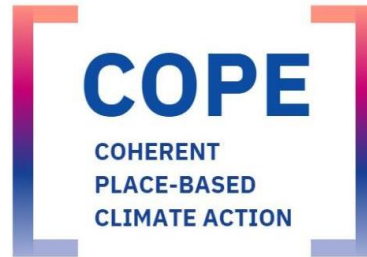
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URBACT KNOWLEDGE HUB ON GREENING URBAN ECONOMIES

5 ACTION PLANNING NETWORKS



LET'S GO CIRCULAR!
Paving the way for a circular transition of cities



The **EcoCore** Project
Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

In4Green

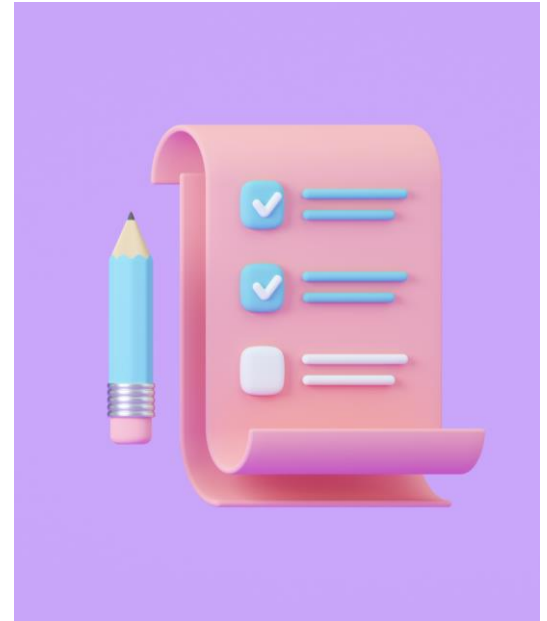
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TODAY'S SESSION

1. Welcome & scene setting.
2. Framing introduction.
3. Pitches from 5 European cities.
4. Questions from the audience.
5. Wrap up.





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What role should cities play in the transition towards a greener economy? Multiple choice.

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A) Leading and coordinating stakeholders

B) Piloting new models and solutions

C) Providing funding and infrastructure

D) Facilitating citizen participation

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WHAT IS A GREEN URBAN ECONOMY?

A green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

UN Environment Programme

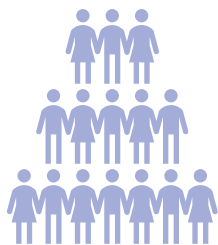
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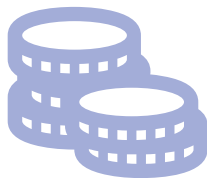
WHY CITIES MATTER

The key role of European Cities:



75%

Population



70%

GDP



70%

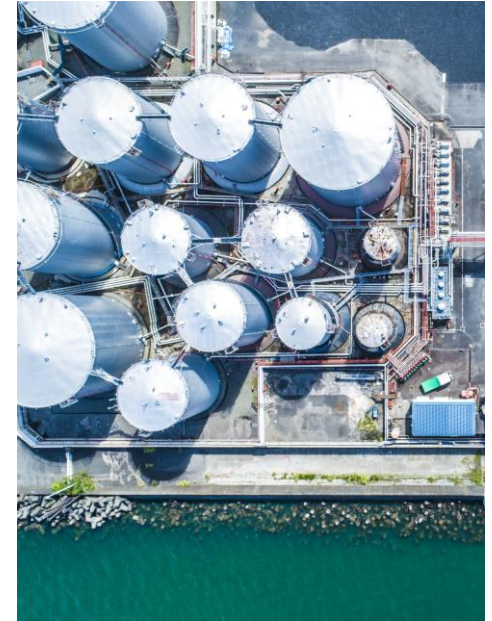
CO₂ Emissions

KEY AREAS OF ACTION

1. **Energy, buildings, public space & spatial planning**
2. **Circular economy**
3. **Mobility and logistics**
4. **Nature-based solutions & green infrastructure**
5. **Green skills & jobs**
6. **Digitalization & new technologies**
7. **Innovation, research & development**

MAIN CHALLENGES

- **Fragmented governance**
- **Siloed stakeholder ecosystem**
- **Limited budgets**
- **Competing interests and priorities**



THE BENEFITS

- **Improved quality of life**
- **Cleaner environment**
- **Healthier citizens**
- **New business and job opportunities**
- **Stronger community ties**



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**HOW TO CREATE A GREENER
URBAN ECONOMY?**

**STORIES FROM URBACT
CITIES.**

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HOW TO CREATE A GREENER URBAN ECONOMY? STORIES FROM URBACT CITIES.

In4Green

Avilés, Spain.

Manuel Campa, Councilor.

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[ONCE UPON A TIME...

Avilés was once a heavy industrial city — steel, shipyards, smoke. A proud heritage, but also a legacy of pollution with industrial decline.



[AND EVERY DAY...

For decades, our
challenge was to reinvent
our economy
— to move from heavy
industry to innovation,
sustainability, and new
jobs.



UNTIL ONE DAY...

In 2015, the city decided to act.

We created a new model of *public-private collaboration* to lead the industrial transition.



BECAUSE OF THAT... FIRST STEP

We launched the **Avilés
Isla de la Innovación
Science & Technology
Park** —
a hub connecting
business, academia, and
public institutions



BECAUSE OF THAT... THE PROJECT

The park became the backbone of the Avilés Innovation Model — a living ecosystem for R&D, circular economy, and green industry.



BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPLEMENTATION

Every year we deliver concrete actions: forums, STEAM programs, training, and investment attraction campaigns.



[AND BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPACT

**Avilés now hosts 10 R&D centres —
8 created in just six years —
— driving digital and green innovation.**



UNTIL FINALLY... MAIN RESULT

The city has become a benchmark for industrial innovation in Spain, with strong public-private cooperation as its signature.



WHAT WE LEARNED

**Collaboration works when everyone wins.
Universities, companies,
and the city together
make innovation real.**



© Sergio López

WHAT COMES NEXT

**We keep advancing through In4Green —
towards a circular, low-carbon, and competitive
industrial future.**

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EcoCore

Balbriggan, Fingal

Aoife Sheridan

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ONCE UPON A TIME...

Balbriggan was a quiet rural town, which grew rapidly because of the availability of land and its location along a strategic transport corridor



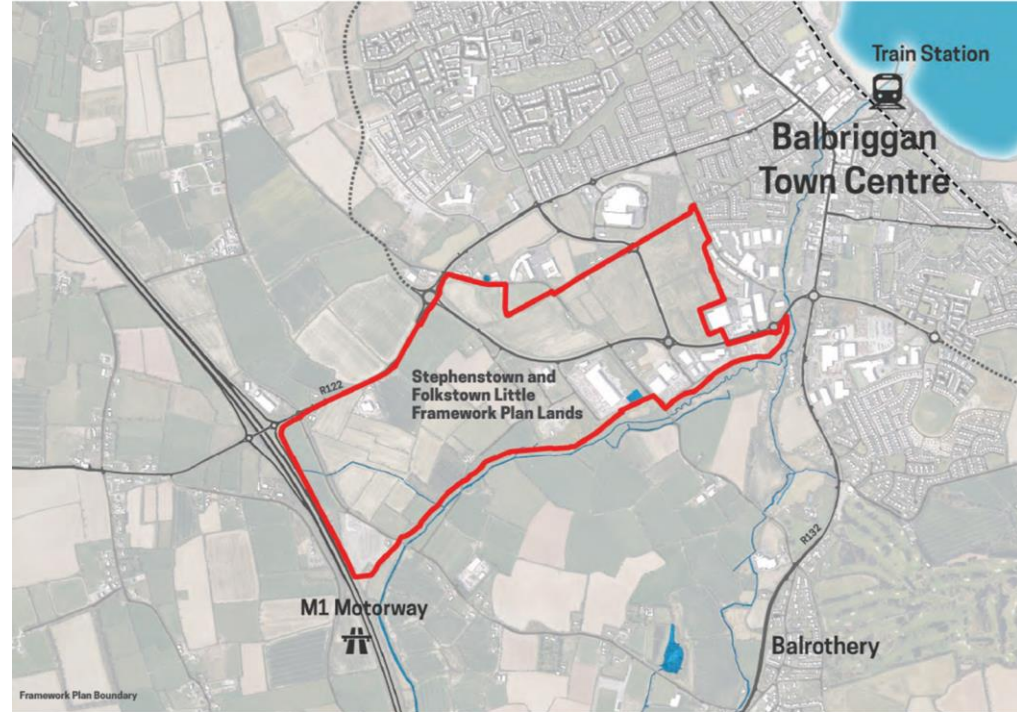
[AND EVERY DAY...

Citizens left the town to work as there are few businesses in the town and very few jobs for the young population



UNTIL ONE DAY...

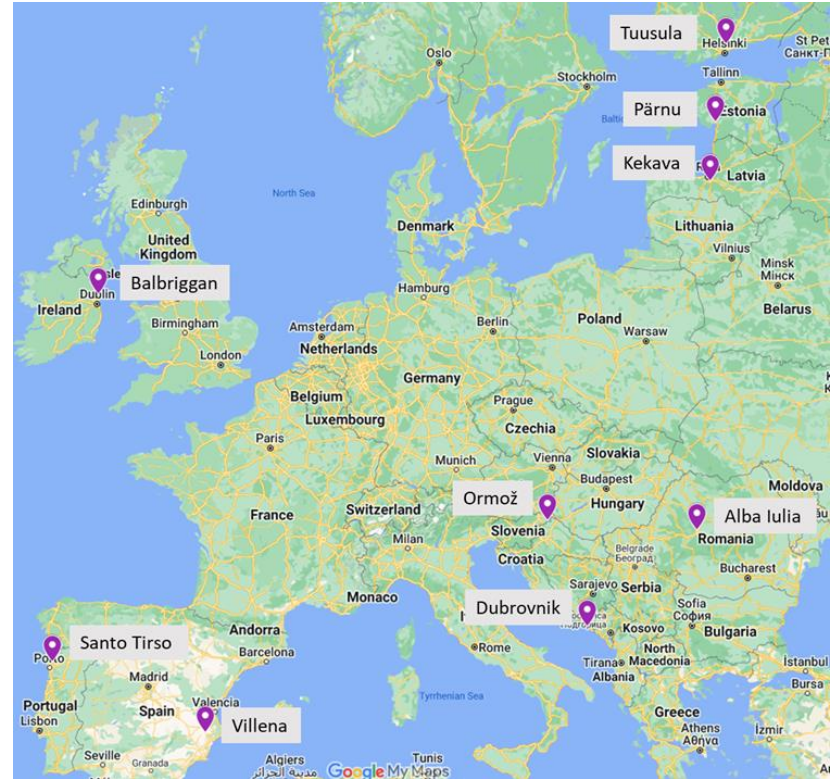
To stop people leaving the town for work and adding to carbon emissions, the municipality bought 200 acres of greenfield land to develop a business zone and create local jobs



Stephenstown and Folkstown Little Framework Plan Boundary

BECAUSE OF THAT... FIRST STEP

Fingal developed the EcoCore project with small cities across Europe facing the same challenges - sustainable industrial development, green investment attraction, promoting the circular economy and developing a workforce with green skills



BECAUSE OF THAT... THE PROJECT

Fingal brought together multi-level, multi-sectoral stakeholders to develop a masterplan to guide the future sustainable development of the industrial zone



**Stephenstown (FP 4.A) and
Folkstown Little (FP 4.B)
Framework Plan**

DRAFT
October 2025

BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPLEMENTATION

EUI City to City Exchange

Hackathon

Proactive engagement
with business & universities

1 Day
Hackathon
Challenge

Sign Up Now

Get ready to brainstorm, innovate, and network with like-minded individuals passionate about sustainability and business.

This in-person event is your chance to make a difference and contribute to a greener future.

Don't miss out on this unique opportunity to showcase your skills and ideas!

For More Information
caitlin@what-the-hack.solutions

EventBrite

URBACT
The EcoCore Project
SMART BALBRIGGAN
A Smart Dublin District

[AND BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPACT

Fingal started talking to businesses about their sustainability journeys, the sustainability challenges they were facing & circular economy opportunities



UNTIL FINALLY... MAIN RESULT

Fingal started to tell the stories of local companies and their sustainability journeys, inspiring new companies to start their own sustainability journeys.



Balbriggan. Ireland. EcoCore

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WHAT WE LEARNED

Branding

Tell the story

Regional collaboration



WHAT COMES NEXT

Development of Branding
Future Fingal: Sustainable Fingal Strategy
Circular Economy Feasibility Study
Delivery of infrastructure for Industrial Zone
Green Investment Attraction
Green Skills Development

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LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

City of Munich

Wibke Borngesser

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ONCE UPON A TIME...

Munich is a vibrant city with many tourists, but facing sustainability challenges in the city's canteens and restaurants.



Credit: A. Heddergott

Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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AND EVERY DAY...

In municipal restaurants and canteens aspects of circularity were not taken into account for furnishing, kitchen equipment, supply chains



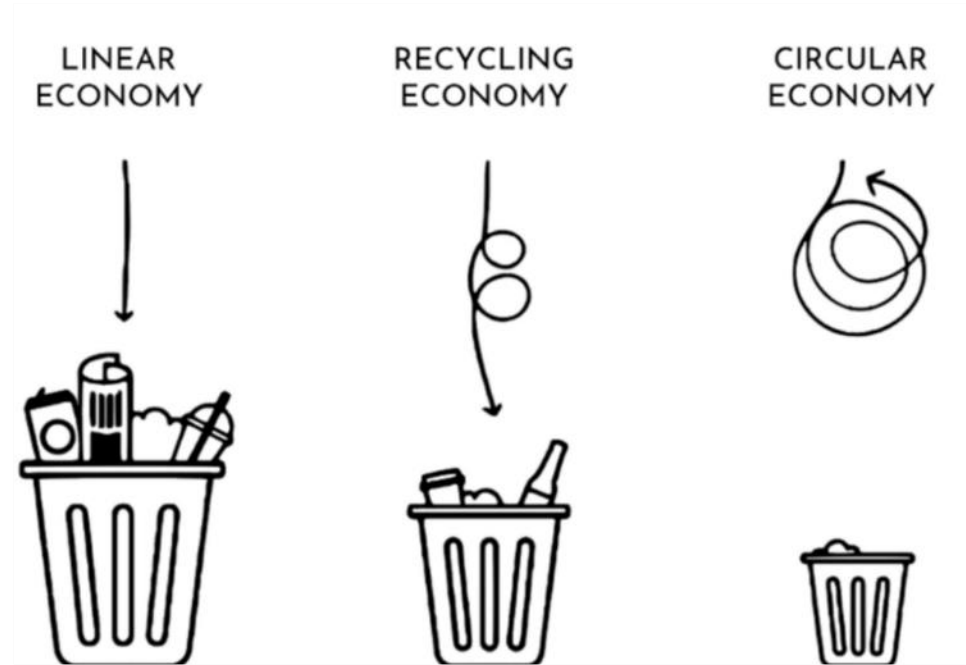
Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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UNTIL ONE DAY...

The Circular Economy Coordinator Team was established in the city's administration



Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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BECAUSE OF THAT... FIRST STEP

Develop a circular procurement guideline for the Museum's café Villa Stuck



Source: Bing photos

The café inside Villa Stuck

Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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BECAUSE OF THAT... THE PROJECT

- Key components of a circular canteen
- Understanding circular criteria already on the market



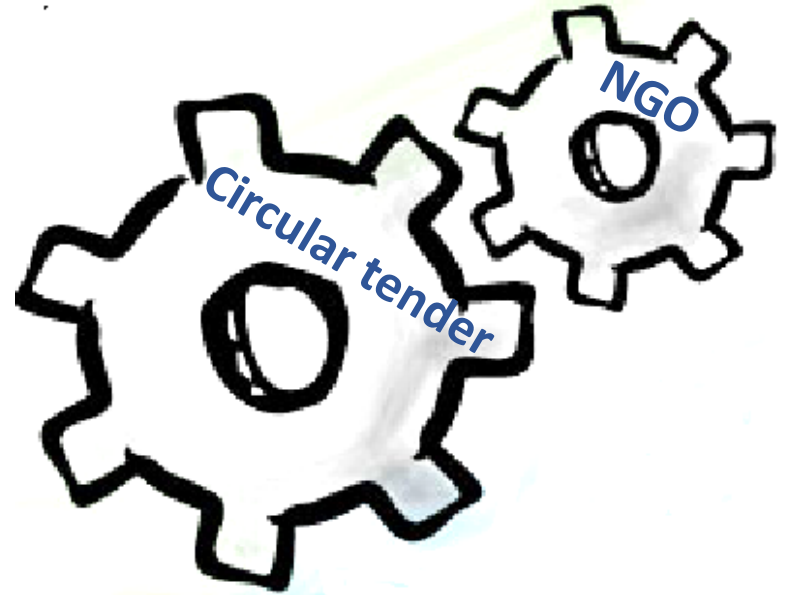
Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPLEMENTATION

- Analyze specific needs
- Tender will be drafted
- Process accompanied by Circular Munich



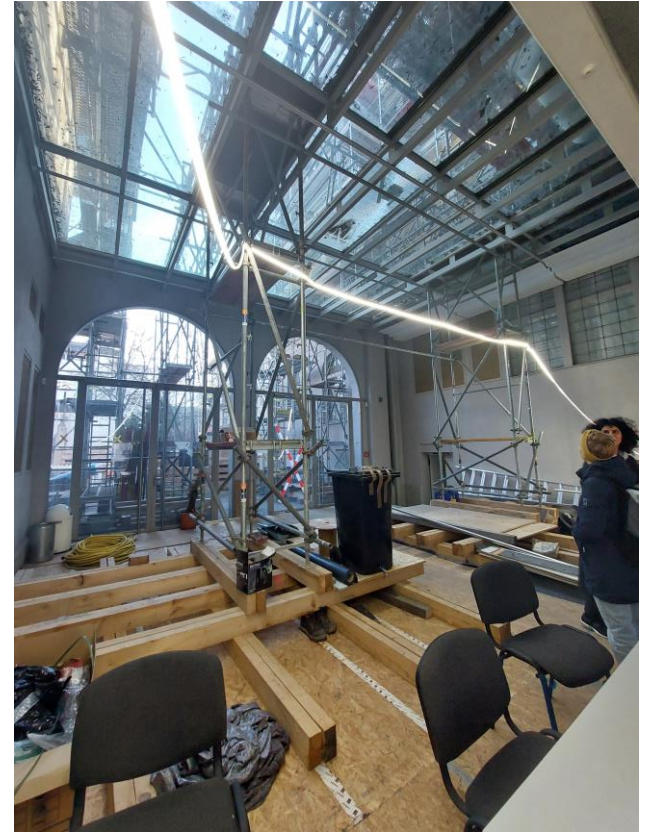
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AND BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPACT

- Working more closely with suppliers to strengthen cooperation
- Integration of circular principles planned



Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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UNTIL FINALLY... MAIN RESULT

Development of a clear guideline providing orientation



Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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WHAT WE LEARNED

- Interest is there
- Need compact, easily accessible support
- Unconventional questions to help break out of established ways of thinking



Munich. Germany. LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

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WHAT COMES NEXT

Workshop with municipal stakeholders: digital, AI-supported competence centre to act as the first point of contact for every procurement process aiming at sustainability

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COPE

Copenhagen

Erik Hagelskjær

05.11.2025 / SCEWC / Barcelona

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ONCE UPON A TIME...

Copenhagen had a plan
for climate neutrality

COPENHAGEN. DENMARK. COPE



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AND EVERY DAY...

We worked hard at
system level, but the
communities were not
invited



UNTIL ONE DAY...

We decided to involve communities



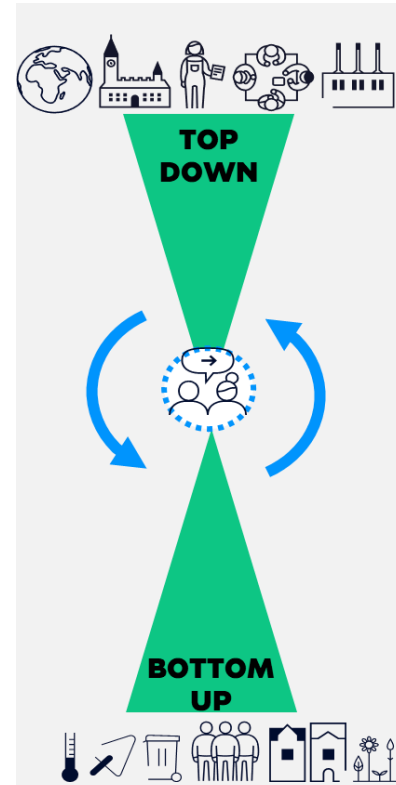
BECAUSE OF THAT... FIRST STEP

We tested a pilot in South Harbour



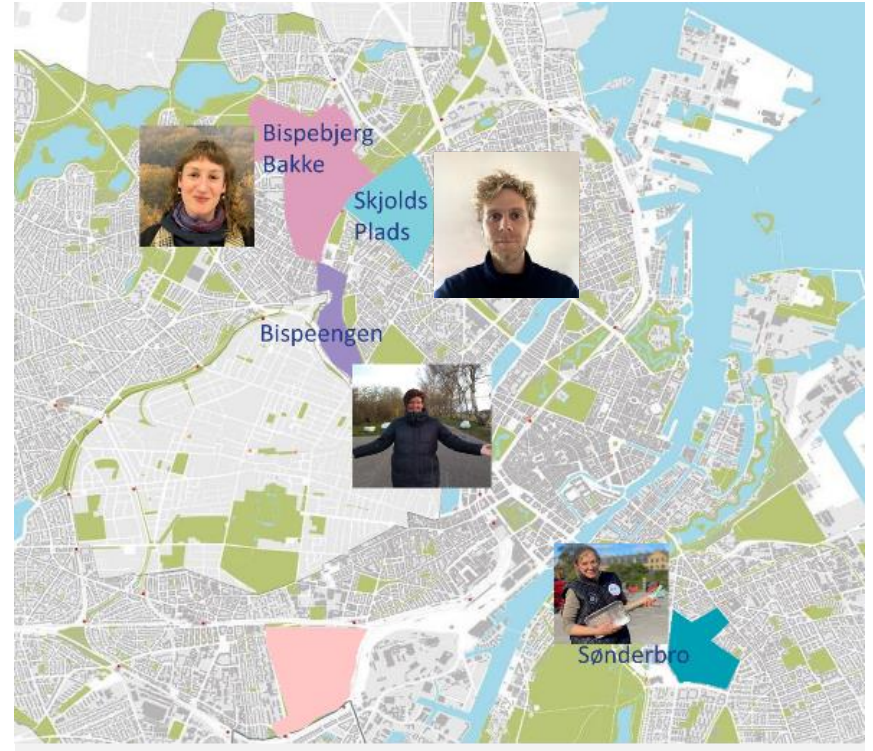
BECAUSE OF THAT... THE PROJECT

The Climate Taskforce
was conceived as an
idea



BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPLEMENTATION

With four local climate officers, backed up by a cross administrative support group



AND BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPACT

We have a partnership
with the district heating
company



UNTIL FINALLY... MAIN RESULT

Involved estates can save up to 30% of their heating bill and get a new PV roof



WHAT WE LEARNED

Capacity building among citizens and housing associations takes time – but its worth it



WHAT COMES NEXT

Bring the concept of local climate officers into new districts



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GreenPlace

Wrocław

Joanna Gańcza-Pawełczyk

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[ONCE UPON A TIME...

There was a postindustrial place in Wrocław, **closed off** and **forgotten** by people.



[AND EVERY DAY...

Residents **couldn't benefit**
from the potential of the
space.



WROCŁAW. POLAND. GREENPLACE

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UNTIL ONE DAY...

Local actors and stakeholders using URBACT tools came up with a **common vision** of the depot.



BECAUSE OF THAT... FIRST STEP

Municipality organized **hackathon** with a **study walk** to determine possible **functions** of the depot.



BECAUSE OF THAT... THE PROJECT

They decided to **open up a green part** of the depot to the public and test its **integration potential**.



BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPLEMENTATION

They planted **flowers**, built a rain and community **garden** as well as wooden **furniture**.
A **mural** was painted.



AND BECAUSE OF THAT... IMPACT

Residents became **interested** in the place and being **engaged** in transforming the depot.



UNTIL FINALLY... MAIN RESULT

The place has been opened for **inclusive community use**, engaging **volunteers** in its creation and upkeep while implementing **NBS**.



WHAT WE LEARNED

The key is:

- **Openness** to various ideas,
- When there's a **will** there's a way,
- Engaging **volunteers**,
- Using **participatory tools**,
- Building **trust** and **community**.



WHAT COMES NEXT

- Involving site into **Placemaking** project,
- Continuation of **Local Stakeholder Group**,
- Organising **social events workshops** and **study walks**,
- Building another **green zone with foodtrucks**,
- Launching a **city mystery game**,
- Application for **external funds** for **heritage restoration**.



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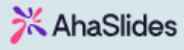


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Top questions

There are no unanswered questions.

- Pinned
- Newest
- Oldest
- Answered

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KEY TAKEWAYS

1. **Governance matters.**
2. **Business engagement is essential.**
3. **Circular thinking works.**
4. **Citizen participation drives climate action.**
5. **Nature-based innovation creates liveable cities.**



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Has your knowledge increased thanks to this session?

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Yes

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No

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What's one idea or step you'll take back to your city or organisation after today?

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Group



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Join URBACT's next opportunities!

A graphic for a URBACT webinar. It features a white Euro symbol (€) in the center, surrounded by two curved arrows forming a circular path. The background is a gradient from green on the left to blue on the right.

**URBACT webinar:
What is a thriving green
urban economy?**

**13 November 2025
14.00-15.30 CET
Online on Zoom**

Register now: urbact.eu/events



Register here: urbact.eu/events



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Contact us at: communication@urbact.eu



Join the activities
of the Knowledge Hub
on Greening urban
economies!

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Meet the community at the 2026 URBACT City Festival!



Register now!

31 March - 1 April 2026
Nicosia, Cyprus



Register here: urbact.eu/city-festival-2026



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