



Investment Plan – Vila Nova de Gaia

Investment Plan – Municipality of Gaia

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Investment Plan –Municipality of Gaia

i. Executive Summary

This Investment Plan aims to transform Casa da Juventude (Youth House) of the Municipality of Gaia into a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable hub for youth engagement. Building on the success of the Testing Action “Inspired Talks”, the plan combines physical improvements, innovative programming, and participatory governance. It aligns with local, national, and European strategies to foster creativity, resilience, and active citizenship.



ii. The Problem

In Gaia, the predominance of youth is relevant: in fact, we are talking about 79785 inhabitants under-35, which represents the county of the northern region with the larger number of young people and, also, the third one nationally speaking.

Which represents a percentage of 26,2% of the population – 303824 inhabitants – the most populous in Porto Metropolitan Area and the third one nationally speaking.

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The Municipal Plan for All Youth(s) 2024-2028 was proposed working towards reinforcing rights and young people's voice, and to recognise the importance of youth work, and to create opportunities so young people can actively participate on the development of the Municipality.

The Municipal Plan for All Youth(s) established a strategical link to 2030 Gaia Agenda – that conciliated intelligent investment and sustainable development – and incorporated a progressive vision of political policies of a Municipality that intends to become a reference in equal opportunities and social cohesion.

The Municipal Plan for All Youth(s) 2.0 highlights a public and civic innovation of Gaia youth policies, full of a holistic and integral vision that assumes incremental improvements, and also disruptive, towards previous document and, now, fully adapted to new Municipality and Gaia youth challenges.

Young people “are beneficiaries, partners and leaders of youth policies” and these responses should be oriented for effectiveness of their rights – including creation of opportunities – and for responding to all different needs. Both can result in major effectiveness of life standards of youth of Gaia.

Youth policies should be built by, for and with young people, and to contribute for youth participation education and active citizenship, including juvenile information and youth communication (peer-to-peer) and creation of youth representation mechanisms and co-management, coproduction and structured dialogue strategies.

Our vision is to position Gaia as a city of future for youth of Gaia: for those who live here; and for those who wish to live here.

Youth ecosystem should contribute for dynamization of projects coproduced by, to and for young people that generate root movements, develop civic solutions (from bottom to top), and to contribute for the creation of social innovation projects.

Municipal Plan for All Youth(s) destines also special attention to values and youth disciplines | work with, by and for young people | It is referred that Youth Work develops or should develop an essential role supporting young people on the promotion of fairer, more inclusive and sustainable communities. Youth Participation emphasizes active participation of young people in the definition of their own goals and activities. It also promotes autonomy and civic responsibility of young people.

Municipal Plan for All Youths 2.0 assumes habitat values, especially those related with the quality of the environment young people of Gaia live in there are several opportunities and goals connected to habitat values on Gaia youth strategy. A healthy and well-planned housing environment can promote civic participation of young people. Environments such as public

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spaces, green spaces and community institutions may encourage active involvement in daily life of the community.

Another important commitment of the Youth Strategy is to create Youth spaces in school and parishes, Youth office that can be assumed as operation spaces of all strategic vision for the youth sector in Gaia.

In the context of promoting an agenda aligned with the social development and enhancement of public spaces in Gaia, we have identified that the ‘Casa da Juventude’ space—currently used predominantly as a youth office—could be repurposed as a space for young people to develop initiatives and promote actions and opportunities that foster their active participation.



Casa da Juventude remains underutilized and disconnected from the evolving needs of young people. Despite existing frameworks for youth participation, space lacks appeal and functionality, limiting its potential as a hub for engagement and innovation.

Following the good practices identified within the framework of Wish–Mi in Milan and aligned with the Municipality of Gaia’s strategy for enhancing public spaces and strengthening youth policies, it is essential to go beyond the mere activation of existing municipal youth spaces. In this

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context, establishing a close and collaborative relationship with the recently inaugurated Youth House of the Parish Council of Olival, as well as with other youth-oriented spaces, becomes crucial.

This approach will not only expand the network of participation spaces but also create the right conditions for young people to take on an active role in the co-creation of activities and projects, directly contributing to the programming and activation of these spaces. By involving young people in this process, it fosters the development of initiatives that are better aligned with their needs and interests, while simultaneously creating new opportunities for the engagement of other young people and strengthening a culture of civic and community participation.

iii. The Policy Response

The proposed intervention is framed within a multi-level policy context, aligning with European, national, and local youth priorities. At EU level, it directly contributes to the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, particularly in fostering youth participation, inclusion, and access to opportunities, while promoting youth engagement in democratic and civic life. At national level, it supports the objectives of the Portuguese youth policy framework, reinforcing active citizenship, territorial cohesion, and equal access to youth services. At the local level, the intervention remains fully consistent with the Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia's Youth Strategy and the Municipal Youth Plan 2.0, which continue to guide youth-oriented action.

In this context, the Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia will implement a co-created revitalisation strategy that integrates physical upgrades, youth-led programming, and digital engagement tools. Drawing on European good practices, this approach seeks to transform youth spaces into inclusive, participatory environments where young people actively co-design activities and initiatives, thereby strengthening their sense of ownership, fostering civic engagement, and expanding opportunities for broader youth participation.

The main goal is to strengthen youth participation and inclusive urban development in Vila Nova de Gaia by transforming youth spaces into dynamic, co-created and accessible environments that empower young people as active agents in their communities.

This Investment Plan contributes to the overall objective by operationalising a co-creation-based approach to youth space revitalisation, integrating physical, social and digital dimensions, and empowering young people to act as active co-designers and drivers of participatory urban development.

iv. Specific Objectives – What Do We Want to Achieve?

1. Modernise and adapt youth spaces to be inclusive and sustainable

To implement at least 3 physical and functional improvements in the Casa da Juventude (e.g. accessibility features, flexible and modular furniture, environmentally sustainable solutions), co-designed with young people, ensuring the space becomes more welcoming, inclusive and adaptable to diverse youth needs.

2. Increase youth participation through co-creation and informal learning

To engage at least 100 young people—including diverse and underrepresented groups—in the co-creation and implementation of a minimum of 10 participatory activities, promoting informal learning, active citizenship and a stronger sense of ownership of youth spaces.

4. Promote accessibility and equal opportunities

To ensure inclusive participation by achieving at least 30% involvement of young people from fewer opportunities backgrounds (e.g. NEETs, socially or geographically disadvantaged youth), and by implementing inclusive outreach, communication and participation measures that reduce barriers to access.

5. Foster innovation, resilience and collaborative networks

To establish at least 3 local partnerships (e.g. schools, youth organisations, community groups, youth houses) and co-develop pilot initiatives, promoting creative collaboration, peer learning and youth resilience, with at least one initiative sustained beyond the project duration.

6. Strengthen local partnerships and activate youth spaces

To establish a structured collaboration with the Youth House of the Parish Council of Olival and at least one additional youth space, ensuring the joint implementation of a minimum of 5 co-created activities, aimed at activating these spaces, increasing their regular use, and expanding opportunities for youth participation at local level.

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v. **Headline Objective**

Transform Casa da Juventude into a model participatory youth hub

To redesign, activate and position the Casa da Juventude as a reference youth hub in Vila Nova de Gaia during 2 years, through the delivery of integrated physical upgrades, youth-led programming and digital engagement tools. The IP will ensure the active involvement of at least 100 young people in co-creation processes and the implementation of a minimum of 10 youth-led initiatives, establishing the space as a replicable model for inclusive, creative and sustainable youth participation.

vi. **Adapted Practice**

Rationale and Approach

The intervention focuses primarily on the Casa da Juventude as a pilot and flagship space, where an integrated, youth-centred model will be tested, refined and later transferable to other youth spaces in the municipality. Drawing on the WISH-MI good practice from Milan, the approach combines spatial, social and digital dimensions to create a sustainable and replicable model for youth participation and wellbeing.

1. Youth-led design workshops for space reconfiguration

- This component is essential to ensure that the transformation of Casa da Juventude genuinely reflects the needs, expectations and aspirations of young people, moving beyond top-down planning approaches.
- In practice, the Municipality will organise participatory design workshops involving diverse groups of young people. These workshops will enable them to co-design the layout, functions and atmosphere of the space, contributing ideas on accessibility, usability and identity. Outputs from these sessions will directly inform the physical upgrading and functional reorganisation of the space.

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2. Flexible multipurpose areas

- Flexibility is critical to respond to the diverse and evolving needs of young people, as demonstrated in the Milan model. A rigid or single-use space would limit participation and long-term sustainability.
- Therefore, Casa da Juventude will be reconfigured into adaptable, multipurpose areas that can host cultural, educational and social activities. This may include modular furniture, open and reconfigurable layouts, and areas suitable for workshops, informal gatherings, creative expression and small-scale events, ensuring the space remains dynamic and responsive over time.

3. Digital engagement platforms

- Continuous engagement with young people requires tools that extend beyond physical presence. Digital platforms are key to maintaining dialogue, collecting feedback and enabling wider participation.
- The project will develop or use digital engagement tools (e.g. online platforms, social media channels or participatory apps) to ensure ongoing interaction with young people. These tools will support co-creation processes, idea-sharing, and consultation, allowing young people to contribute even when they are not physically present in the space.

4. A multidimensional approach to youth wellbeing

- Inspired by the WISH–MI framework, the project recognises that youth engagement is intrinsically linked to broader dimensions of wellbeing, including health, relationships, creativity, safety and self-determination.
- Activities and spatial design will therefore be conceived to support holistic youth development, for example by creating safe and inclusive environments, promoting social interaction, encouraging creative expression and ensuring that young people feel a sense of belonging and ownership.

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5. Co-design and co-production with youth at every stage

- A key lesson from Milan's experience is that participation must go beyond consultation and evolve into genuine co-production.
- Throughout the project, young people will be involved in all phases—from diagnosis and design to implementation and evaluation. This will ensure stronger ownership, higher relevance of activities, and increased sustainability of outcomes.

6. Integrated governance and cross-departmental coordination

- To ensure coherence and impact, the intervention requires coordination across different municipal areas, with the Youth Division playing a central role.
- The project will establish an integrated governance model, involving relevant municipal departments and local stakeholders, to align actions, share resources and ensure that youth policies are implemented in a coordinated and efficient manner.

7. A relational and adaptive operational model

- Rather than a fixed intervention, the project adopts a flexible and learning-oriented approach, in line with European good practices.
- Through testing actions and pilot initiatives, the Municipality will experiment with different formats of activities and engagement, continuously gathering feedback and adapting the model. This relational approach will strengthen collaboration between stakeholders and support the long-term evolution of Casa da Juventude as a living, youth-driven space.

Strategic positioning

While the focus remains on Casa da Juventude as the core intervention space, the methodology is designed to be replicable and scalable, allowing future extension to other youth spaces (such as Olival) as part of a broader municipal strategy.

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vii. Horizontal Integration

- **Education:** Schools and universities partnering for informal learning, mentorship, and project-based activities.
Schools and universities will play an active role as partners in the co-creation and delivery of activities, supporting informal learning, mentorship programmes and project-based initiatives. Students will be engaged in the Casa da Juventude as a practical learning environment, fostering skills such as creativity, collaboration and civic participation, while strengthening the link between formal education and community-based experiences.
Indicator: At least **5 formal partnerships** established and **5 joint activities** implemented, involving a minimum of **50 students** per school, during 2 years.
- **Culture:** Local artists and cultural associations designing creative programs and events. Collaboration with local artists, cultural associations and creative practitioners will enrich the programming of the space, contributing to the design and implementation of innovative cultural activities, workshops and events. This will enhance the attractiveness of Casa da Juventude, promote local talent and encourage young people's creative expression and cultural participation.
Indicator: At least **3 cultural partners engaged** and **4 cultural activities** delivered, involving a minimum of **50 young participants**.
- **Social Services:** Coordination with services supporting vulnerable youth and promoting inclusion.
Close coordination with social services will ensure targeted outreach to vulnerable and underrepresented young people, promoting inclusion and equal access to opportunities. This cooperation will support the identification of barriers to participation and the development of tailored responses, ensuring that Casa da Juventude becomes a safe, inclusive and accessible environment for all.
Indicator: At least **2 social service entities involved**, with a minimum of **30% of participants** coming from fewer opportunities backgrounds, and from CIS - Social

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Inclusion Center from the Municipality of Gaia supported through **targeted outreach actions**.

- Private Sector: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) sponsorships for technology and infrastructure.

Engagement with the private sector will be fostered through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnerships, enabling access to additional resources for technology, equipment and infrastructure improvements. These partnerships will also create opportunities for mentoring, skills development and potential pathways to employment for young people.

Indicator: At least **2 CSR partnerships established**, securing **in-kind or financial contributions** (e.g. equipment, digital tools, workshops opportunities), and enabling **1 mentorship or skills-based initiative**.

viii. Vertical Integration

- **Local: Municipal Youth Plan 2.0, Participatory budgeting, Youth Council initiatives.**
At the local level, the intervention is fully aligned with the Municipal Youth Plan 2.0, reinforcing its priorities related to youth participation, inclusion and the activation of youth spaces. It builds on existing mechanisms such as participatory budgeting processes and Youth Council initiatives, ensuring that young people's voices are systematically integrated into local decision-making. Casa da Juventude will act as an operational hub where these participatory instruments are strengthened, tested and connected, enhancing their visibility, coherence and impact across the municipality.

Indicator: Alignment demonstrated through the integration of at least **3 actions linked to Municipal Youth Plan priorities**, the engagement of **Youth Council representatives in at least 4 project activities**, and the inclusion of **at least 1 project proposal within participatory budgeting processes** during 2 years.

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- **National: Portuguese Youth Strategy and relevant programmatic instruments.**

At the national level, the project contributes to the objectives of the Portuguese Youth Strategy and related programmatic instruments, particularly in promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and equal access to opportunities for young people. By fostering co-creation, informal learning and inclusive participation, the initiative reinforces national priorities aimed at empowering young people as active members of society, while supporting territorial cohesion and the development of locally grounded youth policies.

- **European: EU Youth Strategy (2019–2027), Erasmus+ priorities, and URBACT collaboration.**

At the European level, the project is closely aligned with the EU Youth Strategy (2019–2027), particularly its focus on engage, connect and empower, as well as with key priorities of Erasmus+, such as participation, inclusion and innovation in youth work. Furthermore, the approach draws on and contributes to URBACT collaboration frameworks, building on the WISH–MI good practice from Milan. Through this alignment, the project positions Vila Nova de Gaia within a broader European ecosystem of cities working on participatory urban development and youth empowerment, ensuring transferability, peer learning and long-term impact.

ix. Testing Actions – Lessons Learned (Inspired Talks)

The “Inspired Talks” initiative validated informal, youth-led formats to reactivate underused spaces within the Youth Office. Key outcomes included active co-creation, informal networking, skill development, and community building. Challenges such as limited awareness and the need to engage diverse youth profiles were addressed through youth-led outreach and inclusive invitations.

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“Inspired Talks” / “Inspirational Conversations” – The original name proposed by a group of young people for this activity was “Inspired Fridays”, reflecting the initial idea of holding sessions on Fridays. However, to accommodate different agendas and ensure greater flexibility, we decided, together with the young participants, to change the name to “Inspired Talks”, preserving the spirit and informal essence of the event without compromising the Friday reference when possible. This adjustment allowed the initiative to fit into various contexts and schedules, increasing participation.

The main goal of this action was to reactivate the underutilized Youth Office and strengthen youth engagement through co-created initiatives. Although Vila Nova de Gaia already had a strong framework for youth participation—such as youth ambassadors, participatory budgeting, a Youth Council, and a Municipal Youth Plan—the Youth Office remained disconnected from the current needs and interests of young people.

By testing an informal, youth-led format (Inspired Talks), we aimed to bridge this gap, create a welcoming space for dialogue, and empower young people to take an active role in shaping activities and themes.

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A group of young people from the steering group “New Voice to Youth(s)” was involved in the design of the idea and in leading the session. Young volunteers, youth ambassadors of Gaia – National Youth Capital, and members of Gaia’s Youth Municipal Assembly took part.

This Testing Action contributes directly to the Investment Plan by reactivating the Youth Office as a hub for participation and innovation, aligning with the strategic goal of fostering inclusive and resilient communities. The co-created format (Inspired Talks) strengthens youth leadership and informal learning, which are key priorities in the plan.

Given its success in engaging diverse youth profiles and promoting resilience, the municipality intends to integrate this model into the regular programming of the Youth Office and scale it up through partnerships with schools, youth organizations, and local stakeholders, ensuring sustainability and broader impact.

The informal format and co-creation approach encouraged active participation and honest feedback.

Young participants were enthusiastic about being able to propose new debate topics, suggest guests and speakers, and actively participate in co-creating the sessions. They also appreciated the informal format for sharing information, which fostered openness and creativity.

In this context, we held 3 sessions on the following topics: resilience, juvenile associations, and youth entrepreneurship. The first two sessions involved approximately 40 young participants and 2 policy makers, while the last one brought together 180 students and 4 young entrepreneurs.

For the 3rd edition of Inspiring Talks, the Youth and Association Division of the Gaia City Council involved ISLA - Gaia - Polytechnic Institute of Management and Technology, which is also a member of UGL Wish Cities.

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The initiative emerged from the *testing action* phase of the URBACT ITN “**WISH CITIES**” network as well as from the interest expressed by a group of young people from Gaia in further exploring this topic.

One of the central moments of the programme was the “**Ideas Lab**”, led by **Vítor Freitas**, creator of the *Entrepreneur’s Notebook*, who challenged participants to explore new ways of analyzing problems and identifying innovative solutions.

The event also included a networking session and a panel discussion titled “**From idea to impact real journeys in youth entrepreneurship**”, featuring contributions from:

- **Diego Sampaio** – Globalfly
- **Luís Sousa Vieira** – B-Parts
- **Mariana Couto** – Fisioglobal
- **Pedro Calado** – Acelera Portugal

Throughout the panel, speakers shared personal experiences, challenges faced throughout the process of creating and developing their initiatives and offered practical recommendations for young people wishing to start their entrepreneurial journey.



This initiative reinforces the Municipality of Gaia's commitment to promoting opportunities for capacity building, innovation, and active participation among young people in the municipality.

x. Stakeholders and Partners

Stakeholder/Partner	Role & Contribution
Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia	Policy leadership, funding, governance
Divisão da Juventude	Coordination and integrated management
Urban Local Group (ULG)	Strategic alignment and participatory governance
Youth Associations and NGOs	Co-design and implementation of activities
Gaia Youth Municipal Assembly	Representation and advocacy
Youth Ambassadors (Capital Nacional da Juventude)	Outreach and engagement

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Steering Group “Nova Voz à(s) Juventude(s)”	Co-creation and leadership
Local Schools and Universities	Informal learning, mentoring, research partnerships
Vocational Training Centers	Skills development and employability programs
Local Businesses and Startups	Sponsorship and innovation support
CSR Programs	Funding for technology and infrastructure
Artists and Cultural Associations	Creative programming and events
Media Partners	Communication and visibility
Portuguese Youth Institute (IPDJ)	National policy alignment and funding
URBACT Network Partners	Knowledge exchange and best practices
Erasmus+ Program	Mobility and capacity-building opportunities

The table outlines the **multi-level governance and collaboration model** behind the Investment Plan. It shows how different actors—from local and national organisations to international programs—work together to design, implement, and support youth-related actions.

Key points:

- Public authorities (e.g., Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia, Portuguese Youth Institute – IPDJ). These entities provide leadership, policy direction, funding, and institutional support.
- Internal municipal structures (e.g., Youth Division; Sports Department; Social Policies Department; and others). They will ensure day-to-day coordination and integrated management of activities.
- Participatory bodies and governance groups (e.g., Urban Local Group, Steering Group, Youth Municipal Assembly). These actors guarantee strategic alignment, co-creation, representation, and participatory governance, giving young people a voice in decision-making.
- Youth organisations and ambassadors. They are responsible for engaging young people, co-designing initiatives, and delivering activities on the ground.
- Education and training institutions (schools, universities, vocational centers). They support learning, skills development, mentoring, and research partnerships.

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- Private sector and support programmes (businesses, startups, CSR programmes). Their role is to provide funding, sponsorship, innovation, and infrastructure support.
- Cultural and media partners. These stakeholders contribute through creative programming, events, communication, and visibility.
- International and European programmes (URBACT, Erasmus+). They enable knowledge exchange, best practices, mobility opportunities, and capacity building.

The table demonstrates that the Investment Plan relies on a collaborative ecosystem, where public, private, educational, and civil society actors each play a complementary role. This ensures a holistic, participatory, and well-supported approach to youth policy and action.

xi. Detailed Workplan

Phase	Actions	Stakeholders amd timeline
1. Co-Design & Strategic Alignment	• Participatory youth workshops (needs, aspirations, barriers) • Thematic stakeholder roundtables (education, culture, employment, inclusion) • Spatial and functional needs assessment of youth spaces • Mapping of existing programs and gaps • Definition of governance model and roles	Divisão da Juventude (coordination) Urban Local Group (ULG) Youth Associations & NGOs Gaia Youth Municipal Assembly Youth Ambassadors Local Schools & Universities URBACT Network Partners Last quarter 2026
2. Space Upgrade	• Renewal of furniture and flexible layouts for co-creation • Creation of multifunctional areas (learning, creativity, socialization) • Pilot testing with youth groups	Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia (funding & governance) Youth and Associativism Division Artists & Cultural Associations Local Businesses & Startups (sponsorship)

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		2026-2027
3. Program Launch	• Launch of “Inspired Talks” with local and international role models • Creative labs (arts, digital media, social innovation) • Mentoring circles linking youth with professionals and entrepreneurs • Skills-building workshops (soft skills, civic participation, employability) • Participatory Budgeting projects • Podcast	Youth and Associativism Division Juvenile Associations & NGOs Steering Group “Nova Voz à(s) Juventude(s)” Local Schools & Universities Vocational Training Centers Local Businesses & Startups IPDJ
4. Digital Tools	• Development of an online youth engagement platform in partnership with the Metropolitan Area of Porto • Digital booking system for spaces and activities • Online feedback and participatory decision-making tools • Communication campaigns targeting hard-to-reach youth • Integration with Erasmus+ and international mobility tools	Youth and Associativism Division Business and Entrepreneurship Support Division Local Media Partners Local Startups & Tech Partners Erasmus+ Program 2027-2029
5. Monitoring & Evaluation	• Definition of qualitative and quantitative indicators • Regular youth satisfaction surveys and focus groups • Midterm review and learning sessions with ULG • Annual public reporting and communication of results • Adaptation, scaling, and replication of successful practices	Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia Divisão da Juventude Urban Local Group (ULG) URBACT Network Partners IPDJ

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The following table outlines the main barriers and risks that may affect the successful implementation of the Investment Plan, while also identifying their likelihood and potential impact. It highlights a proactive approach by linking each risk to targeted prevention and mitigation measures, ensuring that challenges can be anticipated and effectively managed. Particular attention is given to administrative, financial, and operational dimensions, as well as to broader risks related to funding and resourcing. Overall, this framework supports informed decision-making and helps ensure the project's resilience throughout its lifecycle.

xii. Barriers & Risks

Category	Description	Likelihood	Impact	Prevention	Mitigation
Administrative	Delays in approvals and procurement	Medium	High	Early engagement with decision-makers; clear procurement plan	Escalation protocol; buffer timelines
Financial	Funding gaps or delayed disbursements	High	High	Diversify funding sources; phased implementation	Scope prioritization; contingency reserve (10%)
Operational	Low youth participation in programs	Medium	Medium	Targeted communications; co-creation; school partnerships	Iterative format adjustments; incentives for participation

Additional Risks Requiring Attention

Funding and Resourcing: Ensure multi-source financing and realistic phasing to match cash flow and procurement cycles.

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xiii. Operational Costs

The Investment Plan foresees a range of operational expenditures necessary to ensure the effective functioning, sustainability, and impact of the Casa da Juventude/Youth Office Activities Plan. These costs support the day-to-day management of the facility, the delivery of youth-focused activities, and the maintenance of the infrastructure and resources required for implementation of the activities and projects related.

Operational costs may include:

- Facility operations, such as utilities (electricity, water, heating, internet), cleaning services, security, and general building management to ensure a safe and accessible environment for participants.
- Maintenance of furniture and equipment, including routine repairs, replacement of worn or damaged items, servicing of digital and technical equipment, and asset management activities.
- Staffing and training for youth-led facilitation, covering personnel costs for coordinators, mentors, and facilitators, as well as capacity-building, leadership development, safeguarding, and skills training to support meaningful youth participation.
- Digital platform hosting and support, including website and platform hosting fees, software licenses, technical maintenance, cybersecurity measures, user support services, and digital content management.
- Program materials and small grants for youth projects, including workshop supplies, educational resources, communication materials, and micro-grants that enable young people to design and implement their own community initiatives and innovative projects.

These investments contribute to the long-term viability of the initiatives by ensuring that facilities, staff, digital tools, and youth-led activities are adequately resourced and managed throughout the Investment Plan lifecycle.

xiv. Potential Funding Sources

The Investment Plan will be ensured through a diversified funding model, combining municipal investment with complementary national, European, and partnership-based resources. As a municipality-led PPlan, the primary source of funding is expected to come from local budget allocations, reflecting the local authority's commitment to supporting youth participation, community development, and the long-term operation of the facility. Additional resources may be mobilised through European Union programmes, national youth policy grants, regional development funds, and strategic partnerships with educational, cultural, and community organisations. The table below presents an indicative financing structure, outlining potential funding sources and their estimated contribution to the overall investment plan.

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Funding Source	Indicative Share (%)	Notes
Municipal Budget Allocations	55%	Core funding provided by the municipality for infrastructure improvements, facility management, operational costs, staffing, and long-term sustainability of the initiative. Demonstrates strong local ownership and commitment.
Erasmus+ and EU Youth Programmes	20%	Supports youth participation, non-formal education, mobility, digital innovation, capacity building, and international cooperation activities. Complements municipal investment through project-based funding.
National Youth Policy Grants and Government Programmes	15%	Funding aligned with national youth strategies, social inclusion measures, active citizenship, employability, and community engagement initiatives.
Regional Development and Cohesion Funds	7%	Supports infrastructure upgrades, digital transformation, social innovation, community development, and territorial cohesion objectives, depending on available funding opportunities.
Local Partnerships and In-kind Contributions	3%	Contributions from schools, universities, youth organisations, cultural institutions, and community partners through expertise, facilities, equipment, spaces, volunteering, or programme delivery support.

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Private Sponsorships	0–2%	Complementary support for equipment, technology, events, or specific youth initiatives. Expected to play a limited role due to the public nature of the project.
Total	100%	

The following table presents a set of preliminary performance indicators designed to measure the effectiveness, reach, and impact of the initiative. These indicators will be further refined and validated through the **Co-Design Indicators Action**, ensuring that they reflect the priorities, expectations, and needs identified by young people and key stakeholders. Establishing a baseline assessment during the initial implementation phase will enable the project to monitor progress over time, evaluate outcomes, and support evidence-based decision-making. The proposed targets for 2026-2027 focus on strengthening youth participation, increasing engagement across diverse groups, improving participant satisfaction, and enhancing both in-person and digital involvement in project activities.

xv. Initial Indicators (to be finalised via Co-Design Indicators Action)

Indicator	Baseline	Target (2026- 2027)
Number of youth-led activities per quarter	To be assessed	≥ 6
Participation rate (unique youth)	To be assessed	+30% vs. baseline
Satisfaction score (post-event survey)	To be assessed	≥ 4/5
Diversity of profiles engaged	To be assessed	≥ 4 subgroups (ambassadors, youth municipal assembly, schools, NGOs)
Digital engagement (platform interactions)	To be assessed	+25% vs. baseline

xvi. Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation framework will provide a structured approach to assessing the implementation, performance, and impact of the initiative. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the framework will enable continuous learning, accountability, and evidence-based improvements throughout the project lifecycle. Regular data collection and analysis will help track participation levels, measure stakeholder satisfaction, assess the effectiveness of engagement strategies, and identify emerging opportunities and challenges. This monitoring and evaluation process will also support adaptive management, allowing activities and interventions to be adjusted in response to feedback, changing needs, and lessons learned. Furthermore, it will contribute to demonstrating the project's value, informing future policy and investment decisions, and ensuring that the initiative remains aligned with its objectives and the expectations of young people and other stakeholders. The framework is fully aligned with the Municipal Youth Plan 2024–2028, contributing to the monitoring of its strategic priorities and reinforcing the municipality's commitment to evidence-based youth policies and participatory governance. Clear responsibilities and reporting frequencies have been established to ensure consistent monitoring and to support informed decision-making by the municipality and project partners. The table below outlines the main monitoring and evaluation methods, their frequency, and the entities responsible for their implementation.

Method	Frequency	Responsible
Attendance tracking	Per event	Youth and Associativism Division / Event Lead
Post-event surveys	Per event; quarterly synthesis	Youth Division and Associativism (M&E focal point)
Qualitative interviews/focus groups	Annual	ULG / external facilitator
Digital engagement analytics	Monthly	Communications team

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xvii. CONCLUSION

This Investment Plan represents a strategic opportunity to transform the *Casa da Juventude* as a dynamic, inclusive, and innovative space, capable of responding to the aspirations, needs, and potential of young people in Vila Nova de Gaia. By combining physical improvements, youth-led programming, participatory governance, and digital engagement tools, the Municipality seeks to create a sustainable model of youth participation that places young people at the Centre of decision-making and community development.

Building on the positive outcomes of the “Inspired Talks” Testing Action, the plan demonstrates that when young people are given meaningful opportunities to co-create, lead, and shape initiatives, participation increases and stronger connections are established between youth policies and the realities of everyday life. The lessons learned through this pilot experience provide a solid foundation for scaling up innovative approaches to engagement and transforming underutilised spaces into vibrant hubs of creativity, learning, and civic participation.

The proposed intervention goes beyond the renovation of a physical facility. It promotes a comprehensive vision of youth wellbeing, active citizenship, social inclusion, and collaborative governance, aligned with the Municipal Youth Plan 2024–2028, the Portuguese Youth Strategy, the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027, and the principles of the URBACT programme. Through a strong ecosystem of local, national, and international partnerships, the initiative will contribute to strengthening opportunities for participation, informal learning, social innovation, and youth empowerment.

Furthermore, the Investment Plan adopts a long-term perspective, supported by diversified funding sources, clear monitoring mechanisms, measurable indicators, and a commitment to continuous improvement and evidence-based decision-making. This approach ensures not only the effective implementation of the proposed actions but also their sustainability, scalability, and potential replication in other youth spaces across the municipality.

This Investment Plan reflects the Municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia’s commitment to building a city where young people are recognised not only as beneficiaries of public policies, but as partners, co-creators, and leaders of local development. By investing in youth spaces, participation processes, and collaborative governance, Gaia reinforces its ambition to become a reference city for youth empowerment, inclusion, innovation, and democratic engagement, creating the conditions for young people to actively contribute to shaping the future of their communities.