

CITISENSE

DRIVING INNOVATION FOR SAFER CITIES

CITISENSE Urban Safety Toolkit Introduction

The CITISENSE Urban Safety Toolkit is one of the network's key legacy outputs, developed to support cities and stakeholders interested in designing and implementing integrated approaches to urban safety.

The toolkit builds on the experience of the Be Secure – Feel Secure (BSFS) project, an Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) good practice implemented by the Municipality of Piraeus. Rather than treating safety solely as a law-enforcement issue, BSFS adopted a holistic approach that considered how urban design, social cohesion, digital innovation and local governance can collectively contribute to safer and more inclusive cities.

To facilitate transfer and implementation, CITISENSE unpacked the original BSFS approach into four complementary Transfer Modules:

1. Spatial Interventions

2. Social Initiatives

3. Digital Solutions

4. Governance Arrangements

The CITISENSE Urban Safety Toolkit encourages cities to adapt and combine the modules according to their specific challenges and opportunities and it offers practical inspiration and transferable solutions for creating safer, more resilient and more inclusive urban environments.

NETWORK CITIES



PIRAEUS

A major port city addressing safety through technology, community-based solutions and spatial upgrades.

168,151 residents
Country: Greece



NAPLES

A historic urban hub addressing public space use, safety perceptions and inclusivity in gateway and central areas.

911,697 residents
Country: Italy



LIEPAJA

A coastal city combining sustainability goals with improving safety perceptions and addressing youth-related delinquency.

68,680 residents
Country: Latvia



GEEL

A medium-sized city reducing public nuisances and enhancing safety in parks and public spaces through community solutions.

42,362 residents
Country: Belgium



MANRESA

A regional hub revitalizing its Historic Centre to address socio-economic inequalities and enhance urban safety perceptions.

80,200 residents
Country: Spain



1 SPATIAL INTERVENTIONS

The Spatial Interventions module recognises that the design, management and use of public spaces have a direct influence on how safe people feel in their daily lives.

Rather than relying on large-scale infrastructure projects, the module encourages cities to implement targeted, incremental interventions that improve the quality, usability, and perception of public spaces over time.



Key Elements

- Inclusive and accessible public spaces
- Designing for the most vulnerable
- Incremental and adaptive improvements
- Community participation and ownership
- Safety as part of placemaking

How CITISENSE Cities Are Adopting the Spatial Interventions Module

Piraeus (Greece)

The adapted model extends BSFS's spatial logic across all five municipal districts, using a risk-tiering methodology derived from the original diagnostic to sequence investment by severity of need. The extended smart lighting network, now covering the entire municipality provides the baseline physical layer on which further CPTED-compliant interventions are mapped and prioritised.

Naples (Italy)

Naples is revitalising public spaces by activating local life, fostering social innovation and testing community-driven ideas that can inform long-term planning strategies. Small-scale urban interventions, combined with cultural and social activities, will be used to explore and validate potential physical transformations of targeted areas.

Geel (Belgium)

Geel developed a city-wide Bin Plan that applies Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to improve urban hotspots. Supported by dedicated municipal investment, future public space interventions will also incorporate New European Bauhaus principles to strengthen sustainability, accessibility and inclusion.

Liepāja (Latvia)

Liepāja is creating youth centres in suburban neighbourhoods as safe and inclusive spaces co-designed and co-managed with young people. The city is also applying CPTED principles and small-scale spatial improvements, guided by local data and risk patterns, to enhance perceptions of safety and better respond to neighbourhood needs.

Manresa (Spain)

Manresa is adopting a participatory approach to identify and prioritise degraded public spaces that contribute to low perceptions of safety. Through tactical urbanism interventions such as greening, lighting improvements and urban furniture upgrades, combined with community stewardship initiatives, the city aims to strengthen both the quality of public spaces and residents' sense of ownership and responsibility.



LESSONS LEARNED

What worked well

- Co-design and active stakeholder participation strengthen ownership and long-term impact.
- Combining physical improvements with social and cultural activities maximises safety benefits.
- Small-scale interventions can catalyse larger strategic change.

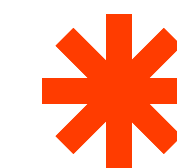
Attention Points

- Limited financial resources can constrain both testing and long-term implementation.
- Sustaining participation and community support requires continuous engagement.

PILOT IDEA

Manresa co-designed and implemented a low-cost tactical intervention in a degraded historic area, combining stone cleaning, surface painting, wiring concealment and the installation of LED lighting to improve the visual quality and usability of the space. The intervention was developed as a rapid, targeted upgrade of a micro-location identified through local prioritisation processes.

Pre- and post-intervention interviews were conducted with users of the space to assess changes in perceived safety and public space quality. The pilot demonstrated that small-scale aesthetic improvements combined with targeted lighting interventions can significantly improve perceptions of safety in historic urban environments.



“Just getting people involved is not enough. We must consider whose voices are missing, whose concerns are being treated as exaggerations and why. City makers have technical expertise, but the city dweller has the empirical expertise about how they use and live public spaces.”

Dr. Edna Peza-Ramirez – CITISENSE Adhoc Expert

SOCIAL INITIATIVES

The Social Initiatives module recognises that fear of crime and insecurity are not always the same phenomenon and that effective urban safety strategies must address both the objective and perceived dimensions of insecurity. Building on the BSFS approach, this module focuses on understanding and addressing the underlying social, economic and contextual factors that shape how safe people feel in their everyday environments.



Key Elements

- Understanding contextual drivers of insecurity
- Access to rights, services and opportunities
- Strengthening community ties and trust
- People-centred safety approaches



How CITISENSE Cities Are Adopting the Social Initiatives Module

Piraeus (Greece)

Piraeus aims to establish the delivery of regular awareness sessions in various thematics. The municipality will also capitalize on its cooperation with the University of Piraeus to expand the awareness sessions to this level. When it comes to local business owners, the city will leverage the multiple events and festivals held in the city center (2nd district) as impact multipliers. Toward this direction, dedicated kiosks will be positioned at strategic, high-traffic points across the commercial district.

Naples (Italy)

Naples is revitalising open spaces by activating local life, fostering social innovation and testing community-driven ideas that inform long-term planning strategies. This is implemented through small-scale “urban injections” and pop-up social and cultural interventions that activate public spaces while exploring new approaches to community engagement and social cohesion.

Geel (Belgium)

Geel is integrating bystander training into the social action work package of its investment plan, supported by six years of Flemish government funding. The initiative follows a phased rollout approach, starting with the training of all municipal frontline staff by mid-2027 and subsequently expanding to external organisations and vulnerable citizens, strengthening community capacity to respond to insecurity and social risks.

Liepāja (Latvia)

Liepāja is establishing a Youth Safety Council to institutionalise youth participation in safety governance. The city is also developing youth-led awareness and prevention initiatives and strengthening cooperation with NGOs and local services that support vulnerable young people, reinforcing a more coordinated and inclusive approach to social safety.



LESSONS LEARNED

What worked well

- Strong co-creation networks significantly enhance ownership and relevance of social initiatives.
- Building on existing social and cultural activities increases trust and effectiveness.
- Targeted and small-scale engagement formats improve participation quality.
- Structured and participatory youth engagement strengthens trust and long-term impact.

Attention Points

- Limited financial and human resources constrained implementation scope.
- Institutional coordination and workload pressures affected implementation capacity.
- Engaging vulnerable or inactive target groups remains difficult.
- Public perception and sensitivity around social interventions must be carefully managed.
- Time constraints limit the depth of capacity-building activities.

PILOT IDEA

Geel co-designed and tested a tailored bystander training programme developed in collaboration with college students. The pilot was delivered through small, interactive sessions involving municipal safety staff, youth groups and school communities, allowing the city to explore engagement methods and test training content in a controlled and participatory environment.

The pilot demonstrated how structured, small-group training formats can effectively build awareness, strengthen community responsiveness, and assess stakeholder acceptance before scaling the initiative into a wider, long-term implementation.

It also highlighted the value of early collaboration with local students and the importance of securing institutional leadership support to enable smoother city-wide rollout of social safety training programmes.



“...the human factor is the crucial element in making cities safer. [...] Collaboration among people can challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and foster a spirit of shared ownership that enhances the full enjoyment of the right to the city.”

Simone d'Antonio – CITISENSE Ad Hoc Expert

3 DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

The Digital Solutions module focuses on how digital tools developed within BSFS can support more effective, evidence-based and transparent urban security strategies. These tools provide a scalable framework for integrating data, improving policymaking processes and strengthening communication between municipalities and citizens.

By combining data collection, real-time analysis, and communication functions, the module enables cities to better understand security challenges, adapt interventions to local needs and improve trust through more transparent information flows.

Key Elements

- > Integrated and participatory data collection
- > Evidence-based policymaking
- > Improved communication and transparency

How CITISENSE Cities Are Adopting the Digital Solutions Module

Piraeus (Greece)

Piraeus is refactoring of CURiM App and proceeds with its integration with "Pireapp" which is the main city's mobile application used by thousands of users. In this regard, citizens' reports and relevant activity will be ingested in the Operations Centre upon data sanitisation and privacy-preserving processing.



Naples (Italy)

Naples is exploring improved ways of aggregating informal and citizen-generated data to better map urban safety perceptions across the city. This includes the development of approaches that consider "emotions" as a complementary source of information, helping to better understand how individuals perceive safety in different urban contexts and times.

Liepāja (Latvia)

Liepāja is implementing an integrated data platform that combines multiple data sources, including police records and citizen reports, to support evidence-based decision-making. The city is using data analytics to guide patrol deployment and inform broader urban policy, including youth-related services, while also training municipal police staff to embed data-driven practices into daily operations.

Manresa (Spain)

Manresa is scaling its digital application to strengthen two-way communication between citizens and municipal authorities. The tool enables real-time reporting of public space degradation and perceived safety issues. Connected to the future municipal Data Lake, it transforms citizen inputs into actionable indicators, supporting co-creation, civic ownership and more preventive and responsive urban management.

LESSONS LEARNED

What worked well

- > Connecting digital tools to citizens' perceptions and emotional experiences increases relevance and engagement.
- > Co-design processes with stakeholders improve data quality and usability.
- > Hybrid data collection approaches increase inclusiveness and reach.
- > Using validated technological foundations accelerates implementation and improves reliability.
- > Close collaboration between municipalities and technology providers supports effective adaptation.

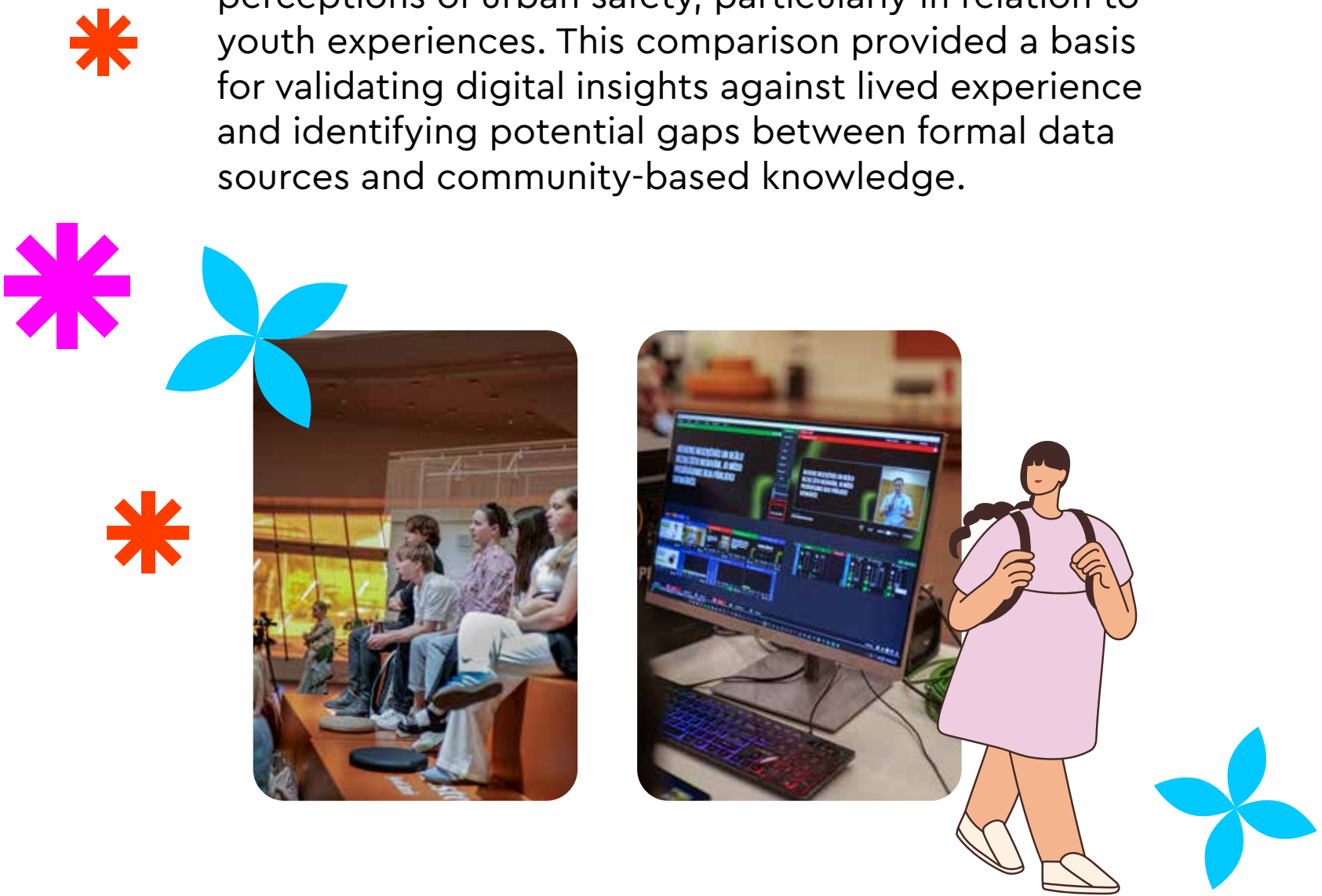
Attention Points

- > Limited financial and institutional resources constrain digital development and deployment.
- > Data integration and quality remain key technical barriers.
- > Institutional engagement gaps can limit system effectiveness.
- > Governance, timing, and political context influence digital uptake.
- > Data protection and legal compliance requirements can slow implementation.

PILOT IDEA

Liepāja implemented a pilot focused on collecting stakeholder-generated data through collaboration with a local NGO working with youth. The pilot gathered qualitative insights on perceived safety hotspots and areas of concern, which were then compared with data generated from existing digital systems and platforms.

The objective of the pilot was to test the alignment between digitally produced data and stakeholder perceptions of urban safety, particularly in relation to youth experiences. This comparison provided a basis for validating digital insights against lived experience and identifying potential gaps between formal data sources and community-based knowledge.



Digital tools can play an important role in urban safety policies, but their impact depends on how they are designed, framed and used. If poorly conceived, they risk reinforcing fear and stigma. If thoughtfully implemented, they can support more inclusive, empathetic and effective urban governance.

Pietro L. Verga CITISENSE Lead Expert

4 GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Governance Arrangements module emphasises that urban security is most effective when it is developed and implemented as a shared responsibility across a wide range of actors. Building on the BSFS approach, this module focuses on strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration to ensure long-term sustainability, legitimacy and effectiveness of urban safety strategies.

By adopting a place-based and integrated approach, cities can better align security policies with local needs and realities, creating more adaptive and responsive governance structures.



Key Elements

- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration and “unusual suspects”**
- **Inclusive participation in decision-making**
- **Trust-building through local intermediaries**
- **Place-based and integrated policymaking**

How CITISENSE Cities Are Adopting the Governance Arrangements Module

Piraeus (Greece)

The Piraeus Local Council for Crime Prevention (LCCP) intensifies its operation. This is realised through close collaboration with the key units of the urban authority. In this regard, LCCP will drive the organisation of the social awareness and inclusion actions mentioned above. Improved monitoring of urban safety and social cohesion will be achieved through periodical consultations with local stakeholders.

Naples (Italy)

Naples is introducing a public-private co-management model for public spaces, inspired by the Bella Piazza approach. The model brings together third-sector organisations and local stakeholders to jointly identify local needs and challenges affecting urban safety and livability. It aims to ensure continuous social presence, active use and long-term stewardship of public spaces.

Liepāja (Latvia)

Liepāja is strengthening multi-stakeholder governance through its URBACT Local Group (ULG), improving coordination between the municipality, police, NGOs, and youth representatives. The city is also embedding participatory approaches across all relevant investments, including digital, social and spatial interventions, to ensure more integrated and inclusive decision-making processes.

Manresa (Spain)

Manresa is establishing an Academic Advisory Council and strengthening the capacities of its Local Security Board members, inspired by the advisory model developed in Piraeus. This action enhances technical expertise within local governance structures, shifting decision-making towards a more structured, evidence-based and preventive approach to urban safety policy.



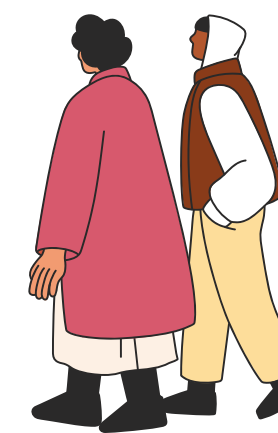
LESSONS LEARNED

What worked well

- Trusted local actors and intermediaries are essential for effective governance.
- Multi-actor collaboration frameworks enable more integrated and adaptive solutions.
- Structured participation through ULGs strengthens ownership and continuity.
- Existing governance structures provide a strong foundation for incremental improvement.
- Exposure to transnational exchange strengthens local motivation and innovation.

Attention Points

- Building and maintaining trust is fundamental but requires time and continuity.
- Diverse and complex stakeholder ecosystems increase coordination demands.
- Cross-sector collaboration and formalised procedures are often underdeveloped.
- Stakeholder rotation affects continuity and shared understanding.
- Local political and administrative cycles can constrain implementation.
- Political shifts can directly affect communication and operational scope.



PILOT IDEA

Naples implemented the “Bella Piazza” pilot as a public-private co-management initiative for Piazza Garibaldi, integrating urban, social, cultural and economic regeneration activities. The intervention combined space enhancement, social support measures, community-led activities, experiential tourism and cultural programming to foster inclusion and reshape the perception of the area.

The pilot served to test a co-management model for open public spaces, assessing how coordinated action between public authorities, private actors and local stakeholders can influence the activation and governance of the space, as well as potential changes in perceived livability and social use of the area.



“...the agency of municipalities is often limited and though unable to carry out these transformation processes on their own, local administrations are key to define rules and regulations for the transformation processes, as well as to foster collaboration agreements with the private sector and community members that ensure the involvement of the local's population needs (including their right to stay) or the diversity of the stakeholders who define the common vision...”

Pablo Muñoz Unceta, URBACT Ad-hoc Expert, Paisaje Transversal

CITISENSE

DRIVING INNOVATION FOR SAFER CITIES

CITISENSE Urban Safety Toolkit



URBACT



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

