

CONTINUITY PLAN

Strengthening Youth Wellbeing in Milan

From Innovation to Public Policy

Department of Youth Policies, [City of Milan](#)

URBACT IV ITN – WISH CITIES

July 2026



Executive Summary

Young people's wellbeing is shaped not only by individual circumstances, but also by the places they live, the relationships they build and the opportunities their city makes available to them. In Milan, territorial inequalities continue to influence access to education, culture, sport, public space and civic participation, affecting life trajectories long before young people enter adulthood.

Over the past four years, the City of Milan has progressively responded to these challenges by moving beyond isolated innovative projects towards a more integrated approach to youth policies. The WISH-MI Urban Innovative Actions project first demonstrated the value of combining proximity, participation and cross-sector collaboration, while the [URBACT WISH Cities](#) network provided the opportunity to compare experiences with other European cities and refine this approach through continuous learning.

This Continuity Plan represents the next step in that journey. Its purpose is not to replicate WISH-MI, but to institutionalise the practices that proved most effective while leaving behind those that generated limited impact. Rather than launching new initiatives, the Plan consolidates three strategic priorities that are becoming permanent components of Milan's youth policy:

- **strengthening a citywide network of youth spaces** as civic infrastructures where young people can meet, experiment and participate;
- **supporting youth-led initiatives**, transforming ideas into collective action;
- **ensuring more equitable access to sport and wellbeing** through a voucher scheme.

Together, these priorities reflect a broader vision of youth policy. Young people do not simply need services; they need places where they belong, opportunities to take responsibility and institutions willing to share trust, resources and decision-making.

The Continuity Plan is supported by a governance model based on co-design between the Municipality and third-sector organisations, strengthened through permanent local partnerships and continuous European peer learning. At the same time, a diversified funding strategy and an integrated monitoring framework provide the conditions for long-term sustainability beyond individual projects or political cycles.

Ultimately, this document is not only a plan for continuing successful actions. It is a commitment to making youth wellbeing a permanent dimension of Milan's urban development strategy, recognising young people not simply as beneficiaries of public policy, but as active contributors to the city's social, cultural and democratic future.

SECTION 1 - The Challenge

1.1 The Problem

Milan is widely recognised as a city of opportunities. Yet these opportunities are not equally distributed. Young people's wellbeing is strongly influenced by territorial inequalities that affect access to education, public services, cultural opportunities, sport and social networks. In many neighbourhoods, socio-economic conditions continue to shape life trajectories more than individual potential.

Youth wellbeing inequalities in Milan

€76.500 income gap per capita between wealthiest and poorest districts	2→24% range of early school leaving rates across districts	~30% early school leaving among students with foreign citizenship
70% migrant-background students in highest- concentration schools	>50% adolescents in youth centres who never leave their district in free time	20% adolescents who practise sport or attend cultural venues

Figure 1. Youth wellbeing inequalities across Milan

These territorial disparities are reflected in educational outcomes. Early school leaving ranges from approximately **2% in the city's wealthiest districts to almost 24% in the most disadvantaged ones**, reaching nearly **30% among students with foreign citizenship**. In several schools, students with a migrant background represent more than **70% of enrolment**, highlighting persistent patterns of residential segregation and unequal access to opportunities.

The effects extend well beyond education. More than half of the adolescents attending youth centres rarely leave their own neighbourhood during their free time, while only a small proportion regularly accesses cultural activities or organised sport. When everyday mobility is limited, aspirations and future opportunities become equally constrained.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed these inequalities. Evidence from [WHO Europe](#), highlights the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health, social relationships and overall wellbeing, particularly among those living in disadvantaged socio-economic contexts.

At the same time, many young people express a growing willingness to contribute to their communities and participate in civic life. However, opportunities for meaningful participation remain fragmented, while public institutions and third-sector organisations often operate through parallel initiatives with limited coordination.

These challenges are particularly significant for young people with a migrant background, who frequently experience additional barriers when accessing education, employment opportunities, orientation services and civic participation. Addressing these inequalities requires responses that are local, relationship-based and capable of building trust over time.

Youth wellbeing therefore cannot be addressed through isolated projects alone. It requires an integrated policy framework capable of reducing territorial inequalities, strengthening participation, improving access to opportunities and creating neighbourhoods where young people can develop, contribute and imagine their future.

How the problems spread from the centre out



Figure 2. How territorial inequalities reinforce youth wellbeing challenges

SECTION 2 - From Innovation to Systemic Change

2.1 Building on the WISH-MI Legacy

The City of Milan did not start this Continuity Plan from scratch. Over the past four years, youth wellbeing has progressively evolved from a collection of individual projects into an emerging public policy. The WISH-MI Urban Innovative Actions project (2020–2023) represented a turning point in this journey, demonstrating that youth wellbeing can be addressed through an integrated approach combining proximity, participation and cross-sector collaboration.

Rather than creating isolated services, WISH-MI tested a new way of working. Community hubs, youth-led initiatives, digital tools and partnerships with local organisations were developed as interconnected components of the same ecosystem, placing young people at the centre of policy design rather than at the end of service delivery.

The results achieved over the last few years demonstrate both the relevance of this approach and its potential for long-term consolidation. Between 2022 and 2026, the Municipality expanded the annual investment dedicated to youth policies from approximately **€1 million to more than €4 million**, activated **eight new youth spaces**, strengthened its partnership network from **122 to 318 organisations**, reached more than **9,000 young people**, and supported **232 youth groups** in developing their own ideas.

These achievements provide the foundations upon which this Continuity Plan is built.

2.2 What We Learned

The implementation of WISH-MI also generated valuable lessons that directly informed the design of this Continuity Plan.

First, proximity matters. Young people engage more easily when opportunities are available within their own neighbourhoods and are supported by trusted relationships. Community hubs and street education proved significantly more effective than purely digital approaches in reaching those who are most vulnerable or disconnected from institutional services.

Second, participation cannot be reduced to consultation. The most meaningful results emerged when young people became active partners in designing activities, managing spaces and developing projects of their own. Programmes such as [100 Idee](#) demonstrated that providing resources, mentoring and trust generates long-term civic engagement rather than short-term participation.

Third, collaboration is essential but requires coordination. WISH-MI successfully brought together municipal departments, third-sector organisations, universities and local communities. At the same time, the experience highlighted the need for stronger governance mechanisms,

clearer responsibilities and shared monitoring tools capable of connecting different programmes within a common strategic framework.

Finally, evidence matters. Alongside quantitative monitoring, the qualitative testing action carried out with the Politecnico di Milano demonstrated the value of integrating users' experiences into policy evaluation.

2.3 From Pilot Projects to Public Policy

The purpose of this Continuity Plan is therefore not to replicate WISH-MI, but to institutionalise its most successful elements. In doing so, the Plan deliberately builds on the practices and approaches that proved most effective during implementation, while leaving aside those that did not generate the expected results or demonstrate sufficient impact.

Rather than creating new standalone initiatives, the Plan consolidates existing programmes and connects them within a coherent citywide system focused on youth wellbeing. Three strategic priorities have been identified as the priorities for the implementation cycle:

- **Strengthening Milan's network of youth spaces** as accessible civic infrastructures for participation and community life.
- **Supporting youth-led initiatives through the [100 Idee](#) programme**, enabling young people to transform ideas into concrete projects.
- **Increasing equitable access to sport and wellbeing**, reducing economic barriers through the [Generazione Sport](#) programme.

Together, these actions translate the lessons learned through WISH-MI into a permanent policy framework capable of reducing territorial inequalities, strengthening participation and improving young people's wellbeing across Milan.

2.4 Learning from the WISH Cities Network

Milan's participation in the URBACT WISH Cities network further strengthened this transition by providing opportunities to compare experiences, test new approaches and adapt practices developed by partner cities.

Three policy modules emerged as particularly relevant for Milan: **Youth Co-design**, **Youth Data** and **Participatory Youth Budgeting**. These themes reflected priorities already identified locally and were reinforced through the testing actions developed by partner cities.

The collaborative mapping exercise illustrated in **Figure 3** summarises this shared learning process, showing how the different testing actions contributed to the identification of transferable practices across the network.



Figure 4. Piece of content from the milanese testing action on Youth Data

SECTION 3 – Delivering the Strategic Priorities

The Continuity Plan translates the lessons learned through WISH-MI into three strategic priorities that will guide implementation over the coming years. Rather than introducing new programmes, Milan has chosen to consolidate and strengthen three policy instruments that have demonstrated their capacity to promote youth wellbeing, participation and equal opportunities across the city.

The following sections describe how each strategic priority has evolved from experimentation into a permanent component of the Municipality's youth policy framework, outlining the main lessons learned and the directions for future development.

3.1 Strategic Priority 1 – Strengthening Milan's Network of Youth Spaces

Youth spaces were the starting point of this trajectory. When the Municipality began this work, Milan had a structural shortage of physical spaces where young people over 14 could simply be accessible, unstructured places that did not require enrolment in a specific service or activity to use.

Rather than building new facilities, the choice was to reactivate what already existed: through a combination of municipal, national and philanthropic funding and partnerships with third-sector organisations, the Municipality has reopened or repurposed **eight youth spaces** over the past

four years, without new land consumption - recovering underused public buildings and turning them into places explicitly designed with and for young people.

Over the last few years, Milan has progressively built a diversified ecosystem of youth spaces. Rather than adopting a single management model, the Municipality intentionally experimented with different forms of governance, recognising that different neighbourhoods and communities require different institutional arrangements.

Today this ecosystem includes eight youth spaces operating through complementary management models. Some, such as [Open Casello](#) and [Baroni85](#), are co-managed through partnerships between the Municipality, third sector organisations and groups of young volunteers. Others have been temporarily entrusted directly to informal youth groups (ex. [Spazio S.T.Art](#)) and collectives, allowing them to experiment with forms of self-management and civic responsibility. A third group consists of spaces managed by third sector organisations that nevertheless provide adolescents and young people with opportunities to create, participate and express themselves.

One of the most important lessons emerging from this experience is that the need for accessible youth spaces is both widespread and persistent. Throughout the implementation of WISH-MI and the broader ecosystem of youth policies, one request consistently emerged from young people themselves: they need places where they can simply stay, meet others, develop ideas and build relationships.

Over time, however, the Municipality also learned that providing physical spaces is not enough. Spaces only become meaningful when they evolve into places of belonging. The ambition is therefore no longer simply to open buildings, but to create environments that young people recognise as their own: homes where they can stay, workshops where they can experiment and tables where they can actively contribute to decisions affecting their communities.



Figure 5 & 6. Activities and events in Open Casello

This transformation depends primarily on governance rather than architecture. Genuine **co-design processes** are essential to foster ownership and belonging. Young people need to be involved in shaping activities, defining priorities and imagining the future of these places, while recognising that different forms of participation are appropriate for different levels of experience, confidence and responsibility.

The ongoing development of Open Casello illustrates this evolution particularly well. Originally conceived as a former customs house transformed into the Municipality's home for youth policies, it is progressively becoming a civic platform where an increasingly active community of young people seeks not only to organise activities but also to make its voice heard within the city's political life.

One of the main strategic challenges for the coming years will therefore be to strengthen structured forms of youth representation. Milan currently lacks a permanent body through which young people can collectively engage with political decision-makers. Drawing inspiration from experiences observed through the WISH Cities network, including the **Youth Council** in Cartagena, the Municipality will explore the creation of a stable youth consultative body capable of contributing to public decision-making.

Ultimately, youth spaces perform a function that goes far beyond service delivery. They make young people visible within the city. Enabling younger generations to occupy, manage and transform public spaces represents a profoundly political act of recognition, signalling that young

people are not simply beneficiaries of public policies but active citizens with a legitimate role in shaping Milan's future.

3.2 Strategic Priority 2 – Supporting Youth-Led Initiatives through 100 Idee

If youth spaces provide the physical infrastructure for participation, [100 Idee](#) represents Milan's principal policy instrument for investing in young people's capacity to generate ideas and transform them into collective action.

Concretely, 100 Idee — full name "100 Idee Se non c'è, lo facciamo" — is an open call through which groups of young people aged 14 to 35 can submit ideas for projects they want to bring to life in their city, in areas ranging from music and civic activism to art, sport, travel and media. Selected groups are not simply given a grant: they are accompanied through structured mentoring, matched with one of over 130 partner organisations acting as mentors, and given access to a citywide map of public and private spaces made available for their projects. Since its launch, the programme has received 352 applications, activated 150 ideas, engaged 58 active mentors and reached around 700 young people directly, with a combined investment of €1.5 million supported by the Municipality, Fondazione Con i Bambini and the PN Metro Plus 2021–2027 programme.



Figure 7. First kick-off meeting of the program

Rather than starting from predefined services or identified needs, the programme starts from young people's ideas. It assumes that adolescents and young adults are not simply recipients of public policies but capable of imagining new possibilities for their communities. The role of the Municipality is therefore to create **enabling conditions** — financial resources, mentoring, spaces, networks and institutional trust — that allow these ideas to become reality.

This represents a significant shift in the philosophy of youth policy. Instead of responding exclusively to existing needs, the programme deliberately invests in aspirations and emerging ideas, recognising **experimentation, uncertainty and even failure as essential components of learning**. In this sense, 100 Idee functions as a civic learning infrastructure, allowing young people to develop autonomy, responsibility and collective agency through direct experience.

The programme has also generated important administrative innovation. Working with informal groups required the Municipality to simplify procedures, introduce more flexible management systems and strengthen co-design with third sector organisations and philanthropic partners through match-funding mechanisms. The public administration progressively shifted from acting primarily as a service provider towards becoming an enabler, facilitator and partner.

This approach shares several characteristics with the **participatory budgeting model** developed by Vila Nova de Gaia, where public resources are entrusted directly to young people to implement projects for their communities. Milan complements this approach with mentoring, educational support and access to an extensive network of civic spaces, making participation an ongoing learning process rather than a one-off funding opportunity.

For these reasons, the Continuity Plan confirms 100 Idee as one of Milan's permanent strategic priorities for strengthening youth participation, creativity and civic protagonism.

3.3 Strategic Priority 3 – Increasing Equitable Access to Sport and Wellbeing

The third strategic priority addresses one of the structural barriers to youth wellbeing: unequal access to organised sport. As highlighted in Section 1, only around 20% of adolescents in Milan regularly practise sport or attend cultural venues — a gap that tracks closely with the same territorial and economic inequalities described throughout this Plan. Rather than a lack of interest, this gap largely reflects the barrier of cost: sport dropout tends to concentrate among young people for whom membership fees, equipment and transport are simply out of reach.

The experience of [Generazione Sport](#) has demonstrated that financial constraints continue to prevent many children and young people from participating in regular sporting activities. In many cases, exclusion is determined not by a lack of motivation, but by the cumulative costs of memberships, equipment and transport.

Concretely, Generazione Sport works through a **system of individual sport vouchers**, co-financed through the Fondo Qubi and private foundations. Young people between 11 and 24 years old, identified through the citywide Reti Qubi network of schools and social services, are referred into the programme and matched with one of more than 70 partner sports organisations across the city, covering the cost of enrolment for a season of activity. Alongside the vouchers themselves, the programme also funds training for coaches, instructors and sports directors on inclusive coaching practices, supports pathways into sport-related professions and employment, and gives particular attention to including young people with disabilities through parasport and

integrated sport formats. Since its launch, the programme has enabled over 700 sport placements for young people facing economic or educational disadvantage.

Rather than creating new sports services, Milan has chosen to reduce these barriers through a voucher system that enables young people experiencing economic or educational disadvantage to access the opportunities already offered by the city's extensive network of sports organisations.

This approach recognises sport as much more than physical exercise. Participation in sport contributes to physical and mental health, strengthens social relationships, develops self-confidence and fosters a sense of belonging. Investing in equitable access to sport therefore represents an investment in prevention, inclusion and long-term wellbeing.



Figure 8. Sport activity from Generazione Sport Program

The evidence gathered during the implementation of Generazione Sport shows that relatively modest financial support can generate substantial social benefits, particularly for young people facing greater vulnerability. For this reason, the Continuity Plan institutionalises sport vouchers as a policy instrument aimed at reducing inequalities rather than as a temporary welfare measure.

Future implementation will continue to strengthen partnerships with local sports organisations while expanding access to activities where inequalities remain particularly significant, including swimming, recognising both its educational value and its importance as a life skill.

3.4 Cross-cutting Principles

The three strategic priorities described above — spaces, ideas, and sport — do not operate as separate tracks. They are held together by three cross-cutting principles that run through every stage of the Plan, from how activities are designed to how their results are read.

Environmental sustainability shapes how youth spaces are recovered and how activities and events are run day to day, consistent with the reuse-over-consumption logic already guiding the network of eight spaces described in Section 3.1, and with Milan's broader commitment as a C40 city.

Gender equality is built into how programmes are designed and monitored, not added afterwards: participation data across youth spaces, 100 Idee and Generazione Sport is read with attention to which groups of young people are — and are not — showing up, so that gaps can be identified and addressed rather than assumed away.

Digital communication determines whether any of this reaches the young people it is meant for. Spaces, ideas and sport vouchers are only as accessible as the channels used to announce them; the Plan therefore treats communication as youth-facing by design, using the formats, languages and platforms young people actually use, rather than translating institutional messaging after the fact.

Together, these three principles are what keep the Plan's three priorities coherent as a single system rather than three parallel programmes.

SECTION 4

Governance and Collective Learning

4.1 A Governance Model Based on Co-design

Milan's governance model for youth policy has evolved over several years through experimentation and sustained collaboration.

Working within the Italian framework of *co-progettazione*, public institutions and civil society organisations do not simply implement predefined actions: they jointly design, test and continuously adapt interventions together. This approach allows the Municipality to combine institutional responsibility with the flexibility, proximity and expertise that organisations working directly alongside young people bring to the table.

In this model, the Municipality's role extends beyond service delivery. It acts as a public convenor: creating the conditions for collaboration, ensuring strategic coherence, and progressively institutionalising the practices that prove most effective. Third-sector organisations, in turn, contribute knowledge rooted in everyday practice, experimentation and direct relationships with young people. Governance, in this sense, is understood not as a hierarchical structure but as a collective process of learning, experimentation and shared responsibility.

4.2 The Urban Local Group: From Project Partnership to “Permanent” Learning Community

One of the most significant legacies of WISH Cities has been the transformation of Milan's Urban Local Group (ULG) from a project-specific stakeholder body into a “permanent” infrastructure for developing youth policy through dialogue and shared learning.

This infrastructure operates across three complementary levels. The first is a smaller strategic core group bringing together the Municipality and a handful of long-standing partner organisations. Together, these organisations act as critical knowledge partners, continuously challenging and strengthening the Municipality's policy development rather than simply delivering services.

The second level is a broader local ecosystem, built through the ***Cantieri delle Politiche Giovanili*** (Youth Policy Labs) — participatory workshops that bring together public institutions, third-sector organisations, educators, foundations, cultural organisations and, increasingly, young people themselves. Rather than functioning as formal consultation exercises, the *Cantieri* operate as spaces of collective reflection, where priorities are discussed, experiences exchanged and emerging challenges identified before being translated into policy.



Figure 9. First “Cantiere delle Politiche Giovanili” (Youth Policy Lab)

The third level connects this local ecosystem to an **international network of peer learning**, most notably through Milan's participation in WISH Cities. Hosting the **Eurocities Working Group on Education** in May 2026 — bringing together around forty education experts from across Europe — allowed Milan to test the priorities and implementation approach of this Continuity Plan against outside perspectives. Rather than acting as external evaluators, these peers functioned as critical friends: offering constructive feedback, questioning assumptions and contributing to the ongoing refinement of Milan's youth policies.



Figure 10 & 11. Eurocities Working Group Education in Milan, focused on Youth Policies

Together, these three levels form a governance ecosystem that combines local knowledge, institutional responsibility and international learning, creating continuous feedback loops through which youth policy can evolve over time.

4.3 Partnerships as Public Infrastructure

The Continuity Plan rests on the premise that youth wellbeing cannot be delivered by public institutions alone: it depends on a strong civic ecosystem in which different actors contribute complementary knowledge, resources and relationships.

Over recent years, the Municipality has expanded this ecosystem by building long-term partnerships with third-sector organisations, educational institutions, sports associations, cultural organisations, foundations and youth-led initiatives — organised not around individual

projects, but around a shared, ongoing commitment to improving opportunities for young people across the city.

The Plan values the diversity of contributions within this ecosystem over fixed roles: some organisations provide educational outreach and youth work, others cultural production, research, mentoring, evaluation, sport or community engagement. Young people themselves increasingly take part not only as participants but as organisers, mentors, volunteers, space managers and co-designers of public policy.

The priority going forward is therefore not to create new partnership structures, but to strengthen the relationships already in place, improve coordination among them, and continue investing in trust — one of the most valuable resources underpinning effective youth policy.

4.4 Learning Across Cities

The strongest lesson to emerge from WISH Cities is that innovation in youth policy depends on **continuous learning** beyond institutional and geographical boundaries. Exchanges with partner cities allowed Milan to test its assumptions, compare governance models and identify practices that could be adapted to the local context — a process that did not end with the project, but has become a permanent feature of the Continuity Plan.

Going forward, the Youth Department will sustain this dimension by maintaining active relationships with European cities, continuing to participate in transnational networks, and deliberately inviting external perspectives into local policy discussions. International cooperation is understood here not as a supplementary activity, but as a structural component of how Milan's youth policies are designed, tested and improved over time.

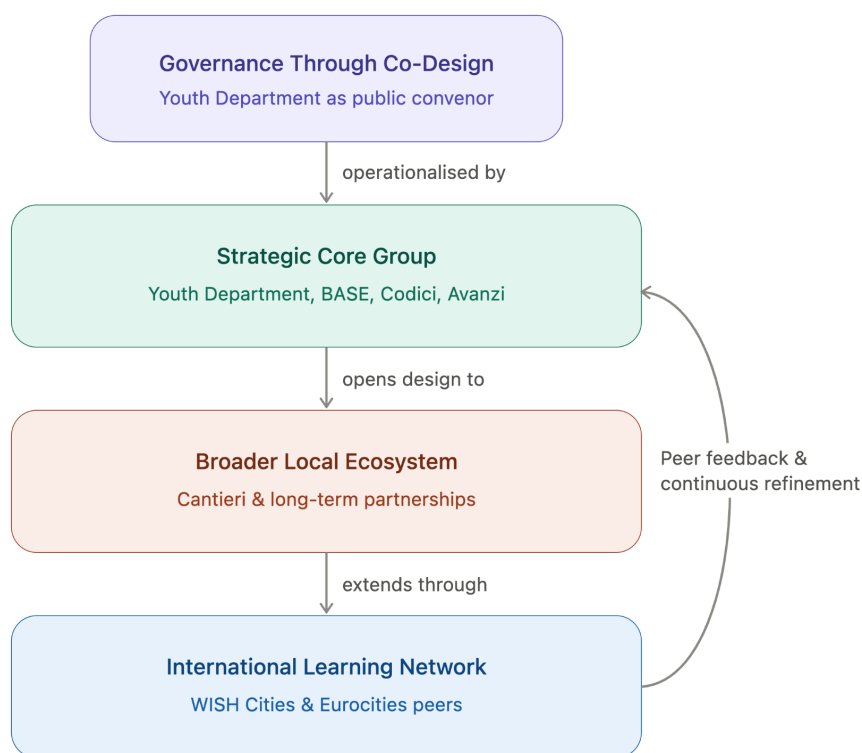


Figure 12. Milan's co-design governance cycle

SECTION 5 – Resources, Investment and Deliverability

5.1 Delivering the Continuity Plan

The Continuity Plan therefore focuses on consolidating and coordinating existing resources rather than creating parallel structures - embedding successful practices within ordinary municipal policy to increase both deliverability and long-term sustainability.

5.2 Funding Strategy

Milan's approach to funding follows a principle: **financing should follow strategy**, not the other way around. Rather than adapting programmes to whatever happens to be fundable, the Municipality first defines its priorities and only then identifies the funders and instruments best aligned with them. This sequencing protects coherence and long-term vision, and prevents the Continuity Plan from fragmenting into a set of disconnected, opportunity-driven projects.

A key enabling factor is the Municipality's own structural budget. Resources that are not tied to external calls give the administration the flexibility to test pilot initiatives without waiting for

external approval cycles, and they generate the credibility that makes the city a convincing partner when approaching foundations or European programmes.

In operational terms, **Milan's funding mix** is built by integrating resources across several levels: the municipal budget, national funds under Law 285/1997, regional and ANCI contributions, European programmes, and private foundations. Much of the strategic work lies in fitting these pieces together so that each funding stream reinforces a single coherent programme rather than pulling in different directions. It is also worth noting that some resources — particularly Law 285/1997 allocations — are channelled through the Municipality itself and could be mistaken for internal funding rather than genuinely diversified, external resourcing; being explicit about the origin and composition of each funding stream is therefore part of presenting the strategy credibly to reviewers and partners.

5.3 Investment Readiness

The Continuity Plan builds on investments the Municipality has already made and can already demonstrate results for. Between 2023 and 2026, annual resources dedicated to youth policies grew from €1,748,945 to over €4,175,137 — close to a 2.4-fold increase in four years, and roughly quadrupling since 2022. Over the same period, active collaborations grew from 122 to 318 organisations, and the number of young people reached annually grew from 2,726 to 9,746.

This growth has come with rising efficiency rather than proportionally rising cost: the cost per beneficiary fell from €641.58 in 2023 to €320.91 in 2025 — nearly halved as the system scaled. The Municipality also activated seven new youth spaces, extended street education across all nine districts (reaching over 6,000 young people through outreach alone, for more than 12,000 hours of activity), and supported 232 youth groups and over 500 young people directly through the 100 Idee programme.

These figures matter beyond their scale: they are also the clearest evidence of the “credibility through own investment” logic described in 5.2. The composition of Milan's funding mix has shifted visibly as that credibility has built: Law 285/1997 funds, which made up 62% of resources in 2023, fell to 32% by 2026, while EU funding rose from a marginal share to 35.5% and philanthropic funding rose from zero to around 14–18% of the mix. In other words, the diversification the Plan describes is not aspirational — it has already happened, and is documented year by year.

Area	Existing Capacity
Resources Mobilised	€1.75M (2023) → over €4.17M (2026)
Partnership network	318 active organisations (up from 122 in 2023)
Youth spaces	8 new dedicated youth spaces

Young people reached	9,746 in 2025 (up from 2,726 in 2023); over 6,000 through street outreach alone
Cost efficiency	Cost per beneficiary reduced from €641.58 (2023) to €320.91 (2025)

Figure 13. Milan's existing capacity

5.4 Resource Mobilisation

Although the core components of the Continuity Plan are already supported through existing municipal resources, further investment will be required to expand successful initiatives and strengthen their long-term sustainability. Priority areas for future resource mobilisation include:

- expanding the network of youth spaces;
- increasing support for youth-led initiatives;
- extending the Generazione Sport voucher scheme;
- introducing swimming vouchers for young people with migrant backgrounds;
- strengthening monitoring and evaluation;

In pursuing these priorities, the Municipality will also continue to pursue national and European programmes while deepening partnerships with foundations, universities and private organisations that share a commitment to youth wellbeing.

5.5 Long-term Sustainability

The Continuity Plan has been designed to remain viable beyond the current implementation period. Rather than depending on temporary project funding, its sustainability rests on four complementary elements: the progressive institutionalisation of successful programmes within municipal policy; a genuinely diversified funding base, evidenced by the shift away from a single dominant source (Law 285/1997 funding fell from 62% to 32% of the mix between 2023 and 2026) toward a plural base including EU and philanthropic resources; a strong network of public, private and third-sector partners sharing responsibility for implementation, now numbering 318 organisations; and continuous monitoring and evaluation - including cost-efficiency indicators already showing gains - to demonstrate impact and support future investment.

This approach aims to ensure that youth wellbeing remains a permanent component of Milan's urban development strategy, regardless of future funding opportunities or political cycles.

Source	2023	2024	2025	2026
Law 285/1997	62.2%	57.6%	36.6%	31.6%

Municipal Budget	19.3%	14.8%	21.1%	7.8%
ANCI / Region	18.5%	8.5%	10.1%	7.8%
Foundations & private entities	–	16.9%	18.1%	14.0%
EU programmes	–	1.6%	13.8%	35.5%
Total annual resources	€1,748,945	€2,668,918	€3,127,637	€4,175,137

Figure 14. Evolution of the Funding Mix (2023–2026)

SECTION 6 – Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact

6.1 A Layered Approach to Monitoring

The Youth Department has built its own internal monitoring system over the past years, structured around two complementary tracks: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative monitoring tracks the core indicators of the Plan — young people reached, spaces activated, active collaborations, hours of activity, resources invested — and is reported semestrally, giving the Department a regular, operational view of how initiatives are progressing across the year. This is the same body of data that underpins the results presented throughout this Plan: growth from 2,726 to 9,746 young people reached between 2023 and 2025, from 96 to 192 spaces activated over the same period, and from 122 to 318 active collaborations.

Alongside this, qualitative monitoring is built around a set of objectives the Department defines for itself, and is reported annually. Rather than tracking volumes of activity, it asks whether the direction being pursued is the right one — whether the youth journey the Plan is built around is genuinely materialising as intended, and where course correction is needed. Together, these two internal tracks give the Department both a live operational picture and a periodic strategic check-in, generated and owned in-house.

6.2 In-Depth Evaluation by External Partners

Beyond internal monitoring, each major project within the Plan is also subject to a more in-depth evaluation carried out by external bodies with specific evaluation expertise. These evaluators work at a level of depth that internal monitoring is not designed to reach — examining individual projects closely, testing the assumptions behind them, and looking specifically at what changed. Their findings feed directly back into how projects are adjusted, rather than sitting as a separate, after-the-fact report.

This external layer allows the Department to combine operational self-monitoring with a degree of independent scrutiny, without duplicating either function.

6.3 Filmic Monitoring: Tracking Change as It Happens

One of the most significant innovations to emerge from the Plan's testing actions has been the development, together with Politecnico di Milano, of a filmic approach to monitoring. Rather than relying solely on retrospective indicators collected after an activity has concluded, this method documents transformation as it unfolds — tracking how young people, spaces and relationships change in real time, and capturing dynamics that conventional before/after measurement tends to miss.

This experimental approach has proven valuable enough that the Department intends to preserve it as part of its broader monitoring toolkit going forward, alongside — rather than instead of — the quantitative, qualitative and external evaluation tracks already in place.

Together, these four layers are designed to complement rather than duplicate one another: internal tracking keeps the Department's own view of progress current and responsive, external evaluation grounds the Plan's claims in independent scrutiny, and the filmic testing action captures dynamics that indicators alone tend to miss. It is the combination of these perspectives — read together rather than in isolation — that gives the Department a credible, evolving picture of how its youth policies are actually landing.



Figure 15. Milan's youth policy monitoring framework

SECTION 7 - Barriers and Risks

The risk analysis developed during the URBACT process identified a set of administrative, financial, operational and strategic risks facing the Continuity Plan. These will be detailed further in the final Plan using the URBACT Risk Analysis Table; at this stage, the main risks and their mitigation measures are outlined below.

Administrative risks relate primarily to the complexity and duration of internal procedures, particularly around selecting external providers and activating services. This risk is highly likely, with a moderate impact on implementation timelines. Mitigation rests on stronger upstream planning, clearer timelines, and closer coordination between administrative, technical and managerial functions within the Municipality.

Financial risks take two forms. Dependence on a limited number of funding sources is less likely, but would have a high impact if it materialised; the discontinuity associated with

short-term, project-based funding, by contrast, is highly likely and moderately impactful. The Continuity Plan addresses both through longer-term planning, the gradual institutionalisation of key actions, and continued diversification of funding sources — the same logic set out in Section 6.

Operational risks stem from the system's multi-actor nature. Misalignment or conflict among collaborating stakeholders is moderately likely but would have a high impact; this is mitigated by consolidating the collaborative working methods already developed through the Urban Local Group — co-design, regular exchange and shared responsibility. Staff turnover is a second, more pressing operational risk: both highly likely and highly impactful. It is addressed through structured handover processes, shared documentation, and a more transversal distribution of knowledge and responsibilities, so that institutional memory does not rest with any single individual.

Strategic and external risks centre on potential political change, which could affect priorities, organisational structures or levels of support. This risk is both highly likely and highly impactful. The Plan responds with a flexible, scenario-based approach, and by strengthening the visibility, value and long-term positioning of youth policy — including through the more stable funding strategy described in Section 5.

Category	Specific Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Key Mitigation
Administrative	Complexity/duration of internal procedures	High	Moderate	Upstream planning, clearer timelines, inter-functional coordination
Financial	Dependence on a limited number of funding sources	Low–Moderate	High	Diversification of funding sources (Section 6)
Financial	Discontinuity from short-term, project-based funding	High	Moderate	Longer-term planning; gradual institutionalisation
Operational	Misalignment/conflict among stakeholders	Moderate	High	Consolidated ULG working methods
Operational	Staff turnover	Moderate	High	Structured handover, shared documentation
Strategic/External	Political change affecting priorities/support	High	High	Flexible, scenario-based approach; stronger positioning of youth policy

Figure 16. Risk Summary

Final Reflection

This Continuity Plan is not simply about ensuring that successful projects continue after the end of WISH Cities. Its ambition is more fundamental: to reshape the relationship between Milan and its younger generations.

Over the past years, the Municipality has learned that youth wellbeing cannot be produced through isolated services or temporary projects alone. It grows where young people find places to belong, opportunities to take responsibility and institutions willing to share trust, resources and decision-making.

The legacy of WISH-MI therefore lies less in the individual actions it generated than in the way it transformed public policy itself. It demonstrated that youth policies become stronger when they are co-designed, when they invest in relationships before outputs, and when experimentation is recognised as an essential component of institutional learning.

The Continuity Plan builds on this understanding. Rather than introducing new initiatives, it consolidates those that have demonstrated their value, institutionalises collaborative ways of working and creates the conditions for continuous adaptation as new challenges emerge.

Ultimately, the success of this Plan will not be measured only by the number of projects delivered or young people reached. It will be measured by something more ambitious: whether Milan continues to become a city in which young people are recognised not simply as beneficiaries of public policy, but as citizens capable of shaping the places they inhabit, contributing to democratic life and imagining the future together with public institutions.

Because cities that invest in young people are not only supporting the next generation. They are strengthening their own capacity to imagine, adapt and thrive.