



INNOVATION TRANSFER NETWORK

DESIGNING INNOVATIVE URBAN SECURITY POLICIES

CITISENSE'S RESULTS, LOCAL IMPACT
AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

THIRD CORE NETWORK ARTICLE, JULY 2026

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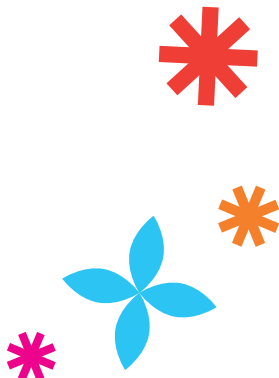
CITISENSE'S RESULTS, LOCAL IMPACT AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

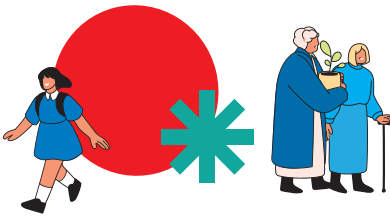
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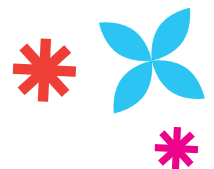
Zygmunt Bauman argued that "security" is in fact a composite of three distinct dimensions. The first is security in the narrow sense (*Sicherheit*) – protection against external threats, dangers and violence, the classic "safety from harm" dimension tied to social and political order. The second is certainty (*Gewissheit*) – the epistemological dimension, meaning confidence in one's understanding of the world and in the reliability and predictability of rules, institutions and outcomes. The third is safety (*Geborgenheit*) – the existential and emotional dimension, a felt sense of being sheltered, cared for and not alone, closer to "shelteredness" or psychological safety than to physical protection.

Bauman first sets out this distinction in *Liquid Modernity* (2000) and develops it further in *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (2001), arguing that modern – and especially "liquid modern" – societies tend to trade off between the three. Certainty and shelteredness are routinely sacrificed in the name of individual freedom, while the resulting anxiety is displaced onto demands for security in the narrow sense: policing, borders, surveillance. The value of this tripartite scheme lies in exposing how political discourse conflates all three under a single word, obscuring which kind of insecurity is actually being addressed.

We tried, and stayed true, to this approach throughout the whole CITISENSE Innovation Transfer Network's journey, making sure to design policies and measures capable of thoroughly understanding and directly addressing the root causes and complex dynamics underlying urban (in)security issues and citizens' perceptions of (in)security.

In this article, I will briefly reflect on the results achieved, the impact generated, and the prospects that lie ahead, after two intense years of activity at both transnational and local level.

1. Network Results



Across its two-year journey, CITISENSE delivered a dense and varied programme of study visits and thematic workshops, both online and in person, designed to deepen partners' understanding of the many dimensions of urban security.

Online sessions tackled digital solutions and data-driven decision-making, community outreach and stakeholder communication, and the often-overlooked intersection between mental health, homelessness and public space, while a further webinar and workshop expanded the network's thinking on the daily needs of the unhoused and on social inclusion more broadly. In-person workshops, embedded within the network's Transnational Meetings, brought a more experiential dimension to this learning: in Manresa, partners explored the revitalisation of historic

centres and worked hands-on with resourcing and financing strategies for their Investment Plans, while in Naples the focus turned to the night-time economy as an under-explored driver of both risk and opportunity in urban safety. The two study visits offered equally significant thematic input: in Rome, the EUI Innovative Action We-Z showed how participatory urban regeneration can build community from the ground up, opening new opportunities especially for young people and pursuing a "healing community" approach as both a quality-of-life strategy and a form of preventive safety policy; in Copenhagen, the transformation of Pusher Street illustrated how a once-notorious, high-risk area can become a vibrant and genuinely safer place through a broad and unusual partnership spanning community self-governance, city authorities and police, showing how acting on the quality and

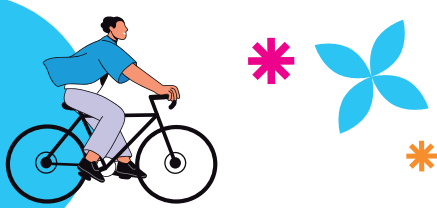
functions of public space – making it lively, attractive and well-used – can do more for security than policing alone.

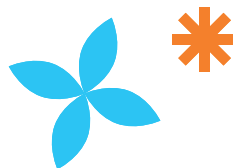
Alongside this capacity-building effort, the two years of the ITN journey gave partners a sustained space for peer exchange and networking, allowing cities to share their own experiences and challenges openly and to discuss potential solutions with colleagues navigating strikingly similar issues – or, in several cases, with colleagues who had already found their way through them. This peer dimension proved as valuable as any external expert input, grounding the network's thematic learning in the lived, day-to-day reality of running an Urban Local Group, negotiating a testing action, or drafting an Investment Plan under real administrative and political constraints. From this combination of capacity building and peer learning, a number of cross-cutting lessons emerged. Urban security calls for an integrated approach, working across different departments and policy fields simultaneously, since almost everything turns out to bear on it at some level. It calls, too, for addressing root causes rather than symptoms, since insecurity is very often itself a symptom of other problems – social vulnerability, or the poor condition of public space and the built environment. Unconventional partnerships need to be built and sustained; qualitative and quantitative data need to be combined, and collected and analysed thoroughly and without bias. Above all, communication needs to be handled carefully and effectively, engaging the most vulnerable groups rather than only the most vocal ones, and framing the discourse in a positive and inclusive way that avoids bias and "us versus them" attitudes – for example, talking not of tackling insecurity but of improving liveability, not of reducing avoidance behaviour but of enhancing the attractiveness of a place.

These same principles now underpin the Continuity and Investment Plans through which CITISENSE's partner cities translate the BeSecure–FeelSecure (BSFS)

into locally tailored strategies, each retaining the original's blend of governance, digital, social and spatial dimensions while adapting it to markedly different territorial conditions. **Piraeus's** own plan consolidates BSFS's legacy – the Victims Information Unit, the CURiM risk-management platform and the Local Council for Crime Prevention – into a framework for sustaining these outcomes over the longer term. **Liepāja** prioritises three components addressing weak cross-sectoral data use, limited youth engagement and a shortage of safe spaces: an integrated digital platform drawing on CURiM's logic, a Youth Safety Council modelled on the LCCP, and youth centres combining CPTED-informed design with capacity-building activities. **Geel**, confronting perceptions of insecurity concentrated around its station, park and market square despite stable crime figures, sequences a Local Security Council, staff and citizen training, and targeted public-space adaptation. **Manresa** addresses a comparable gap between a crime rate below the Catalan average and elevated citizen concern in its historic centre, combining tactical urbanism, data governance and social intervention within a longer strategic horizon. **Naples**, working along the Piazza Carlo III–Piazza Garibaldi corridor, reframes the transfer as a broader governance strategy for urban quality centred on perceived safety, linking it to the wider regeneration of the Real Albergo dei Poveri and Porta Capuana.

Read together, the five plans differ considerably in complexity, level of detail and ambition. This has less to do with the model itself than with factors specific to each city: larger cities tend to involve more layers of political decision-making and a wider, more diverse set of stakeholders to align, while the experience and process each partner brought to setting priorities and building its ULG also shaped how far the plan could go. This is reflected in the choices each city has made, from a set of specific, clearly defined measures to a broader focus on building and consolidating longer-term governance and collaboration processes.





2. Impact at Local Level

CITISENSE's impact at local level unfolded on two layers. The first, and most visible, is what the Testing Actions actually produced on the ground in each of the five partner cities. The second, less visible but arguably just as important, lies in the stakeholder networks and collaborative processes the project helped set in motion – relationships and working habits that will likely outlast any single intervention.

Starting with the Testing Actions: each city tested its adaptation of the BSFS model at a small scale, and while the ambitions and starting points differed – as one would expect from five very different local realities – all five generated concrete evidence that is now feeding directly into their Investment Plans.

In Piraeus, a four-pillar intervention at the Tinanios Garden combined a safety-perception poll deployed through the municipal app – which found the garden trusted by day but unsafe after dark for more than half of respondents – with the renovation of a derelict kiosk into a micro-civic hub, a social programme of twelve activities reaching around a thousand participants, and the formal alignment of the Local Council for Crime Prevention with the Municipal Youth Council. Procurement delays pushed several works from April into June, a lesson the city has already folded into its planning for a wider rollout across other neighbourhoods by 2030.

In Naples, the City Vibes programme embedded urban tours, an intercultural Migrantour, and performances led by people themselves drawn from marginalised groups within the city's Maggio dei Monumenti festival, reaching 55 participants in its first activities and showing a marked change in reported safety perception – while also raising a question the network kept returning to: whether festival-framed, one-off events can demonstrate a durable shift in daily perception, or only a temporary one.

In Geel, a bystander-training programme delivered with Thomas More College reached over thirty participants and will now be built into the Investment Plan

with six years of secured Flemish funding; a second pilot, the Talking Bins concept, was cancelled at a late stage, yet the debate it triggered led the municipality to rationalise nineteen different bin types into a single citywide model – a case of a Testing Action that fell short of its original objective while still generating real policy leverage.

In Liepāja, NGO-led youth research and a peer-designed awareness campaign on money-mule fraud drew their strength from the authenticity of youth participation, since the topic itself was chosen by young people rather than handed to them, though running research and campaign in parallel rather than in sequence limited how far the findings could shape the campaign's content.

In Manresa, a tactical urbanism intervention at the historic Arc d'en Botí and the beta launch of the WardUs reporting app – which had over 7,000 registered users and 200 incident reports by the final workshop – together produced the clearest political lesson of the whole network: local government's decision to pause active promotion of a security tool for fear of reviving public anxiety, the so-called "security calm paradox", showed how far framing can matter more than substance.

Turning to the second, less visible layer of impact: perhaps the most significant outcome of CITISENSE at local level was the activation of stakeholders and the discussions triggered with a growingly diverse range of actors in every city, particularly among partners new to URBACT. What stood out across the network was how differently, yet how consistently positively, the Urban Local Groups evolved as the project progressed. In some cities the ULG narrowed over time, from a broad initial gathering into a smaller, more focused and genuinely committed core; in others it expanded, drawing in stakeholders that had not been part of the original conversation at all. Both movements, in their own way, represent a positive outcome, because what they ultimately produced was the same: solid, trust-based relation-

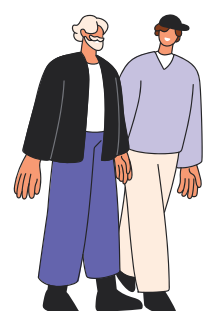
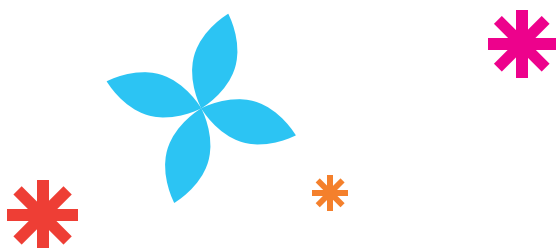
ships with actors who matter and who are willing to stay engaged, and the initiation of collaborations – or, at the very least, of conversations – that simply did not exist before. That, more than any single intervention, is the legacy CITISENSE leaves at local level: once there is agreement on scope and goals, and once partners recognise that valorising each other's complementarities is a positive-sum game rather than a competition for resources or credit, the foundations for genuine, long-term cooperation are already in place.

3. Future Prospects

What happens after CITISENSE formally closes will depend less on the network itself than on how well each city has managed to embed what it has learned into its own institutional machinery.

The Investment and Continuity Plans are the main vehicle for this: they carry forward not only the specific measures tested over the past two years, but also the governance arrangements and stakeholder relationships built around them. In the coming years, cities will need to sharpen their priorities and secure the funding required to sustain what has been started, while also building on the relationships established at both local and transnational level to develop and implement new initiatives.

But the real challenge is a qualitative leap: once the added value and effectiveness of these innovative solutions have been demonstrated, cities need to move beyond a project-based logic – interventions designed and built around a one-off, limited funding source, chasing the next call simply to keep previous efforts alive – and instead work strategically and structurally, so that these actions and practices leave the experimental stage behind and become consolidated, lasting practice.



CITISENSE

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