

WISH

You Were Here

CITIES

Edition

URBACT



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Interreg

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK AHEAD.... THE SCRAPBOOK (2024-2026)

We collected here all the big and small stories of the seven cities of the URBACT WISH CITIES ITN Network (2024-2026). This scrapbook is just a way to keep track of our journey - bits and pieces, moments, people, things that worked and things we're still figuring out.

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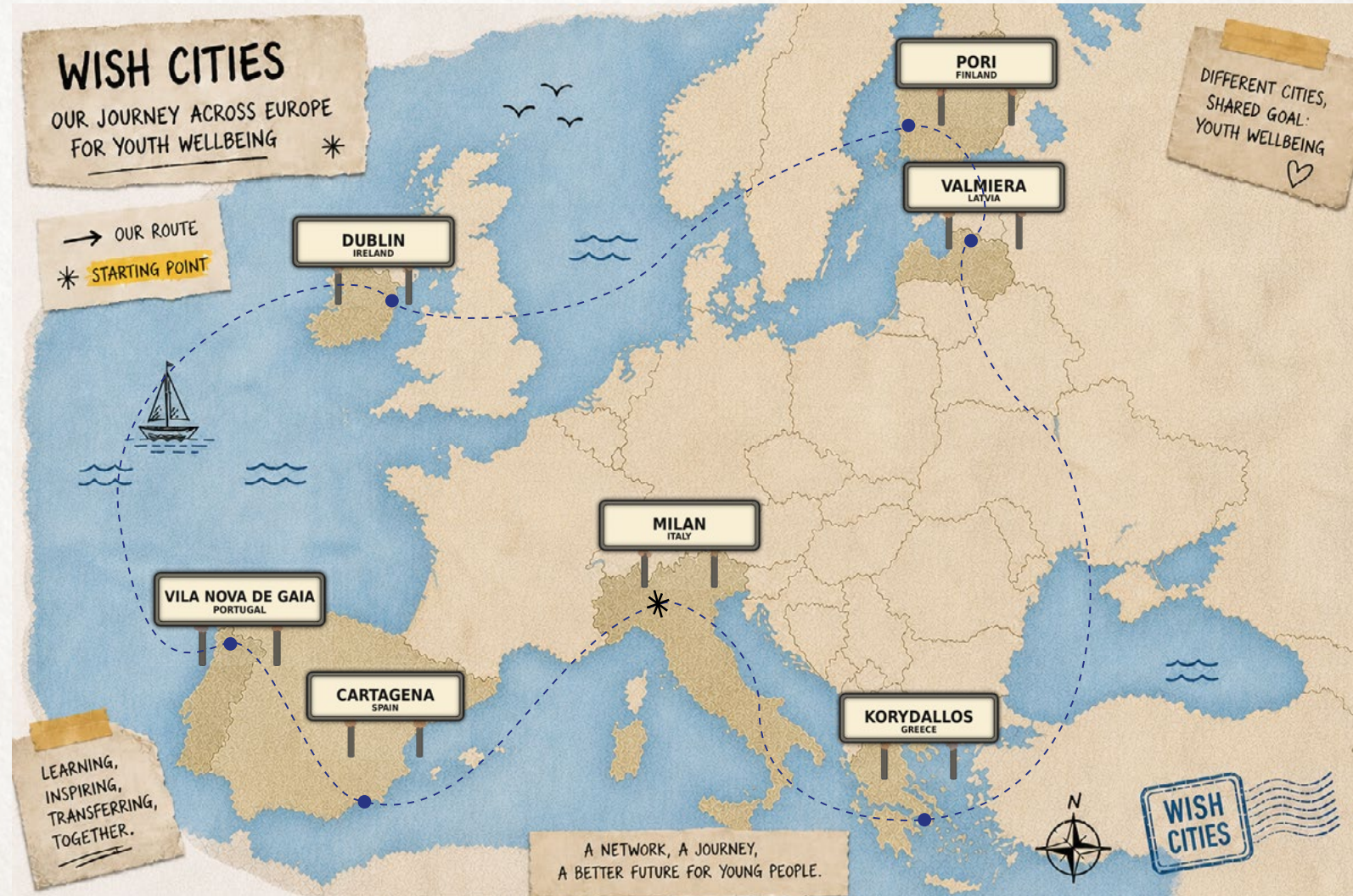
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WISH-CITIES IN MOTION



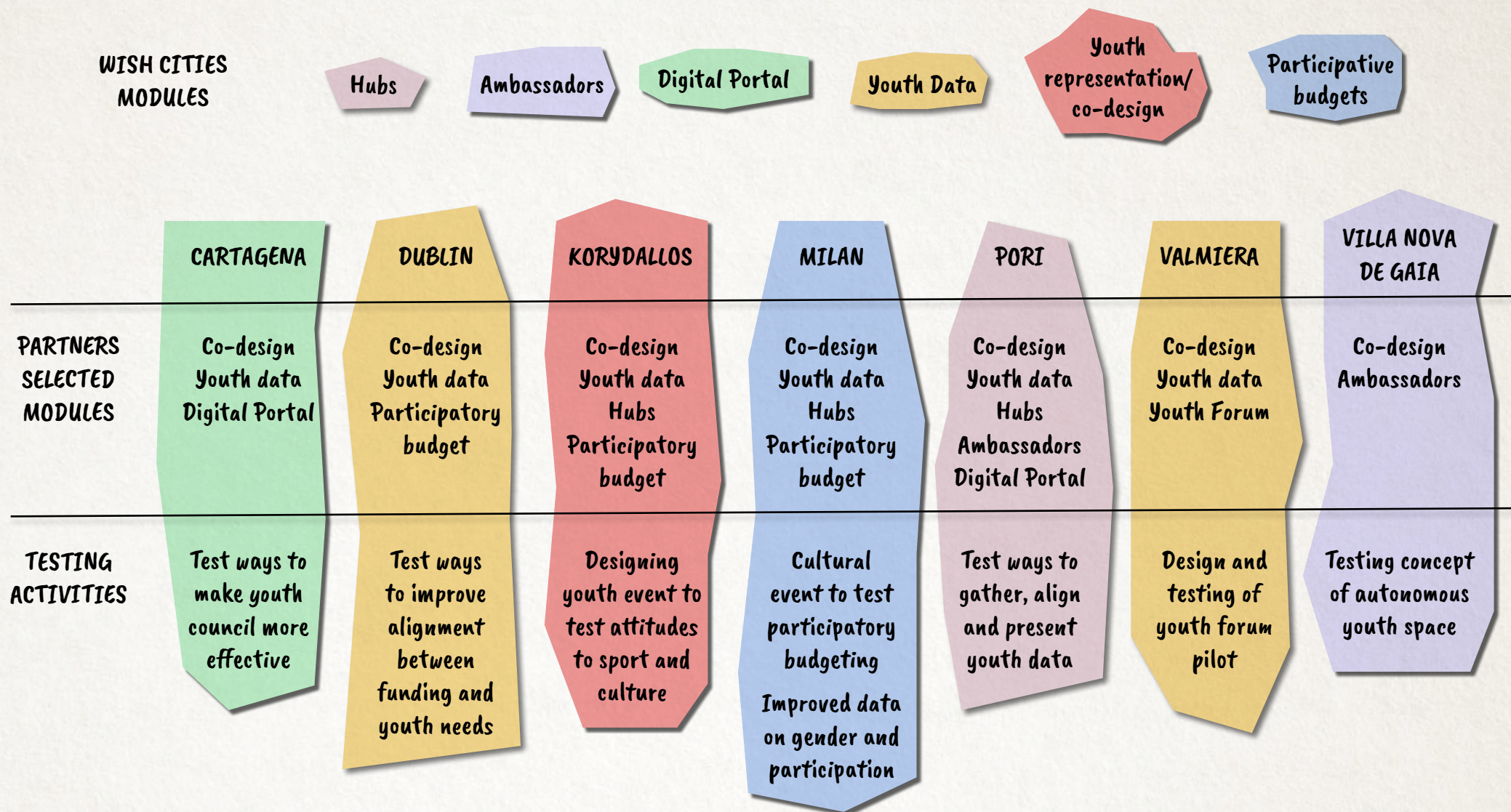
A memory of Milan in 2020.

WISH-MI... an Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) project with one big question: ***“How to rethink wellbeing for children and young people as a system.”*** Not a single service, but a mix of actions. We came up with community hubs, digital catalogues with access to opportunities, and “phy-gital” activities connecting physical and digital spaces for the 21st century generations, so they don’t get lost.

A big challenge that doesn’t stay in Milan.

Here comes WISH CITIES... Thanks to URBACT, WISH-MI becomes WISH-CITIES, a network of cities across Europe. Different sizes, different realities, but strikingly similar questions. How to listen better, how to engage and empower, how to avoid losing the Z and α generations along the way? Same focus, wider perspectives to test, adapt and learn from each other. As it often happens, innovation becomes a -oftentimes bumpy- journey.





Our WISH CITIES network **works in modules**. They are the signposts of our journey. The starting point is in Milan, but cities pick, combine and adapt what makes sense for them. They mix hubs, ambassadors, digital tools, youth data and participatory budgets. One thing stays the same for everyone: **youth co-design** is always there, because it is the key tenet of our transfer ... everything else builds on that.

WISH-CITIES ROADMAP



1

MILANO DEEP DIVE SEPTEMBER 2024

Deep Dive into the original UIA Innovative Actions concept. Opportunity to visit the spaces and exchange with local stakeholders.

2

TEX 2: VILA NOVA DE GAIA MAY 2025

Focus on Gaia's new youth strategy and leading edge co-production work with young people

3

TEX 3: DUBLIN SEPTEMBER 2025

Focus on Dublin's cross-sectoral work with young people, and structures supporting youth empowerment.

4

TEX 4: CARTAGENA NOVEMBER 2025

Highlighting Cartagena's infrastructure to include youth voices and perspectives.

5

TEX 5: PORI MARCH 2026

Showcasing Pori's local assets aimed at youth wellbeing - including Ohjaamo

6

TEX 6: MILAN JUNE 2026

Final network event - sharing results.

We move from city to city, picking up ideas, testing things and adjusting along the way. We start in Milan, where everything begins, then we move through Vila Nova de Gaia, Dublin, Cartagena, Pori... and back again.

Each stop brings a different focus. From spaces to (and of) participation, data and services. We have our URBACT local groups (ULGs) running, we pause and then we move forward again, from testing actions to investment plans... Until we come back to Milan, not as a starting point anymore, but as a place to share what we have been learning along the way.

PORI – FINLAND

August 2025 -Polje ny Pohjois-Poriin (Ride to Northern Pori!) is our main Testing Action, a lively outdoor event designed to encourage families to experience a more active lifestyle using the nearest school yard. Our focus is on developing the hub as part of WISH CITIES, learning to work together and always putting well-being first. The school yard is a welcoming communal space, making it easier for families to spend time together with their kids and even organize their own activities in the building. We want to strengthen collaboration and make future teamwork more natural.



**RIDE TO
NORTHERN PORI!**

Children enjoy creating a map with straws as flagpoles representing each WISH CITIES partner city, to visualise the network. A variety of activities are organized by different groups. We have fun playing different games such as Ohjaamo (fortune wheel), Scouts, 4H-association, and DogFriends. What a lively atmosphere and collaborative spirit!

“There are so many possibilities in this yard to do things, exercise and meet other residents. Free access and it is very easy to come if you live near here. That is great!”

- a participant

SAFETY DAY

This Safety Day is an indoor event during school hours. We kick start the day with a powerful talk about what it means living with a brain injury caused by a single blow. This makes us stop and think, hearing how one knock, push or just not wearing a helmet can change everything for someone. This is “kids only”, because parents have their own separate gathering in the evening, together with teachers, outside organizations, and other school staff.

We visit different activity points run by various organizations, and learn about topics like traffic safety, first aid, staying safe online, dating violence and self-protection. It is really eye-opening to see safety from so many angles.



Satakunta's Rescue Services let kids safely try what it's like to be in a car that flips over, slow and controlled, not scary like in real life.



Kids drawing something that “gives you the feeling of being safe and sound”



Little First responders learn how to save lives with the Red Cross

Red Cross personnel teach kids how to help/ secure a friend who is unconscious and needs to be put on the side position. First, they show students how it is done and then they do it together.



"It was nice to be able to tell where I feel safe"

"I was brave in a spinning car"

"Now I can help a friend when they need help"

- *Participants*

At the Youth services desk kids combine the parts of sentences correctly while youth workers promote the nearest youth house, Sampolan nuorisotila.



Scrambled sentences for fun

"I remember that people easily and quickly started drawing friends, family/home, pets (cats, dogs), and especially middle school students also drew pictures of their hobbies."

- *Päivi, one of the adults observing kids*

ACTORS BACKSTAGE

Different groups working behind the scenes

Developing the hub in Pori is a big deal and means everyone needs to see things differently. It doesn't matter if you're a student, part of an association, or just someone joining in, it's not all about the school, even if most stuff happens there. Clubs, groups, events, lectures and meetings aren't run by the school, but they're set up by all kinds of groups to avoid rigid regulations.



Itätuuuli actor forum planning the annual Itä-Pori Day in Salonki, the community space, spring 2026.

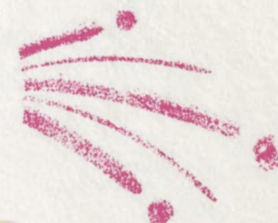


Autumn 2025 - Pohjois-Pori hosts a chill evening for associations. Everyone checks out the building, sees the new booking system and learns about making reservations for evenings and weekends. A great chance for members to meet city staff and connect with others.



A lively ULG workshop on the new booking system at the Pori Centre Youth house.

The ULG in December 2025 ... quick talks from folks in the school, tech department and cleaning crew, sharing their thoughts about the new booking system for the school. To wrap up, small groups decorate Christmas cookies—lifting spirits and bringing some smiles.



Christmas cookies brought smiles to the end of the day.



"This concept is unique and important, but it takes time, consistency and strong leadership to make the systemic changes and transform the working culture towards a system where wellbeing is fully integrated and where all parties work together towards the same goal (residents wellbeing)."

- Mari, member of the ULG and the local WISH-coordinator



I wish my city could make every school yard, youth house and community space a place where people of all ages feel safe, active and connected.



TEX VILA NOVA DE GAIA

14TH AND 15TH
MAY 2025

Vila Nova de Gaia- in short Gaia - is a city where participation is already structured and visible. The city was Portugal's national Youth Capital in 2025. Their youth plan engages around 700 participants, including 540 young people and 160 policymakers and youth workers. The choice of the themes like happiness, humanism, habitat and talent tell us that this is not the usual language of city planning, but something that resonates with young people, a real end game for kids!



First stop: Gaia.



A €240,000 participatory youth budget, with a strong youth council behind it.

What stands out about Gaia is how normal this feels here. Young people are part of the process, not invited at the end. This is where our network starts to understand what “co-design” can actually look like in practice.



Testing actions...



here we go!!!!

CARTAGENA

The Challenge	What if...	We want to test it...
The recently created youth body be recognised and funded by the local authorities?	What would municipal policy be like if young people were the main decision makers in the city?	this body is really effective and the mayor would be more active in the city
Our IDEA		Measurement
The creation of a youth council is provided by state, regulated by community, etc as a way of giving it its own entity		• All of participants • Proposal collected • Implementation • Working process • Training process

URBACT

CITY OF FORI

"improve youth data"

The Challenge	What if...	We want to test it...
Data - separate data, in different forms, how to use it with research information and phenomena	comprehensive information would be constantly all the time in use in evaluation and decision making	What kind of information do we need a lot? Comprehensive enough
Our IDEA		Measurement
make a pilot: to choose some starting point, regular checkups, presentation to various stakeholders, thinking proposals to be made -> these taken to city government		• complete model for "data collection" • does the system come to life? -> the proposal last decision • DOES THE WELLBEING OF CITIZENS IMPROVE?

URBACT

DUBLIN

The Challenge	What if...	We want to test it...
urban services not aligned with local community needs, experiencing in deprived areas	if the young population budget is aligned community budget is aligned community budget is aligned	if youth outcomes from the test, measure, the funding criteria
Our IDEA		Measurement
Group of people in each street area - funding application to apply for funding to address youth issues		• Different issues • Design issues • Funding criteria

URBACT



In Gaia, we are taking the first steps into the testing actions phase. Using the URBACT Testing Actions Canvas, we explore local challenges through a playful but practical approach, starting with the question “What if?”. The process is helping shape ideas, define what we want to test, how the experiment would work and how success could eventually be measured.

DUBLIN - IRELAND

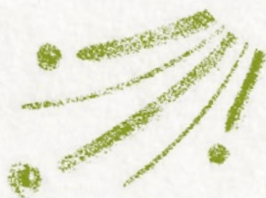


The Youth Advisory Panel

This meeting is the first of its kind... young people aged between 17 and 24 meet to explore youth well-being in Dublin 10, where they live. They workshop issues that impact their well-being and explore ideas in relation to gaps and improvements that could be made. A fantastic engagement and enthusiasm brighten up the room, with many issues being highlighted including safety, mental health, the need for more creative spaces and lack of resources. One clear issue that participants discuss is public lighting, because low lit areas are enabling gangs to meet and engage in anti-social behaviour.



Big ideas, good vibes, and real talk ... young people coming together for the first Youth Advisory Panel meeting, with the poster inviting even more voices to jump in and be part of the change.



It's so important to get the voice of young people heard, as a young person you have ideas about your area and you want to tell someone, when you do, you just get told, 'leave it to the adults, someone will fix it', but you never see it fixed. We need projects like this that will get our voice heard and make a real difference in our communities.

- Dylan Faye

My wish for my city is to see more spaces available to bring out people's creative sides. Creativity is great, everyone is creative in their own way, whether it be theatre, art or music, having the space for that is really important. Making sure that the space is safe is also really important, having the space to express ourselves creatively is key.



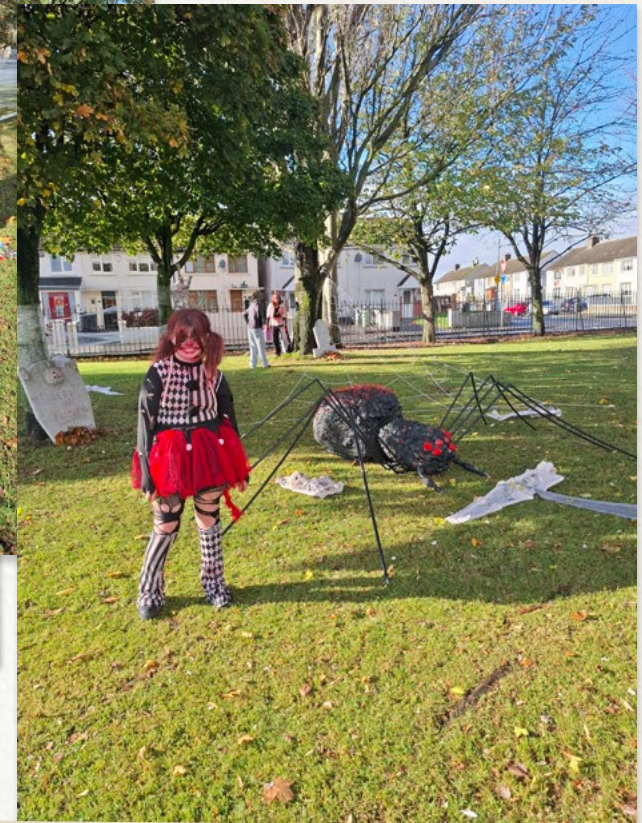
ZOMBIES RUN

the Familibase Halloween event in Dublin 10

Since the start of our journey we have been wanting to work with partners that ensure best practice when it comes to youth participation, and Familibase is definitely one of them. They include young people in all elements of their planning and decision making. Their Halloween event is run in partnership with young people who decide on activities and help build props, run games and workshops and even dress up as zombies to enhance community experiences such as the hugely popular Zombie Run.



Locked in chains and unleashed in imagination: a young participant becomes part of the Familibase Zombie Run



From giant spiders to handmade props ... the event gave young people the chance to shape the experience themselves.



Before the zombies came out, the community came together. Families, young people and volunteers preparing costumes side by side for the Familibase Halloween celebration

*My wish for my city
is affordable cultural
events for young
people.*

"Youth services give you a chance to have a say, not just in your group or activities that you do with them, in activities which happen in the wider area and community in general. They make you feel valid and an important member of your community, it's a great opportunity"

- David Henry



REACHING OUT

Questionnaires, Parks and Big Ideas

"The council could do more to include young people's voices in events and festivals and how we animate our parks" says a young staff member of Dublin City Council during a recent interview. We have also developed a youth survey to capture opinions on what's working well, gaps in provision and where we need to improve. Now we are engaging with all festival committees to encourage a youth representative to be part of their steering committees so they can inform all planning and decisions. This is working really well, not only does this highlight what young people would like to see happening in their area but also how to communicate and advertise events to young people to bring them in.

ARE YOU AGED BETWEEN 12-24?

**Have Your say
on Your Area!!**

You've got thoughts and we want to hear them. The DCC Community and Social Development Team would love to hear your thoughts on what happens in this area whether it be Halloween, Summer Festivals, Events in Parks... Your opinion matters!!



BE IN
CHANCE
€50
VOI
JUST SCA
AND FILL
QUE



Young people are the best people to ask about what should go on in their area, most have grown up in the area, yet never have a say in what happens, so having questionnaires like this are amazing to have and I can't wait to see more initiatives like this".

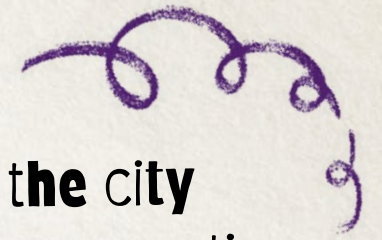
- Oonagh O'Brien



My wish for my city is for engagement to happen with young people in relation to funding, events and what happens in parks and public spaces



KORYDALLOS – GREECE



Rehearsals, puppets, drama and comedy in Korydallos, where the city becomes an open and shared space of learning, creativity and connection among generations.

Korydallos' partnership with the academic community turns the city into a living laboratory of action and imagination, where everyday urban life meets academic learning. Through the postgraduate programme "Theatre, Education, Society" of the University of the Peloponnese, Department of Theatre Studies*, seminars, workshops and open theatre activities bring together students, teachers, parents and people of different generations as active participants. In this exchange, daily experience and shared memory help sustain both the city's theatre tradition and Greece's wider cultural heritage.



A city that opens its doors to art and education is a city that builds a soul. Our public spaces are the stage where the future of community is rehearsed.

**We would like to warmly thank them for the photographic material they shared with us.*





Democracy is a living performance. When we open the doors of our assembly halls to the voices of the next generation, we turn formal spaces into stages for real change.



A dynamic group of participants working together on a large-scale creative construction to capture the essence of community-driven innovation.



*Community is built by hand.
When we gather to create
together, we are not just making
objects; we are weaving the
social fabric of our city.*



Standing in a circle with handmade puppets.

This is Korydallos' commitment to "soft investments" by repurposing its facilities into spaces for social inclusion and creative workshops.



In every character we create, we find a new way to tell the story of our community. Puppetry is not just play, it is the art of giving a voice to the voiceless.





The city is our stage and every corner holds the potential for transformation. We don't just inhabit space; we perform our future into existence.



The city is not just brick and mortar; it is a canvas for our collective imagination. We reclaim the forgotten corners to perform the stories of tomorrow.

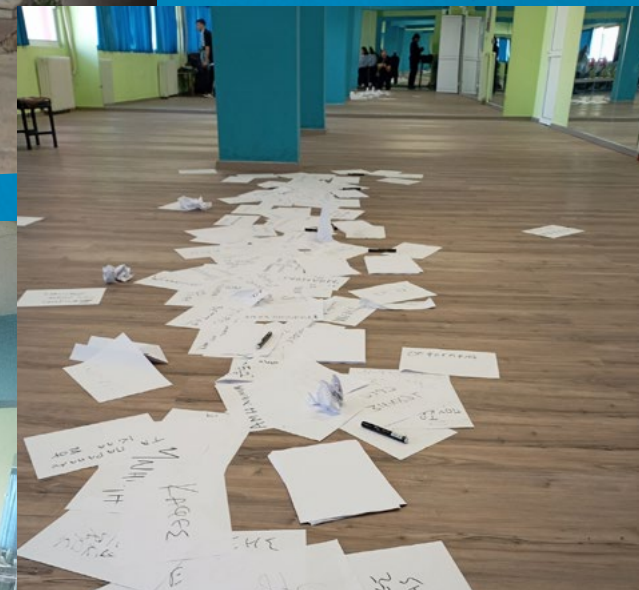




When education gets spread to the streets, the whole city becomes a classroom. Our community is a living parade of creativity and shared purpose.



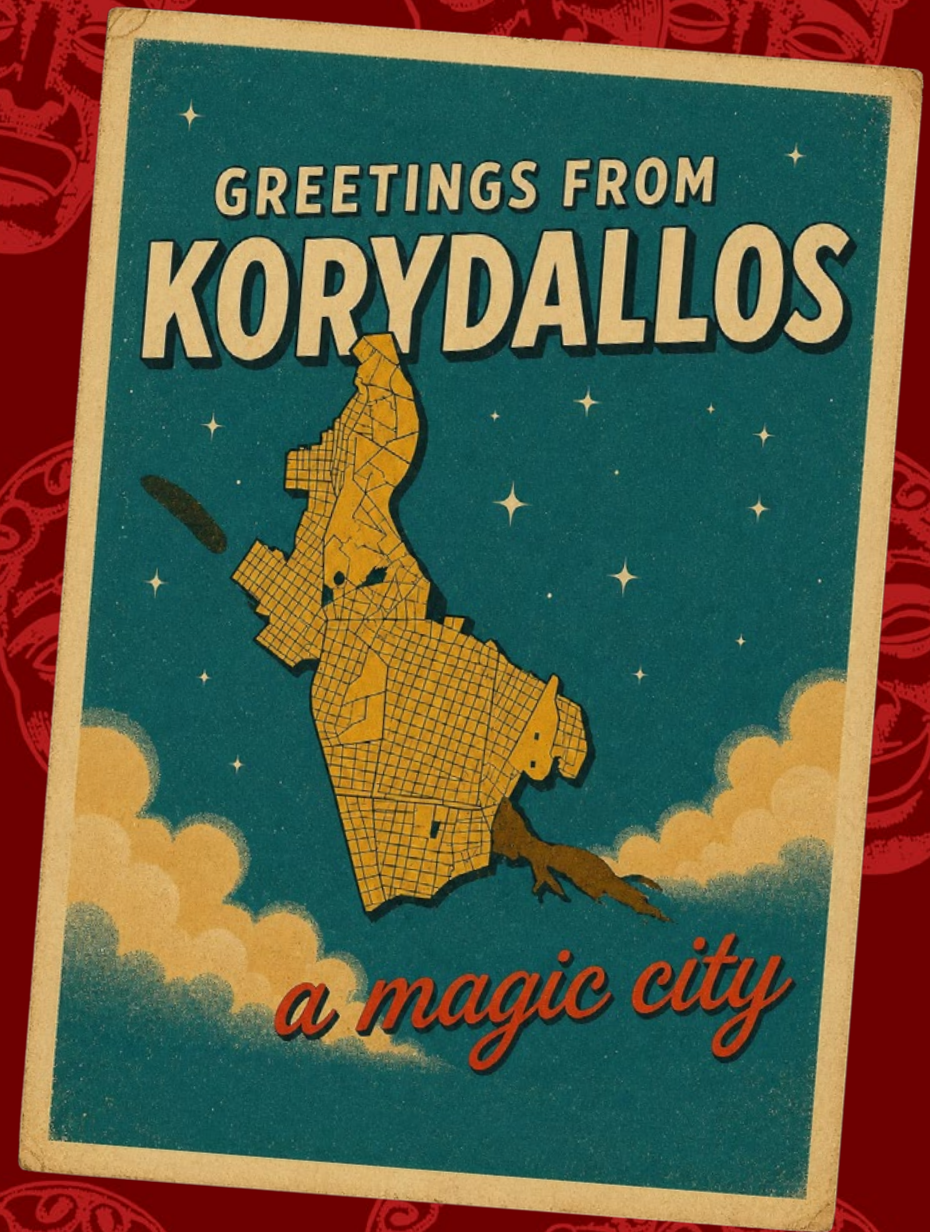
A moment of deep reflection and dialogue in a municipal multipurpose room. The mirror catches the psychological space of trust and social inclusion that the Municipality of Korydallos supports by providing these venues.



A trail of thoughts and creative expressions scattered across a municipal floor... The “soft investments” Korydallos is making - not just in buildings, but in the ideas and voices of its people.



*I wish my city could turn
every public space into
a stage for creativity,
dialogue and belonging,
where young people feel
heard, trusted and free to
imagine their future*



WEBINARS with
17/06/25
ROTTERDAM &
BRADFORD
4/09/25+ HULL

We want to learn from outside our network, so webinars help us bring in “lighthouse cities”, to widen our perspective. Rotterdam is the first of our online learning moments.



Today Raisla Roekalea tells us about the Rotterdam mentoring model, which originated in the city's diverse South neighbourhood. All school pupils in the area are matched with a mentor, usually a higher-education student, often with a similar background.



The match is based on needs and interests and what they build is not just support for school and careers, but a profound relationship... the magic human touch that makes this initiative work well.

Photo Credits: City of Rotterdam



Mentors and mentees meet at least one hour per week for around 20 weeks, during school time. Mentors are trained and receive credits.

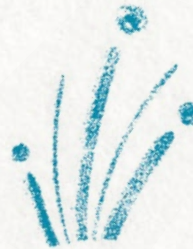


In our second webinar, focused on Bradford and Hull, we heard that youth violence and lack of opportunities are deeply connected. In response, the Peer Action Collective, supported by the Young Foundation, brings young people together to research these issues and design their own solutions. The English Football League community foundations and clubs act as trusted local reference points, using the power and visibility of football to reach and support young people often disconnected from institutions.





"It's not just about listening, it's about actually changing things because of what we say."



"It is important to be patient and give young people time to build trust in adults, organisations and spaces. While we help them feel more confident in decision-making, adults must also create environments where that confidence can grow"



Photo Credits: EFL- Young Foundation



TEX CARTAGENA

19TH AND 20TH
NOVEMBER 2025



Cartagena is a city where youth participation thrives in public life. One can see and feel this in the many youth-friendly youth hubs and participatory budgets and especially during the annual children's march. Cartagena shows in so many ways how youth can actively shape local democracy.



November 20, 2025 - Here goes youth participation in action. More than 1,000 children and young people march to the City Hall to defend their rights under UNICEF principles. From the stage, they read a manifesto calling for the right to play, study and access to green spaces. After this march, the Cartagena Youth Council meets with the Mayor, municipal staff and UNICEF representatives to present their priorities for the future.



This felt like a very different TEX meeting - one where young people were in charge and we were being invited in to participate. Throughout these days we heard examples of how the city is encouraging young people's voices to be heard, and establishing structures to make this sustainable - and 'the norm' not only for young people, but for adults too.

"When young people speak together, the city has to listen. This isn't just a march, it is a reminder that children are citizens too."

- a Participant

VALMIERA – LATVIA

ELECTIONS!!!

Democracy begins in the family, with the children and adolescents' elections

We believe that democracy begins in the family, so we have organized elections for children and young people throughout the Valmiera region. In the elections, kids can share their views on the issues that matter for the region's future. Small but memorable moments of young people stepping up, taking part seriously and making their voices heard. And they vote without losing their style – as democracy demands.



First votes, serious choices – democracy begins with small hands and big opinions.



A proud moment in Valmiera: young citizens stepping up and voting in their own style.



"Many children were happy and proud of themselves for voting as adults, and some parents also said that their children really wanted to vote and were happy to see their child vote too."

- A volunteer at the voting station



My wish for my city is that the opinions of children and young people are equal to the opinions of adults.

FEELING GOOD

Testing action – Youth forum “Mental health”

The energy in the room is high for the “Mental Health” forum for young people across the Valmiera region. The well-known Latvian singer Emilija shares her personal journey with mental health and closes her performance with the song “To Be Yourself”, a very honest and moving tone for the occasion. Afterward, participants open up in group discussions, reflecting together on different aspects of mental health, so brave and genuine.



Music opened the heart...



... and dialogue kept it open.

“1. Either we do it well or we don't do it at all

2. We must first listen to ourselves

3. I am not money, I don't have to please everyone.”

- a forum participant

I wish for Valmiera to be a bold visionary that sees the youth not just as future potential but as equal partners of today. May the doors of the municipality and parish administrations in rural areas always be open to youth ideas, and may we succeed in creating an environment where young people feel heard, needed, and like they belong. Wishing strength and patience to the youth affairs specialists as they build new, innovative bridges of participation, and may the Valmiera Municipality thrive as smart, active, and attractive homes for the youth!?”



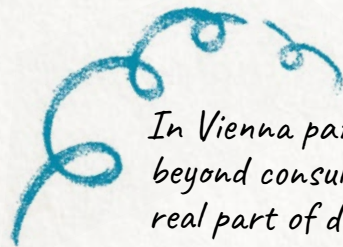
WEBINAR with VIENNA

15TH JANUARY 2026



We virtually land in Vienna, where a new kind of 21st century “Viennese Blood” flows through the city... it’s all but nostalgia, rather it’s the energy, ideas and voices of children and young people shaping urban life for a city that wants to become the most child- and youth-friendly city in the world. The webinar shows how children’s rights are a cornerstone of urban policy in Vienna.

Through its ambitious Children and Youth Strategy, Vienna involves thousands of young people in workshops, assemblies and participatory budgeting processes every year.



In Vienna participation can move beyond consultation and become a real part of decision-making.



Photo Credits: City of Vienna

VILA NOVA DE GAIA – PORTUGAL

Young people are talking about **youth associations’ engagement with the Deputy Mayor for Youth** during **our testing action “Inspiring Talks”**



Young people from Gaia gather in an open and informal setting to talk about what participation really means to them. The discussion explores what motivates them to get involved, what barriers they face and what could work better in youth associations and organized groups.

The format is simple and direct, we share experiences, exchange perspectives and openly discuss ideas for the future. At the same time, the activity invites young people to take ownership of the youth space itself. Rather than being passive participants, they help shape the conversation, the themes and the dynamics of the session, becoming active protagonists in the dialogue around local youth policies.



sharing ideas, challenges and new visions for stronger youth participation in the city.



Youth voices in action during the “Inspiring Talks” in Vila Nova de Gaia...





“During the Inspiring Talks, we shared our experiences in youth associations, from organizing activities to simply taking part. We talked about the confidence, teamwork and sense of responsibility these experiences helped us build, but also about some frustrations and challenges. It was also interesting to hear the municipality’s perspective and have an open conversation about how youth associations and the city can work better together.”

- Luís Santos Gouveia, young participant



My wish for my city is to empower its youth by listening to and involving them in the delivery of the projects carried out.



**TALKING
BUSINESS!**

Conversas Inspiradoras: Empreendedorismo: Young people and entrepreneurs discussing youth entrepreneurship during the 3rd edition of our “Inspiring Talks”

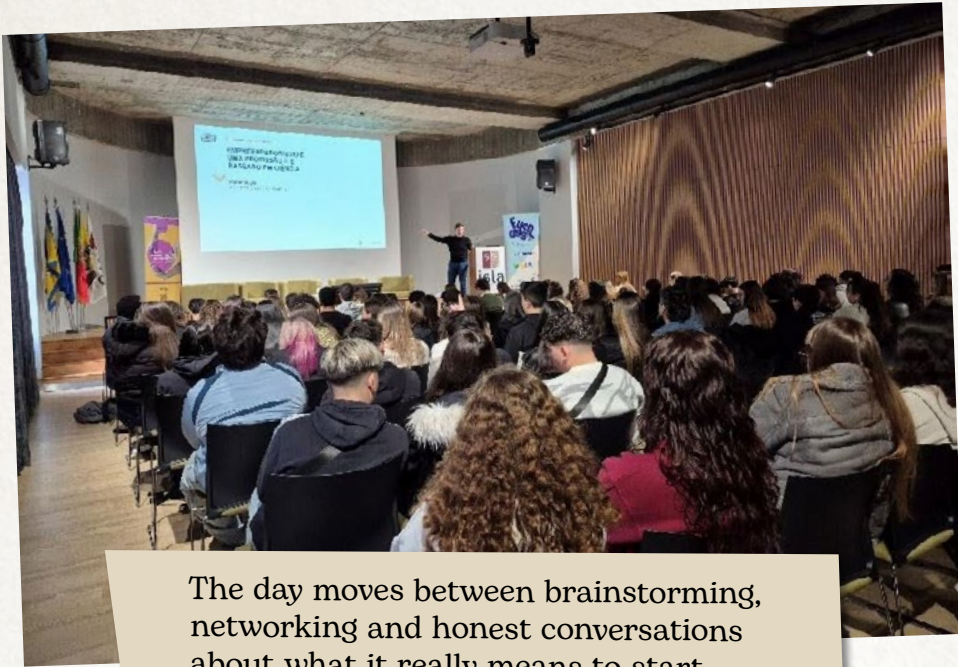
March 18th 2026 - A room full of students, young entrepreneurs and ideas in motion. The Youth and Associations Division and ISLA Gaia, part of our ULG, are hosting a session on youth entrepreneurship as part of the WISH CITIES testing action, responding directly to topics young people themselves wanted to explore.



During the Idea Lab, participants test ideas and challenge each other's perspectives, promoting creative problem solving and innovative thinking. Later, local entrepreneurs take the stage to share real stories, their risks, failures, unexpected turns and moments that made their projects work.

It's an open, practical and peer-to-peer atmosphere. Less about formal speeches, more about creating a space where young people feel encouraged to experiment, connect and imagine new possibilities for themselves in the city.





The day moves between brainstorming, networking and honest conversations about what it really means to start something from scratch.

My wish for my city is that young people have more initiative and the courage to start and take risks.



"Moderating the youth entrepreneurship session at ISLA Gaia showed me how important it is to create spaces where young people can share ideas, experiences and inspiration. Today we have access to so many tools and examples from other entrepreneurs, which makes it easier to learn from their challenges and successes. Entrepreneurship often starts with the courage to take an idea seriously, respond to a real need, and turn it into action. Beyond contributing to society, this journey is deeply rewarding and becomes a true personal achievement for any young person who discovers their sense of purpose".

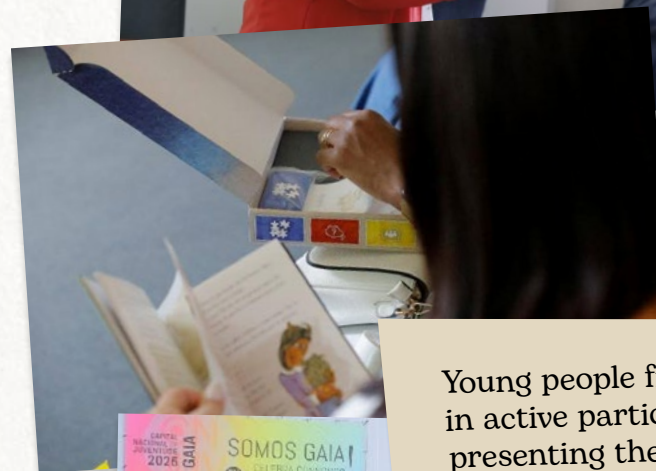
- Inês Moreira, young participant

WISH CITIES IN GAIA

A group of young people from Gaia welcomes the WISH CITIES partners and takes them straight into the world of the Municipal Youth Council by sharing how it actually works from the inside.

The Council brings together dozens of young representatives from youth associations, schools, universities, student federations and youth political organizations across the city. At the center of it is a small Permanent Committee of five young people, elected to represent the wider group and keep the dialogue with the municipality alive.

What makes the session feel different is the tone: open, confident and very direct. When Joana Castro speaks about the Council not as a structure on paper, but as a real space where young people can debate ideas, challenge decisions and influence local youth policies. Many network partners feel the different tone, more open, confident and extremely direct. It becomes one of the clearest examples of youth participation in action.



Young people from Gaia engaged in active participation dynamics, presenting the Municipal Youth Council to the Wish Cities partners.





"What I value most about the Municipal Youth Council is that it gives young people a real voice in the city, not just a symbolic one. It was exciting to speak not as an institutional representative, but as a young person directly involved in making these spaces work. Sharing our experience with the WISH Cities partners made me realize that youth participation can go beyond the local level and inspire other cities too. Knowing this, is something I carry with great sense of responsibility and genuine pride. In fact, when taken seriously, youth participation can travel a long way."

- Joana Castro, Municipal Youth Council participant

My wish for my city is that youth participation becomes a continuous and meaningful practice, increasingly embedded in the way the city listens, plans and decides.



TEX PORI

11TH AND 12TH
MARCH 2026



The final TEX of the WISH CITIES journey brings us to Pori, on Finland's west coast, a city where trust, data and early intervention shape youth policies.



Visits to the Ohjaamo, schools and local services show how integrated support can help young people before problems escalate.



Pori has been a turning point for the network, as we move from testing actions towards the drafting of our final Investment and Continuity Plans.

CARTAGENA – SPAIN

**RIGHTS FOR
ALL CHILDREN!**

20 November 2025 - During the WISH-CITIES partner visit to Cartagena, the city's main celebration of International Children's Rights Day brings together more than 1,500 schoolchildren in front of the City Hall, turning the public square into a collective stage for children's voices, rights and wishes.



We are all with the children and teenagers when it comes to the rights to be happy, engaged and listened to

Schools, families, local representatives, ULG members and WISH-CITIES partners gather around a manifesto written and read by the Municipal Council for Children and Adolescents. This moment shows what meaningful child and youth participation can look like when it moves from meeting rooms into the heart of the city: children and adolescents occupying a symbolic public space, expressing their rights, asking adults to listen, and linking local participation with a wider European network of cities.





“We do not want to dream
of the city of the future, but
to be an active part of the
construction of the city of
the present.”

- a participant

“We like to be listened to, to be
taken into account, and to be an
active part of this city.”

- a participant



*My wish for my city is that all
children and adolescents can
grow up in healthy, safe and
protective environments, where
we are listened to and can take
part in local decisions.*



WE RULE!

Young city governors for one day

In a WISH-CITIES role-play workshop, Cartagena's young participants become "city governors" for a day and build their own wish list for the future of the city. This workshop helps Cartagena move from consultation to shared imagination.

Young people from the CLIA imagine Cartagena through their own priorities, dreams and concerns. Standing in front of their "Wishlist del CLIA de Cartagena", they have just wrapped up a discussion on how to make the city more inclusive, accessible, sustainable and youth friendly. They talked about safer public spaces and better mobility to youth facilities, digital skills, support for families and stronger mechanisms for participation.

Young people can read the city with honesty, creativity and a clear sense of public responsibility.



"We do not just want
to be asked what we
think; we want to
help build the city
where we live."

- a participant

My wish for my city is
that Cartagena listens
to young people not only
as the future, but as
citizens of the present.



PARIS, HOME OF URBACT



“La Ville Lumière” has also been an important stopping point in the WISH-CITIES roadmap. We are one of ten Innovation Transfer Networks (ITNs) and getting together with our wider community has added huge value to our work. The opportunity to notice and explore synergies with other networks was a great starting point, back in September 2024. And the second ITN meeting inspired us with the invitation to experiment in our testing actions, which all of our cities grabbed with both hands.



Our final Paris stopover in February 2026 was a chance to go public - for the first time - with our draft Investment Plans... a scary moment! Working with peers from other networks made this a lot more manageable - and it also led to some valuable exchanges, where we heard great suggestions about improving our plans. Thanks to all our sister ITNs, and we hope to stay in touch!



Investing in **our** future ...



All of this learning, and the sharing of all of the inspiring practices, comes together in our final products - the Investment and Continuity Plans. These plans are the culmination of our innovation transfer journey, each designed to enhance youth wellbeing in our partner cities.

Each plan is distinctive, reflecting local needs. But, as you might expect,, we can see many synergies across these documents. Universally, there is a drive to empower young people and to make their voices heard more effectively. In some cases, this is reflected through new structures and governance mechanisms.

For example, Cartagena will create a new Youth Council for people aged 18-35, addressing a gap in their existing youth ecosystem. Valmiera will continue its 'Democracy Starts at Home' campaign, allowing children and young people to have their say in a voting process. Dublin will establish its first Youth Advisory Panel, giving voice to young people in the city's 10th district.





In other cities, the focus is on repurposing how we use physical spaces to support young people. Through its circular economy lens, Pori will introduce an innovative procedure to tackle the issue of underutilised public buildings, giving youth organisations greater access and flexibility. Korydallos will also create a new space for youth, which will function as a hub for young people as well as a centre for entrepreneurship. Vila Nova de Gaia will explore ways to 'let go', handing over public spaces to young people, which builds on their local testing action. Finally, our Lead Partner, Milan, will also enhance its network of local youth hubs, complemented by a new range of engagement activities.

MILAN - ITALY

OPEN CASELLO

OPEN CASELLO, where we transformed a landmark building into a shared space for young people

In Milan we chose to transform a piece of the city into a space where youth can figure out who they are, and experiment. It all started with a former toll booth - Open Casello - and expanded into the adjacent square, redesigned and coloured together with young people.

Reclaiming parts of the city for new generations means more than redesigning spaces. It means restoring dignity, recognising their role, and making a clear statement that their voices matter and they deserve a physical space to express them.



Working side by side, hands-on...Open Casello becomes a place where ideas are not just imagined but negotiated and built in reality.





Open Casello brings together two dimensions – exploration and experimentation – while testing something that didn't exist before, the co-management of a public space between young people and the municipality.



"This is not just a place where things happen. It's a place where we can actually take part in making them happen."

– young participant

My wish for my city is to have real spaces where we are not just invited, but involved.

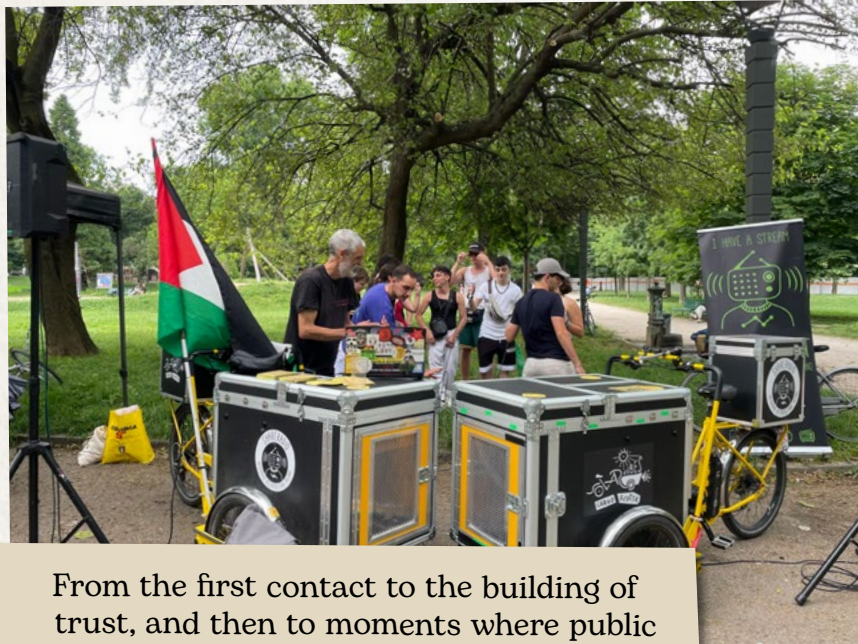




Rebuilding trust in the streets with the return of street education in Milan

For years, Milan had no structured street education programme. It was something the city no longer fully believed in. What we see here is part of a generational shift. Milano Street Lab brings back a method based on proximity, continuity and respectful presence - creating space for the voices of young people who often remain at the margins.





From the first contact to the building of trust, and then to moments where public space is activated by youth presence.



These interactions show something essential: young people always have something to say - to their peers, to adults and even to the city. Over time, this approach has reached more than 6,000 young people across different neighbourhoods, while slowly rebuilding networks of trust within the city.

“They didn’t come to change us. They came to stay, and that made the difference.”

– young participant

My wish for my city is to be heard - even if we come from the outskirts, even if we don’t look the “right” way, even if our families don’t go to museums on Sundays.

100 IDEAS

Enabling young people to shape their own ideas

“100 IDEE” is a citywide programme that shifts the role of public institutions from providing services to creating opportunities. Instead of offering predefined activities, the programme supports young people in developing their own ideas - through access to mentors, spaces and small resources. This approach introduces a new way of working, namely trusting young people as creators.

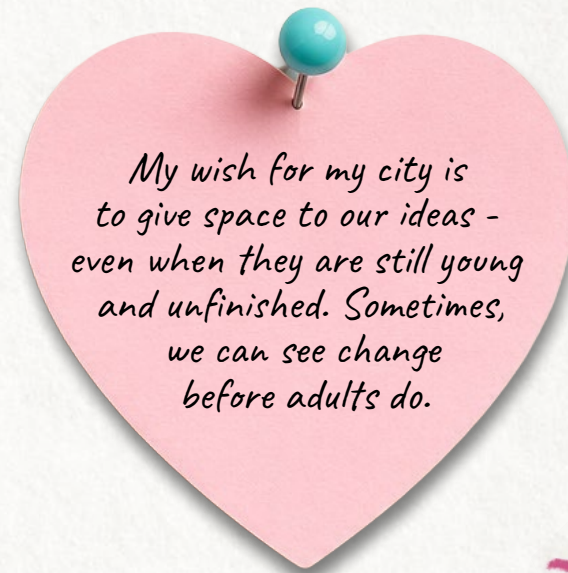
This is a change in perspective, where the city becomes an enabler, and youth move from being users of services to active protagonists shaping initiatives, spaces and narratives across Milan.

“If it does not exist, we’ll make it”... young creators and mentors ideating spaces and services in different locations of the city...



“For the first time, I realised I was actually good at something - and I felt like myself, really myself, for the first time.”

- A participant



*My wish for my city is
to give space to our ideas -
even when they are still young
and unfinished. Sometimes,
we can see change
before adults do.*



BEYOND 6-7 CONCLUSIONS

Maybe WISH-CITIES has never been about reaching a perfect "10." Like the famous internet meme, sometimes a "6-7" is where things become interesting.

If these two years show unfinished, experimental and still evolving ideas and approaches, then the future looks a lot like now: imperfect, alive and exactly enough... and we wouldn't have it any other way.



Across Europe, we explore very different ways of supporting young people.



Milan is improving youth hubs and data gathering.



Vila Nova de Gaia

has been testing how much power cities are willing to hand over through participatory civic spaces.

Cartagena transforms children's rights into public action through marches, manifestos and youth councils.



Dublin focuses on trusted youth workers embedded in communities and local government.

Valmiera experiments with democracy itself, inviting children to vote on city priorities.



Korydallos uses theatre and the arts to strengthen confidence, expression and participation.



Pori demonstrates the value of prevention, trust and integrated services.





*There is no single formula
for building a “wish city”
because such a city cannot be
a fixed model, but rather it has
to be a state of mind, a bold city
willing to listen, test, adapt
and grow alongside the
protagonism of its young
people.*

URBACT



Co-funded by
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