



WISH CITIES TRANSFERABILITY PLAN

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URBACT



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Interreg

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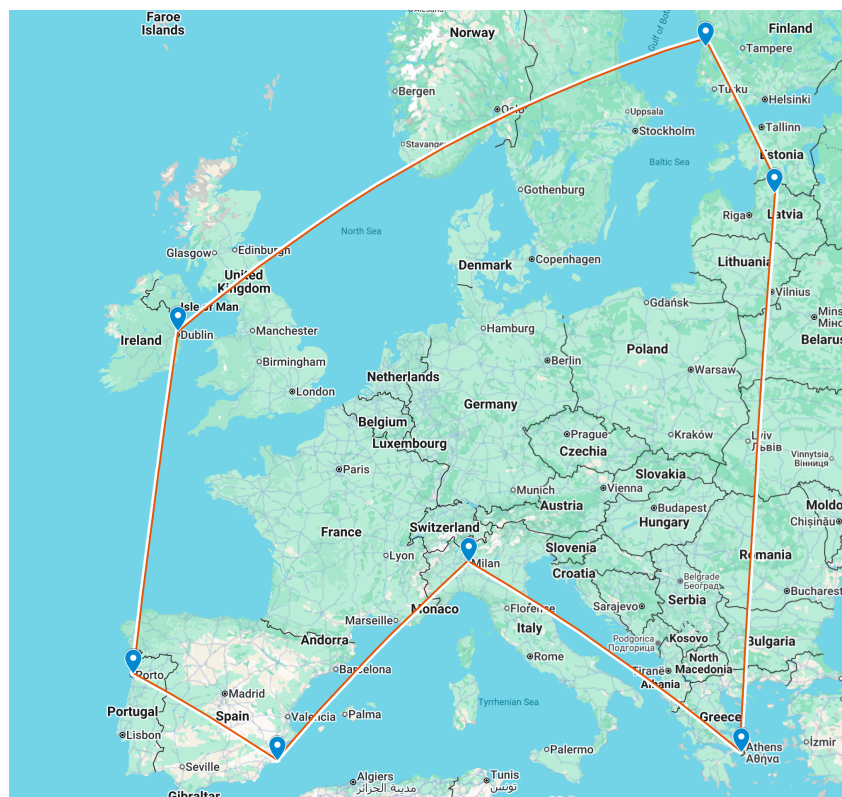
Section 1: The Innovative Practice

1.1: Introduction

Children are our future. Supporting all children and young people to make a successful transition to adult life, should be everyone's priority. Ensuring that they have good (mental and physical) health, safe homes and communities, access to education and the opportunity to nurture their talents should be the right of every child in Europe.

This is especially the case in Europe's urban areas where large proportions of young people can be found. But, too often, children are missing stakeholders in the sustainable urban development (SUD) discourse. Cities offer great opportunities for children to develop their full potential. However, they can also be challenging places to grow up in. These challenges have been exacerbated during and after the Covid pandemic, with commonly reported increases in anxiety and poor mental health amongst the young.

WISH CITIES addresses these issues. It is one of 10 URBACT Innovation Transfer Networks (ITNs), bringing together seven EU cities focused on improving the well-being of children and young people.



Courtesy of Google Maps

The network partners are drawn from across the EU, comprising metropolitan, mid-sized and smaller cities from different corners of the continent, as the table below shows:

Table 1: The WISH CITIES PARTNERSHIP							
Partner/data	Milan	Pori	Cartagena	Valmiera	Korydallos	Vila Nova de Gaia	Dublin
Member State	Italy	Finland	Spain	Latvia	Greece	Portugal	Ireland
City population	1,371,000	83,106	218,050	52,203	61,247	304,149	588,233
Youth population aged 15-29	49,534	13,219*	36,454	6,432	9,271	99,853	162,940
Youth population as % of total	36.1%	16%	17.7%	12.1%	15.1%	32.8%	27.1%
% of youth living in poverty	N/A	N/A	15.7%**	N/A	14%	16.2%	14.3%***

* 0-18 years old

** 15-28 years old

*** National data, Dublin likely to be higher

At the network centre is the Lead Partner, the City of Milan, Italy. In 2019 Milan started an Innovative Actions (IA) project¹ focused on improving wellbeing for its children and young people. The URBACT WISH CITIES project convenes six transfer partners with the same shared commitment, looking to learn from the Milan experience. Over the two years of the network, they will examine ways to adapt and implement the key IA lessons in their own cities.

1.2 The Transfer Study Methodology

This Transferability Study provides a starting point for the network journey. Its production process has included:

- A desk review of all the WISH-MI materials and outputs
- A scan of relevant EU policy initiatives
- A Deep Dive meeting in Milan with all project partners
- Bilateral visits and meetings with network partners
- Drafting of the Transferability Study with support and input from the partnership

1.3 EU Policy Context

The European Union's Cohesion Policy (2021-2027) includes a commitment (Priority 4) to a 'More Social and Inclusive Europe'. Alongside this, the [New Leipzig Charter](#) provides a framework for Europe's urban policy which underlines the importance of the Just City, where no one is left behind. This highlights the importance of supporting the most vulnerable, and the key role cities occupy in providing opportunities and transforming lives for the better.

¹ <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/milan-call4>

The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) contains a commitment to reduce the number of people at risk of or living in poverty by 15 million by 2030. Principle 11 of the EPRS specifically commits to the provision of childcare and support to children. This complements other key policy documents aimed to support Europe's children and young people, which include the [EU Youth Strategy](#) and the [EU Child Guarantee](#).

However, despite these policy commitments, Europe's children are in a precarious position. Even prior to the pandemic, child poverty was a significant issue, but this has been worsened by the impact of Covid and other factors, including the Global Energy Crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine, and the recent cost of living increases. As a consequence, in 2022, 24.7% (almost 20 million) of the children (aged under 18) in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

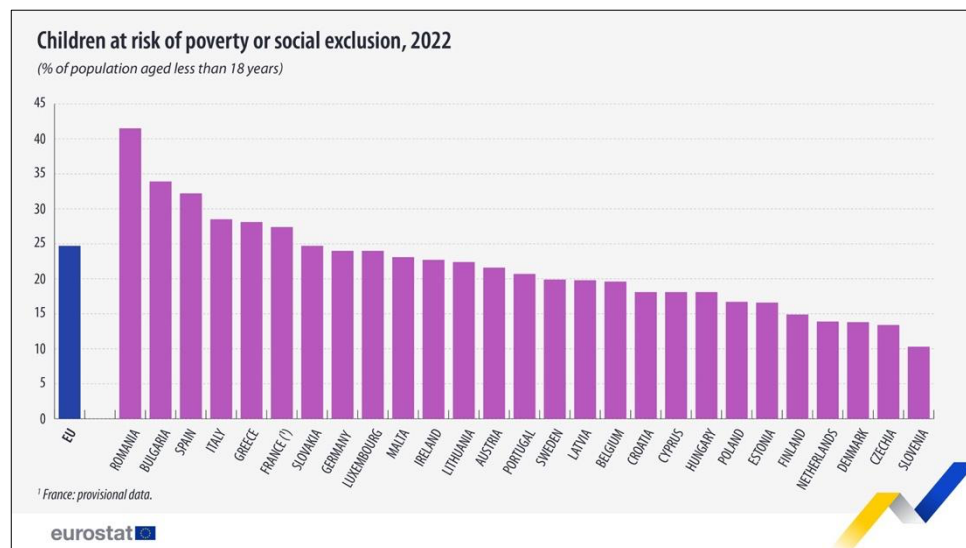


Figure 1, source Eurostat

And there is a specific urban dimension to Europe's child poverty issue. A key Eurocities study² confirmed that most cities³ in Europe have a higher child poverty rate than the national average in their countries. Families living in cities face specific urban challenges that increase their risk of poverty, such as higher living costs, lack of affordable housing and shortage of places in childcare, among other factors. This is, in part, the result of the dynamic growth of cities, which are now home to 75% of Europe's population

Within these numbers, specific groups of young people are at higher risk of poverty. These include Roma children and those from migrant families. For example, a 2024 Eurochild report⁴ found that 80% of Roma children were at risk of poverty, compared to 17% of the broader EU population. Children of low-educated parents are also at higher risk of poverty, underlining the intergenerational dimension of this issue. Children living in single-parent households, those growing up in institutional environments and disabled children are also more likely to be poor.

² [Fighting Child Poverty in European Cities, Eurocities, 2020](#)

³ 86% of the cities surveyed in the study

⁴ [Roma Children Across Europe, Eurochild, February 2024](#)

There is also a territorial aspect to this within cities. Wealth levels within urban areas can vary widely, meaning that children growing up in different parts of the city can have very different life chances. In the previously mentioned Eurocities study, nearly all cities (32 of 35 surveyed) reported that in some of their city districts child poverty is considerably higher than the city average, with child poverty rates ranging from three to ten times higher in poor areas compared to more affluent areas. This troubling statistic, and the potential it creates for wider social polarisation, was an important driver in the original Milan IA project, as we discuss below.

Addressing this challenge is hampered by the fact that at the EU level there is no common definition of child poverty or agreed metrics to capture it. Some cities use their national definition, while others use the EU concept of children ‘at risk of poverty or social exclusion.’ Most appear to define child poverty in relation to their economic vulnerability based on family income levels.

Understanding the patterns of urban child poverty is therefore not easy on the EU scale. However, there is widespread acknowledgment that the first five years of the current decade have worsened the situation for many. Many Member States have implemented budget cuts in areas – for example social, cultural and recreational policies – that disproportionately affect poor young people. At the same time, the cost-of-living crisis has impacted upon household budgets, reducing opportunities for children.

Covid has also been a major factor, and we are still coming to terms with the lasting impact of the pandemic on young people. A significant 2023 WHO study⁵ found that almost one third of adolescents (30%) reported higher levels of anxiety and poor mental health as a consequence of the pandemic. A more detailed Finnish study⁶ analysed the gender dimension of this, concluding that amongst girls in secondary education, the prevalence of anxiety and depression increased between 2021 and 2023, whilst for the same age-group of boys it went down. However, overall mental wellbeing scores for all groups increased in this period, whilst the rate of reported eating disorders increased amongst adolescent girls and boys.

Linked to this, a growing body of research⁷ links the rise of anxiety in adolescents with high uses of social media, which are also associated with bullying and other anti-social behaviours that contribute to young people’s isolation and sense of vulnerability. Gen Alpha’s familiarity with technology has many advantages, but social media is a double-edged sword which also brings negative consequences.

Every child deserves the opportunity to realise their full potential, regardless of their background or where they live. Europe’s young people have a potentially bright future ahead of them, and cities can assume a key role in implementing the policies designed to support them to achieve this.

⁵ [Coping Through Crisis](#), WHO, 2023

⁶ [Mental health after the COVID-19 pandemic among Finnish youth](#), The Lancet, 2024
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(24\)00108-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(24)00108-1/fulltext)

⁷ For example, the 2022 [STEM4 report](#)

1.4 The innovative practice

1.4.1 Milan's starting point

Milan developed the concept of the original Innovative Actions project, WISH-MI, in response to a fear of widening social polarisation and increased levels of child poverty in the city. The city recognised that the scale of the challenge required an ambitious, innovative approach, and that incremental tweaks to their existing support offer would be insufficient in reversing the direction of travel.

The city of Milan has 1.4 million inhabitants, 230,000 of whom are minors. Although the largest and wealthiest city in Italy, it had a wide and growing rate of inequality. While average and median income levels were higher than the Italian average, the gap between the better and worse off was widening. The Gini index for Milan was 53.2% compared to a national rate of 38.2% nationally. Almost one third (30%) of the city residents lived below the poverty line.

The City of Milan was concerned about how this affected its young people, particularly the most vulnerable. Although the data was imperfect, they illustrated the scale and impact of poverty and inequality on minors, with 1 in 10 living in absolute poverty, amounting to over 21,000 young people, in 2018.

Fast changing social trends were contributing to this scenario. For example, the traditional Italian family structure was shifting, with a higher prevalence of single occupancy households (45%), reflecting an ageing society and a growing preference to live alone. At the same time 11% of the city's households were single parents whilst between 2021 and 2016 there was a 26% rise in marriages amongst divorcees, creating blended families. In short, the traditional extended Italian family structure with close ties had become much less common.

These societal shifts were impacting upon young people in a way that is still not yet fully understood. However, it seemed likely that social fragmentation and familial shifts are creating a climate of uncertainty and emotional tension for children. The Covid pandemic, which hit just as the project was starting in early 2020, has since contributed to this.

These tectonic societal changes affect all young people, but particularly those with lower levels of social capital and resilience. For the most vulnerable, the situation was worsened by unequal access to educational opportunities. In Milan, this was most evident in those priority areas with high levels of deprivation and rising rates of diversity. City education data confirmed a phenomenon where white Italian families are leaving these neighbourhoods, effectively creating a segregated school system. 56 schools in the city (32 primary and 24 secondary) had been identified as having high failure rates as a result of this phenomenon.

In some neighbourhoods, migrant children accounted for 40% of the school roll. The data also showed that these children had a 117% higher probability of dropping out of the education system, compared to the average city rate of 10.6%.

The city's analysis also acknowledged the importance of home-life and community as important factors in ensuring the positive wellbeing of children and young people. However, the most marginalised children were also disadvantaged here. In Milan, many of them grow up with parents who have low levels of educational qualifications, basic Italian language skills and little understanding of the public support system. This includes low awareness of the wider range of cultural and recreational facilities that help young people identify their talents and which provide a balanced approach to childhood development.

The WISH-MI project was designed to promote the wellbeing of all children and young people in Milan, set against this complex and fast-moving context.

1.4.2 The WISH-MI concept

WISH-MI had the primary goal of redesigning services to children and young people in Milan – as well as their families – in order to improve youth wellbeing. Initially, the project was informed by four stated goals:

- 1. Rethink and redesign city policies and services for young people, so they are delivered seamlessly across departmental silos*
- 2. Increase minors' opportunities to access wellbeing services*
- 3. Establish Physical and online platforms to facilitate access to integrated service provision*
- 4. Create mechanisms to enable the city authority to listen to children and families in order to promote service co-design.*

Inherent to the WISH-MI approach was that the belief that the established model of service design and delivery for children and young people required an overhaul. Instead of assuming what they needed, and continuing the same services year on year, the intention was to build collaborative relationships with the target group – and service providers – in order to encourage and support new service design, better aligned to service-users' needs.

A number of principle interventions were designed to enable this, as follows:

- The development of a digital services catalogue and online service portal

An identified obstacle to children and young people not accessing services was that they did not always know they were available. Therefore, WISH-MI set out to establish a comprehensive and transparent service offer which could be accessed online. This had two principal components. First, a digital platform, which enabled users to search for and book services. Second, a digital services catalogue which would contain all of the available opportunities.

The intention was to generate a catalogue of services across sectors – public, private and NGO – throughout the entire city. In terms of type, the catalogue hosted details of any services that might support youth wellbeing, including Sport and Recreation, Educational, Cultural and Health.

- The creation of a network of neighbourhood-based WISH-MI hubs

The digital platform was complemented by a network of community-based WISH-MI hubs. This element acknowledged the importance of place-based approaches by offering youth spaces that were accessible, supportive and welcoming. The hubs were deliberately positioned in different neighbourhood types, to provide an opportunity to see where they might be most effective.

Each hub also targeted a specific age group⁸, and, in some cases, had a thematic speciality -such as the Hub Bruzzano, which had a music recording facility.

The management of the hubs was sub-contracted to a series of community-based organisations. In each case, the host organisation already had an established local reputation for working with young people, which helped cement community relations, as well as with youth recruitment.

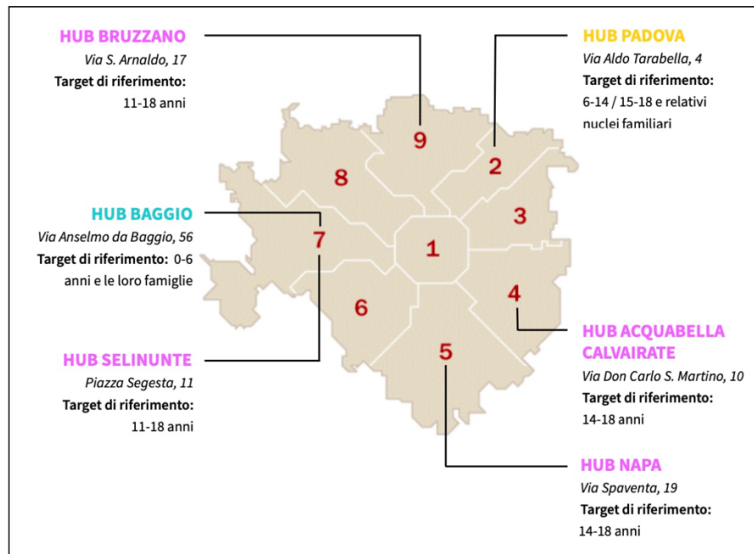


Figure 2: WISH-MI Hub map, source City of Milan

- The use of a voucher systems (collective and individual) to stimulate service demand and encourage new service co-design

The development of a voucher scheme was one of the most innovative dimensions of the WISH-MI project. The model was seen as a key tool both to stimulate service demand amongst young people – especially the most deprived – and to incentivise new service co-design.

Two types of voucher were developed. The first was an individual voucher which entitled the holder to access a specific service. Digital vouchers were sent out to families across the city to encourage them to review then sign up for available services, which could be delivered on-line or face to face. Poorer households were prioritised and given vouchers with a monetary value in order to encourage them to actively participate.

The second type of voucher was the collective version, which was used to reward providers for engaging in service co-design with their young clients. This started with a call issued by the City of Milan, inviting service providers to collaborate with young people in order to identify new service needs and to come up with ideas in response to this. After an assessment process, the selected project ideas were given collective vouchers with a monetary value to design and deliver these new services.

⁸ WISH-MI operated three age cohorts: 0-6; 6-14 and 14-18

- The WISH-MI Ambassadors programme

The idea behind this element was to create a network of youth champions across the city. In response to an open call, a wide variety of people came forward willing to get involved in supporting Milan's youth in some way. Primarily aimed at civil servants, participants came forward from across a wide variety of departments, and after an extensive (90 hour) training programme they were supported to work with young people in ways that best drew on their own strengths.

Their support format took various forms – supporting migrant children to access school services, improving participation in museums and galleries, supporting community groups to draw up youth-related projects etc – and the network of ambassadors eventually evolved into a Community of Practice that remains ongoing.

Two other aspects of the original innovation project are also worth mentioning. The first is the establishment of a visual identity for the project in order to create a 0-18 brand that was visible for young people. This was developed by the Politecnico di Milano during the initial phase of WISH-MI. Also scheduled for this period, but ultimately less successful, was a proposed campaign of local engagement to raise awareness and participation. Sadly, this aspect of the project coincided with the early part of the Covid pandemic, when it was impossible to conduct this kind of participative community-based activity. As an alternative, some engagement sessions took place online, however they were not very well attended, and by the time the pandemic had declined, it was deemed too late to catch up with this engagement activity.



Figure 3: Milanese youth co-producing a hub mural, source City of Milan

1.4.3 Implementation and key lessons

WISH-MI was an ambitious and complex project that set out to re-shape not only the service offer to children and young people, but also the relationships between City Hall and these service users. In fairness, the project was never fully realised as initially envisaged, due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic. However, the IA project was eventually completed in sufficient a way for us to draw some important lessons from the experience.

These are summarised here, but further details can be found in the WISH-MI journals, especially the [final one](#) which sets out the final conclusions.

The *digital services catalogue and online service portal* were established and open to the public until the end of the UIA project, although they have not been continued. The intention of creating a single portal containing information on the wellbeing support available to children and young people across the city of Milan was a highly challenging venture. This was due not only to the technical issues relating to the digital design and hosting, but also related to the task of populating the catalogue itself. To be credible, such a database required a minimum critical mass of services, straddling the public, private and voluntary sectors. It also sought to contain services at the city and neighbourhood level, relating to the WISH-MI wellbeing sub-themes.

The core team worked hard to attract providers to the catalogue, learning a lot along the way. For example, it was much harder to attract private providers compared to the other two sectors. The team

took special measures - such as holding events targeted at private providers - to address this imbalance, but despite this, it remained an uphill struggle.

In terms of the profile of services, the catalogue ultimately contained 360 across the city, with the largest grouping relating to Art (95), School +(90) and health (83).

The *network of neighbourhood-based WISH-MI hubs* was ultimately delivered with six of the nine opening over the lifespan of WISH-MI. Once again, this element of work faced a number of implementation challenges which – in addition to Covid – included procurement issues and difficulties finding the right local management organisations. On a positive note however, the more successful hubs continue to operate and as part of the process, the Citta di Milano (CdM) has built stronger relationships with some of the key delivery partners including *Fondazione Aquilone*, *Action Aid* and *Mamme a Scuole*. On the basis of the pilot experience, the continuing hubs will focus on supporting young people aged 14-18, who were identified as the biggest users and beneficiaries of these services.

The *voucher scheme* represented one of the key instruments in Milan's drive to support access and also to stimulate bottom-up service co-design. More than 1,000 households activated individual vouchers and over 5,000 activities were accessed using them. Given that the vouchers did not go live until quite late in the lifetime of the pilot, this indicates at least a modest scale of success. Of these, Sport and Health services were the most popular, followed by Education, Culture and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). In the final evaluation, 63% of respondents said that they would not have accessed their chosen services without the vouchers.

The collective vouchers had limited scope to operate, based on only one call. 64 new pilot micro-projects were supported as a result, but it seems that few of these offered much in the way of very different service innovation. In the final evaluation report (conducted by Codici Ricerche) service providers only scored 3.3 out of 6 on the extent to which the collective voucher scheme enabled them to broaden their service offer.

The *Ambassador model* was one of WISH-MI's simpler concepts. Perhaps because of this, it has been one of the most successful and sustainable parts of the overall model. More than 130 people have enrolled in the programme, with feedback from ambassadors suggesting that it is a highly rewarding experience. The Community of Practice which evolved provides a useful ongoing asset for the city, which may be mobilised as one of the rings of the Milan URBACT Local Group (ULG).

1.5 Transfer potential of the innovative practice

Taken as a whole, the WISH-MI model was a high-level strategic project that required mixed hard and soft investment on a scale of around €5million. Few cities are in a position to transfer this scale of innovative intervention in its entirety.

However, WISH-MI was underpinned by a series of principles that can provide inspiration for transfer in cities across Europe. The most important of these are:

- A commitment to service co-design with young people

- A focus on gathering high quality data on the situation and experience of children and young people
- A willingness to work across established municipal boundaries in order to build new collaborative models
- A pledge to experiment and test at the local level, which involves risk-taking and a commitment to transparency of results

Informed by these principles, WISH-MI developed a number of key interventions to promote its youth wellbeing goals. Some of these – such as the voucher scheme and the digital catalogue and platform – are complex and investment intensive. Others – such as the Ambassadors and the neighbourhood hubs – are more established and, consequently, easier to replicate.

The figure below assesses each of the key interventions based on their level of innovation and ease of transferability. In the context of URBACT ITNs, this matrix is important, as pilot evidence suggested a temptation to focus transfer activity on modules perceived as easier to implement. This should be discouraged within the network, and the matrix can help facilitate this exchange with partners.

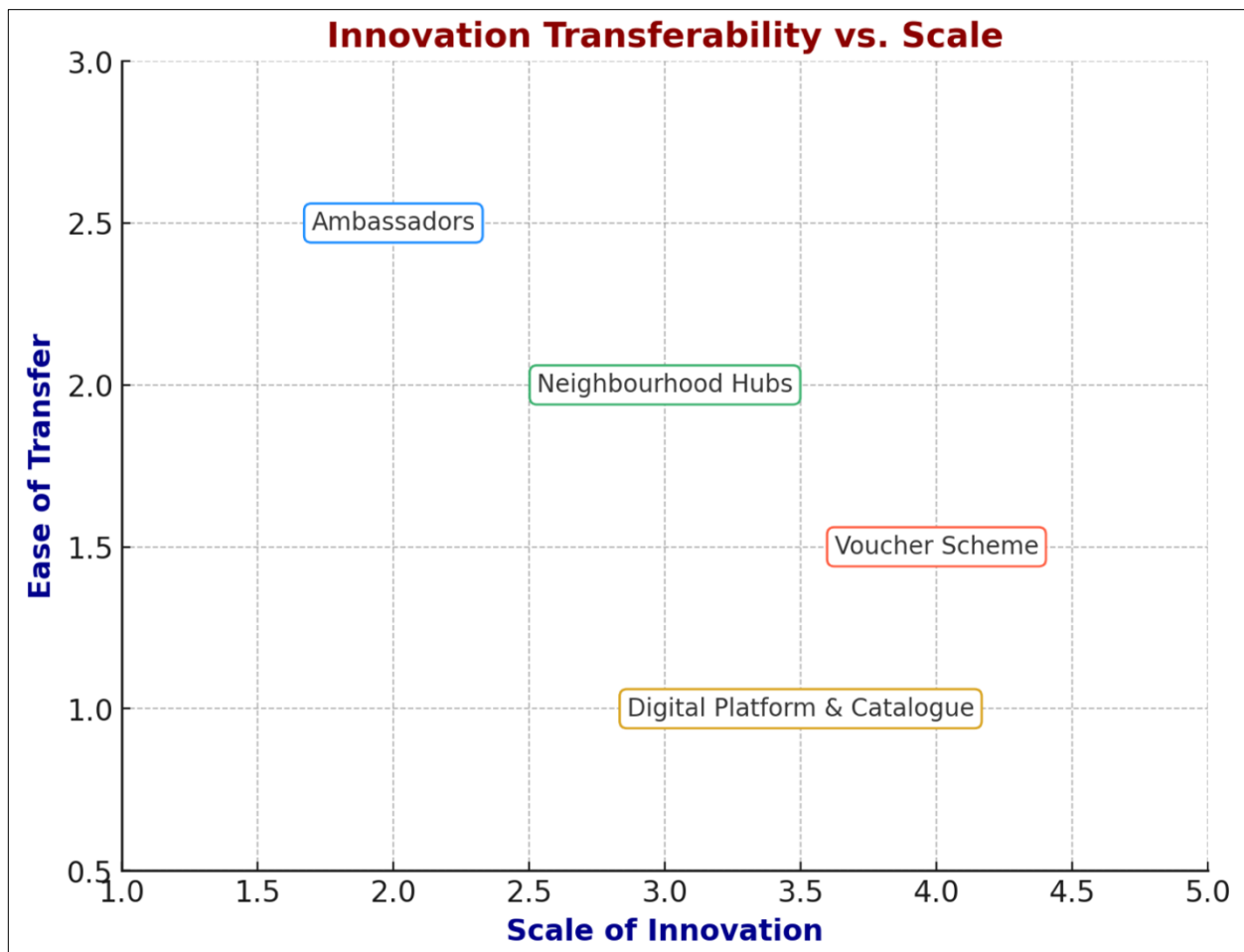


Figure 4: Innovation vs Ease of Transfer Matrix

1.6 Milan's new starting point and Continuity Plan

As Lead Partner, the City of Milan comes to WISH CITIES with a commitment to share its experience, but also to build on its initial innovation work and to learn from other network partners. In this way, the network provides a two-way street, in terms of innovation transfer.

Milan will use this opportunity to refine and strengthen the original WISH-MI concept with a focus on three of the project elements:

- The neighbourhood hubs
- The voucher system
- The Ambassador network

The city has already absorbed the lessons of the pilot and made changes to the concept. Most notably, the focus now will solely be on the 14-18 age group, who are identified as most in need and the biggest potential beneficiaries. Building on the existing infrastructure and enhancing the model through the lessons from WISH CITIES, will provide the focal point for the Lead Partner's Continuity Plan.

Section 2: Partner profiles

2.1 Introduction

WISH CITIES harnesses a network of partners committed to improving the wellbeing of children and young people. Although diverse in terms of city size, location and territorial situation, the challenges facing young people – especially the most vulnerable – provide a common denominator.

This section of the Transferability Study provides further details of each partner. This includes a short overview of the youth population, insights into key services on offer, the transfer assets and barriers and the partner's priority transfer elements from the WISH-MI model. It concludes with a short assessment of each partner's transfer potential.

2.2 The WISH CITIES partner profiles

2.2.1 Vila Nova de Gaia

The city in a nutshell

Vila Nova de Gaia (or, simply, Gaia) is located on the south side of the Douro River, in the Porto metropolitan region of northern Portugal. It has 304,149 inhabitants, residing in a territorial area covering 168 square kilometres. This results in a population density of 1,805 persons per square km, making it one of Portugal's most densely populated areas.

Located on the Atlantic, Gaia has a strong sea-faring tradition and its neighbouring coastline now attracts many visitors, with tourism and hospitality an important employment sector. So too is the wine

and port industry, with Gaia being the principal location of the area's port houses. The food sector, and growing sustainable agri-tourism industry, are also important economic sectors for the city.

Vila Nova de Gaia is an active international city which has previously participated in the URBACT Agri-Urban network, led by Milan and focused on innovation in the food sector. It has a strong reputation for its support of young people and it is currently (2025) Portugal's National Youth Capital.

The snapshot of youth in Vila Nova de Gaia

Gaia is a young city with almost one-third (32.8%) of its inhabitants below thirty years old. The age distribution of its 99,853 young people is set out in the table below.

According to the Social Observatory of Gaia, in 2021, 4410 foreign youngsters (10-34) live in the city, which represents a percentage of 5.5% of all young people. Primarily, these are from Portuguese-speaking countries, such as Brazil and Angola, although young Ukrainians make up the third highest national group.

Gaia's young people have high levels of qualifications. 41.1% have a secondary education diploma while 27.1% have a degree-level qualification. The school-dropout rate (6.3%) is also below the national and EU average (9.5%), so this perspective is very positive. Less so is the data relating to employment, which shows that 25.8% of young people are unemployed, according to the IEFP – Portuguese Institute for employment and Vocational Training – in September 2023. So, despite being the most educated generation ever, these young people struggle to convert their qualifications into well-paid quality jobs.

The policy context

In recent years Vila Nova de Gaia has established itself as one of Europe's leading cities in relation to the co-design of youth policies. In autumn 2024 it launched the second iteration of the city's [Municipal Plan for All Youth](#), drawing on the lessons of the first version and driven by a youth co-creation process financed through the Erasmus+ Programme.

A comprehensive process of labs, workshops and other events generated an ambitious and far-sighted document that reflects the challenging times we live in, whilst identifying those priority areas most important for the city's young people. Informed by social-innovation methodology and cross-cutting perspectives, the plan identifies the following eight priorities that should underpin the city's approach to youth provision:

- Humanism
- Freedom
- Habitat
- Feeling
- Impact
- Talent
- Happiness



Figure 5, Gaia participatory youth process, source Vila Nova de Gaia

The plan reflects Gaia's prioritisation of youth issues which started when the city bid for the European Youth capital award in 2018. Since then, the momentum around youth issues has attracted much international attention, positioning the city as a front-runner in relation to youth co-design.

Following the launch of the new plan, a new centre for youth is under construction in Gaia, which will provide a future focal point for the city's youth-related activities.

Delivery Infrastructure

Gaia has a strong local infrastructure supporting young people, which includes its schools and colleges. Amongst the latter is the innovative 'Escola Oficina' which provides placements and skills training in a facility totally dedicated to recycling and circularity.



Figure 6, Escola Oficina, Gaia, image by Eddy Adams, Expert visit October 2024

Gaia is also notable for its participative structures relating to children and young people. The city has a Youth Council, bringing together over thirty youth organisations across the city, in addition to a well-established participatory budget (PB). The objectives of the PB are to promote active citizenship and democracy amongst the young. Open to all young people aged 13-30, the PB consists of a €240,000 pot that is open to young people's ideas and suggestions. Divided into three areas – Creativity, Culture/Sports, Environment/Sustainability and Empowerment/participation – each proposal can have a maximum budget of €40,000 and young people vote for the two best concepts each year.

Winning projects to date have included an animal park, a sensory garden, a multigenerational park and a board game and handbook to address bullying.

State of play on the ULG

Gaia already has well-established structures that can provide the nucleus of its ULG, to enable the voices of young people. At the centre of this is the Youth Council, supported by the municipal youth department team. Educational institutions, as well as research centres (such as the Gaia Social Observatory) are other candidates and the city is also keen to mobilise the private sector, as part of its quadruple helix approach.

Assets and Barriers to Transfer

As a partner, Gaia brings a lot to the table. Its deep experience in relation to youth co-design and representation is highly relevant and of great interest to all of the WISH-CITIES partners. With its strong political support and highly motivated staff, it is also well-placed to optimise the potential benefits of participation in the network. There are few evident barriers, but the table below summarises both sides of the equation.

Gaia	
Transfer Assets	Transfer Barriers
● Strong political support ● Good timing – new youth facility scheduled – national Youth Capital ● New Youth Plan in place ● Culture of youth co-design ● Innovative and effective interventions – such as the PB- to build upon	● How much does Gaia have to learn from others? ● High levels of activity already in place – capacity for more? ● Funding and finance?

Conclusion – motivation and areas of interest

Innovation transfer is a two-way street. Gaia approaches the network keen to learn from the Milan experience but also enthusiastic about sharing its own achievements and lessons. During the kick-off meeting in Milan, the city expressed a commitment to go further, in terms of youth co-design, which means being open to new ideas to add to their own. Additionally, Gaia identified the following aspects of the WISH-MI concept that were of particular interest: Improved data gathering and usage; the use of vouchers; the mobilisation of an Ambassador network.

Transfer potential measure

Vila Nova de Gaia has committed political support, resources and an established infrastructure supporting children and young people. It has much to offer the WISH-CITIES network and its transfer potential is high.

2.2.2 Korydallos

The city in a nutshell

The municipality of Korydallos is located in Western Attica, within the wider metropolitan Athens area, midway between the capital and Piraeus. It has a footprint of 4,324 km² hectares and 61,247 residents, which translates into a population density of 14.16 persons per square kilometre.

Korydallos has no major industries and its economy comprises many small businesses in an area where significant numbers commute into Athens for work. Within Greece, the city is now known for housing the country's largest maximum-security prison and although this has had some reputational downsides, it has also created some employment locally.

Korydallos is a relatively poor city which was badly affected by the Global Financial Crisis and which has also faced the challenge of absorbing refugees in recent years.



Figure 7, side elevation of central school building in Korydallos, image by Eddy Adams

The snapshot of youth in Korydallos

There are 9,271 young people living in Korydallos, which represents 15.1% of the entire population. The level of educational qualifications is low in a local economy where traditionally opportunity pathways have been quite limited. Feedback from local service providers suggests that local facilities are primarily targeted at younger children, with good outdoor play facilities, whilst there are fewer resources invested in older children. There was also a suggestion in stakeholder meetings that children's physical wellbeing is prioritised over their emotional health, in a society where the family remains the social focal point.

Local service providers report increased rates of young people seeking support in relation to anxiety and mental health issues, while the city's psychological services unit reported higher than average support demand from ethnic minority groups, including Roma children.

The policy context

The Korydallos Municipal Business Plan provides the local strategic context, which is focused on sustainable urban development with an emphasis on sustainable waste management, electric mobility and the use of renewable energy in public buildings. The city already supports this agenda through its involvement in the URBACT [COPE](#) network. Although there is no specific youth strategy, Korydallos promotes citizen participation, especially amongst young people, through its involvement in projects such as the ERASMUS+ [CLEAR](#) project, focused on the Circular Economy.

The city has previously experimented with structures designed to support youth representation, including a youth assembly. However, this did not prove to be sustainable, and the reasons for this – and the overall experience – may be useful for other WISH CITIES partners.

Delivery Infrastructure

Korydallos has a well-established framework of publicly funded service providers addressing the needs of children and young people. As well as local schools, this includes a strong and well-resourced psychological services team which supports up to 700 people, including many youngsters, per month. Alongside this, the municipality has established links with the research and higher educational sector, which occupies a potentially key role in driving up levels of educational qualifications. Collaboration between City Hall and the higher education sector has largely focused on the circular economy, and technical solutions to local urban challenges.

There is a well-functioning employment brokerage service, where job-seekers, often young people, are supported to develop their CVs and interview skills, as part of a wider offer matching them with job-vacancies. Alongside this, Korydallos has a growing support structure around volunteering.

Korydallos also has a reputation for its cultural offer which includes facilities for film, digital and media content as well as a long-standing and widely recognised classical dance centre. There are also good sports facilities in the city.

However, during the expert visit, local stakeholders reported that although there is ample provision for younger children, this is less the case for older teenagers. Those in fragile home situations are not always well supported, and there are few mechanisms for their voices to be heard.

Since the pandemic there has also been a trend to provide a growing numbers of services online. Although digital provision has its place, this is often driven primarily by budget constraints, and it can put limitations on support services for people with more complex needs.



Figure 8, Korydallos service provider workshop, October 2024, image by Eddy Adams

State of play on the ULG

The municipality of Korydallos already has experience in establishing a ULG through its participation in the COPE network, although the stakeholders for this environmental project will differ from that of WISH CITIES.

Korydallos is a small city, where most of the key players are already known to one another. Potential ULG members in the city may include:

- Professionals from a range of municipal departments
- Higher Education and research bodies
- NGOs and civil society organisations, particularly working with youth, culture and sports
- Representatives of vulnerable communities

Assets and Barriers to Transfer

Like all of the partners, Korydallos brings existing assets to the WISH-CITIES network, as well as barriers that might limit the scope for innovation transfer. These are summarised in the table below:

Korydallos	
Transfer Assets	Transfer Barriers
● Strong public sector infrastructure ● Well-established community psychological services ● Sports, culture and media facilities ● Growing culture of volunteering	● Budget constraints ● Absence of youth representation mechanisms ● Absence of a specific youth strategy or targets

Conclusion – motivation and areas of interest

WISH-CITIES provides Korydallos with an opportunity to improve its capacity to co-design services with young people, aimed at improving overall youth wellbeing. Specifically, in relation to the city's challenges, the experience of Milan (and other partners) in engaging less-visible, vulnerable young people, has relevance for the local context.

At the network kick-off meeting, the aspects of the WISH-MI project identified as being of high interest to Korydallos were:

- The physical hubs
- The voucher system
- The digital platform

The principal of youth co-design was also highlighted as being a potentially important transfer dimension.

Transfer potential measure

Korydallos is a small city which brings some distinctive assets to the network. It has clearly identified some of the potential transfer elements and its potential for transfer is rated as medium.

2.2.3 Pori

The city in a nutshell

Situated near the Gulf of Bothnia, in Western Finland, the city of Pori has a population of 83,106 people. It is the regional capital of Satakunta, covering a municipal area of 834 km², characterised by low population density (72 people/km²). Historically, Pori's economy relied on heavy industry and manufacturing but these days the largest employer is the city authority. However, Satakunta produces 40% of Finland's energy (combination of wind and nuclear) and there is a growing local focus on robotics and automation. Pori also has a global reputation for its international jazz festival.

In terms of jobs, unemployment rates are higher than the national average and traditionally, educational qualification levels are low. Key challenges include raising local educational and skill levels, as well as retaining and attracting talent.

The snapshot of youth in Pori

There are 13,219 young people (aged 15-28) living in Pori, which accounts for around 16% of the entire population. Most of them are well served by the strong educational facilities and the network of effective local services, which helps them make a successful transition to adulthood. However, higher than average unemployment rates amongst adults means that some children (in some localities as high as 22% of households) are affected by poverty. Recent data (LEA -advanced analytics -project) indicates that the wellbeing of children living in single-parent families and those from migrant backgrounds are more at risk. Recent research also indicates growing levels of anxiety and poor mental health amongst children and young people in the city region.

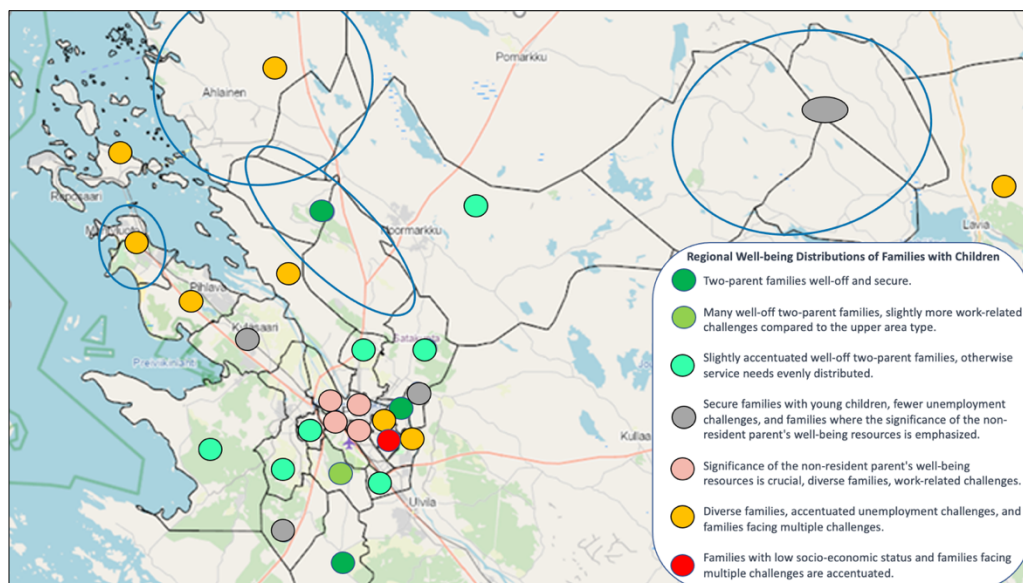


Figure 9 Source, City of Pori, LEA -data 2021

The local policy context

Pori is designated as a UNICEF Child Friendly City and there is strong political commitment to improving youth wellbeing. This was reflected in the establishment of a new Youth Department in January 2024, formerly aligned with Leisure. The approach is to work across policy domains to best support the city's youth. One of the challenges here has been the national wellbeing reforms which created some structural and financial issues at the regional level, but there is a strong local commitment to work around this.

The city's strategy (Pori 2030) focuses on sustainable growth but also on the concept of 'smooth weekdays' for citizens, which translates into something akin to good wellbeing. There is also a strong culture of co-design and collaboration in the city. Pori also has a strong reputation for supporting cultural and recreational activities amongst young people, with a network of facilities that are described below.

Delivery Infrastructure

Pori has a variety of assets addressing youth needs. This includes not only comprehensive and high-quality educational opportunities (Satakunta University of Applied Sciences, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences and the University Consortium of Pori) but many leisure time possibilities for young people. Pori is actively using the concept of the "Finnish model for leisure activities" and "Youth passport" to advance youth wellbeing. Assets also include the impressive Ohjaamo facility, which forms part of Finland's national network of one-stop-shops for young people. The Pori base supported over 4,000 young people between January and September 2024 through a mix of personal and group activities. They tend to be young people who are less likely to seek support from formal organisations like the Public Employment Service (PES). Ohjaamo staff have noticed changes in client patterns since the pandemic with increased rates of young people experiencing anxiety and mental health issues. The figure below provides an insight into the range of support issues clients present with.

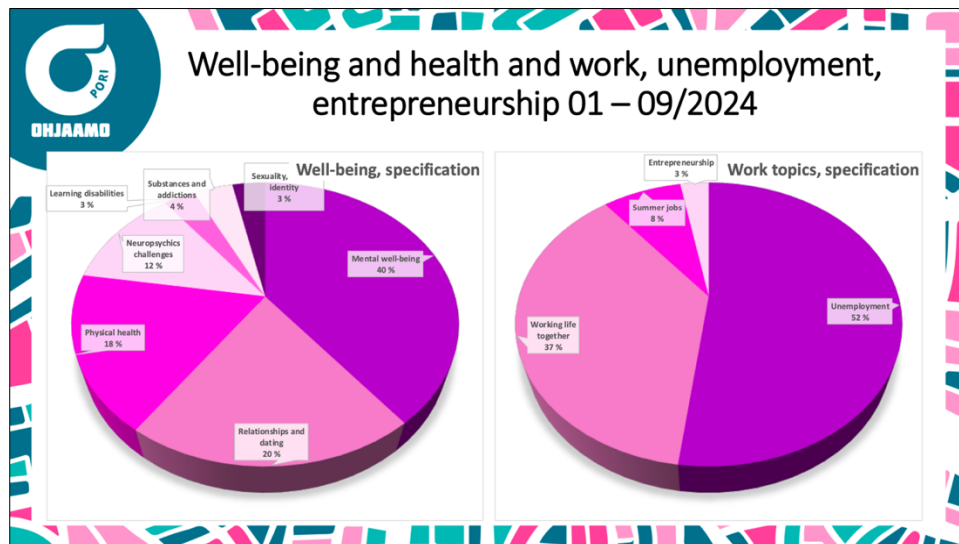


Figure 10, Source, Ohjaamo, Pori

Around 12% of Ohjaamo's clients are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is disproportionate to the levels living in the city.

Pori also has a network of facilities – several of which have been youth co-designed – offering cultural and personal development activities which include:

- *Cultural House Annis (part of Youth Department in Pori)*
- *Asema 44 (EU -funded, former bus station now a cultural space)*

State of play on the ULG

The Youth Department is ideally placed to organise and facilitate the Pori ULG. Strong links are already in place with local research and education bodies, as well as with schools and key voluntary sector players. Ohjaamo is potentially a key actor, and there was an excellent turnout of highly motivated local stakeholders from across the city during the expert visit in October 2024. Looking more widely, there is also potential to involve the recently established Wellbeing Services County of Satakunta team, which may be mutually beneficial.

Assets and Barriers to Transfer

Pori is an experienced URBACT city, albeit in other policy areas, which brings an understanding of the programme combined with some strong assets in the context of innovation transfer. The table below summarises the city's starting point.

Pori	
Transfer Assets	Transfer Barriers
Good timing – new Youth Department Political support across policy areas Highly motivated staff and stakeholders Established culture of youth co-design Relevant recent research findings Strong youth delivery network Ohjaamo – good example of integrated service delivery	Large geographical area with low density population – service delivery challenge Balance between the significance of youth work and the financial investment required Attitude towards working together and collaboration Long term planning & commitment

Conclusion – motivation and areas of interest

Pori's involvement in WISH CITIES comes at a time of heightened focus on young people in the city. The relatively new department provides an opportunity to address some of the challenges that youth in the city face, particularly around isolation, anxiety and mental health. Pori already has a head start in providing integrated hub-services – along the lines of the Milan model – and they are interested in further exploring ways to combine and improve online and face-to-face service delivery. In doing so, they plan to improve their co-design mechanisms, particularly in relation to involving families.

Gathering and managing better data as a way to understand young people's experiences, in order to inform better service development, is also a priority for Pori. Again, this chimes with the Milan experience, and those of other WISH CITIES partners.

Transfer potential measure

Based on the available information and exchanges, the assessment is that Pori is medium/high in terms of transfer potential.

2.2.4 Cartagena

The city in a nutshell

Situated on Spain's south east coast, in the province of Murcia, Cartagena has a population of 218,050. Covering a land mass of 558 square kilometres, it is a densely populated urban area with an outlying rural hinterland and a population density of 390.7 persons per square kilometre.

Cartagena's history pre-dates Roman times and its fine archaeological heritage includes a beautifully preserved amphitheatre. It is Spain's largest port and has been long established as a naval facility, remaining one of the bases of the Spanish navy. This sector remains one of the city's key industries, alongside chemical production, tourism and agriculture.

Cartagena is an outward-looking city. It has a highly active international department within the municipality, and is actively engaged in a wide-range of EU and wider global projects⁹.



Figure 11, Cartagena youth empowerment event

⁹ This includes participation in the URBACT [Next-Gen Youthwork](#) network

The snapshot of youth in Cartagena

Cartagena is a young city with a youth population of 36,454 which accounts for 17.7% of the total population. Although traditionally dominated by the port and its associated industries its economy is changing due to the impact of digital and environmental shifts. This transition will bring new opportunities for the city's youth, and the challenge is to ensure that they are well-placed to take them.

Cartagena, like many cities in transition, has high rates of deprivation and child poverty. Regional level data indicates that Murcia is Spain's third poorest autonomous region, with 9.9% of the population designated as living in extreme poverty in 2023. Whilst the adult poverty rate declined, at the same time, extreme child poverty rates in Murcia increased, affecting 15.7% of young people under 18 years of age. This amounts to 46,500 children and adolescents living in severe poverty at the regional level.



Figure 12, Cartagena poster from the WISH CITIES kick off, Photo, Eddy Adams

The policy context

Against this backdrop, the city of Cartagena has a clearly defined and strong commitment to tackling youth poverty and improving the wellbeing of its children and young people.

Since 2018 it has been recognised by UNICEF as a ‘Child-Friendly City.’ It has its own municipal services aimed at the welfare of children, adolescents, and youth, which comprises Social Policy, Equality and Family, Youth, Education and Sports. The municipality complements this through established structures which support inter-departmental collaboration as well as co-operation with community-based organisations focused on the needs of young people.

Cartagena's investment in youth wellbeing is shaped by the city's Municipal Plan for Children and Adolescents. A new version of this key strategic document covering 2023-2027 has been informed by an evaluation of the first plan, which concluded in 2022. The priority intervention areas include:

- Analysis of access to cultural, sports, and recreational facilities for children and adolescents.
- Independent and safe mobility.
- Review of municipal regulations to ensure the inclusion of child and adolescent perspectives.

- Healthy and sustainable city initiatives.
- Prevention of violence against children and adolescents (LOPIVI).
- Meaningful and real participation of children and adolescents in the city.

Cartagena also has an existing mechanism to promote the voice of young people in the shape of its annual municipal children's plenary session. This presents proposals submitted by children and young people which the municipality is bound to respect and implement. The Municipal Council for Children and Adolescents (CLIA) organises and manages this process.

Delivery Infrastructure

Cartagena has a well-developed and sophisticated range of services supporting children and young people. Amongst those which may be of particular interest to the wider partnership are its:

- Specific municipal services, such as
 - Its Childhood and Adolescence Unit
 - The Municipal Plan for Addictions
- Established participatory structures, including
 - Internal Coordination Body - Inter-Council Commission
 - External Coordination Body - Social Entities Commission
 - Child and Adolescent Participation Body - Municipal Council for Children and Adolescents of Cartagena
- Initiatives to stimulate youth participation and volunteering, including
 - 'Cartagena Free from Rumours'
 - Implica 2
 - Social Services Volunteering Programme

State of play on the ULG

Youth participation will form a central component of the Cartagena ULG, utilising the CLIA to ensure that youth voices have an active input. In this way, the city will make use of an existing effective mechanism, which will be complements with other relevant perspectives from:

- City Hall and relevant municipal departments
- Educational institutions
- The private sector – providing the potential to explore synergies between Cartagena's economic and social objectives
- Civil Society organisations, reflecting youth services and the city's neighbourhood diversity

Assets and Barriers to Transfer

Several of Cartagena's potential innovation transfer assets have already been stated, and they are summarised, together with potential barriers, in the table below:

Cartagena	
Transfer Assets	Transfer Barriers
• Strong political commitment to promoting youth wellbeing • Established Childhood, Adolescence and Youth strategy in place • Existing structures to promote an integrated approach • Mechanisms to support active youth participation • Clear objectives for network participation	• Adapting Milan's experience to the local Cartagena context • Limited English language capability within the administration may limit key stakeholders' transnational experiences

Conclusion – motivation and areas of interest

There is real momentum and commitment in Cartagena to promoting the wellbeing of children and young people. An important principle is also the commitment to active youth participation and service co-design – which chime clearly with the original WISH-MI innovation concept.

As a city, Cartagena is keen to learn from the experience of others, whilst sharing their own lessons with other partners. The city brings a lot to the network, and has expressed a specific interest in two elements of the Milan experience. The first of these is data analysis and visualisation, in order to make better use of data to shape and inform service development and delivery. The second is the exploration of participatory spaces for young people beyond formal structures like representative bodies.

Transfer potential measure

Cartagena is well-resourced and highly motivated in its support of children and young people. It has strong political backing and a strong infrastructure already in place. The city seems clear about its aspirations from the network and its transfer potential is rated as high.

2.2.5 Valmiera Municipality

The city in a nutshell

Valmiera is located in north east Latvia, situated 107 km northeast of Riga and 50km from the Estonian border. The municipality was established in 2021 after territorial reforms. The core area has a population of 24,233 in an area of 19.35 km squares, but it functions as the regional centre for a wider rural county area which extends to 2,946 km2 and a population of 53,962.

Turnover share of TOP 8 business sectors (%)

28% Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	17% Wholesale and retail trade
12% Glass fiber production	11% Construction
5% Production of food products and beverages	4% Production of wood, wood and paper products and furniture
4% Health and social care	3% Mechanical engineering and metalworking

Figure 13. Turnover share of TOP 8 business sectors (%)

The principal local industries are the food sector, fibreglass production, metalworking, wood processing and furniture making. Top 3 turnover share: agriculture, forestry and fisheries (28%), wholesale and retail trade (17%), fibreglass production (12%). GDP is the 2nd highest in Latvia, just after Riga EUR 24 344 (2022) but much less than the EU average of €37,600.

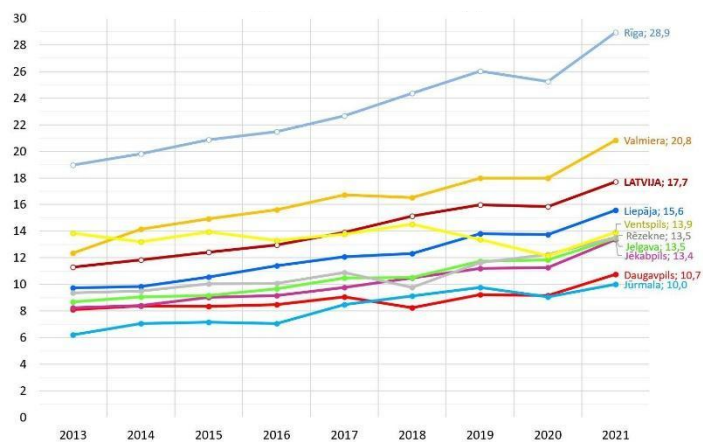


Figure 2. Gross domestic product per capita, thousand. EUR in city of Valmiera

GDP per capita is EUR 20 800 (2021), lower than the national average of €26,600 and much less than the EU average of €37,600¹⁰.

Figure 14: Source, City of Valmiera

The snapshot of youth in Valmiera

Valmiera has a youth population (aged 13-25) of 6,432, which accounts for 12.3% of the total population. As the figure below illustrates, most of them live in the less densely populated rural part of the territory.

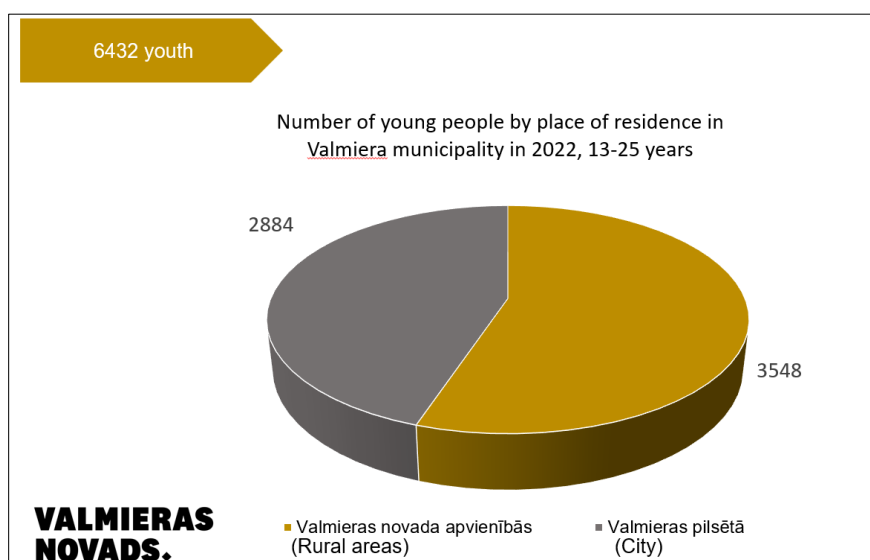


Figure 15: Source, Valmiera city authority, 2023

¹⁰ <https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/lxegay13nlotu97przjw?locale=en>

The territorial context affects the lives of young people in Valmiera. Facilities and youth support services are challenging to provide over a relatively large area with such a sparse population. Limited public transport exacerbates this, leaving young people excluded from opportunities and support.

Schools provide the most important structure for young people, and the city invests a high proportion of its budget (€58.72 million or 47% of total 2024 budget) on education. However, schools cannot do everything, and there is an aspiration to grow the complementary support offered by youth services.

Schools also struggle to recruit staff, especially in key subjects such as physics, chemistry and maths. The ageing workforce amongst teachers is also a concern at the local level¹¹. "The vacancies are primary education teachers, teachers of STEM subjects including chemistry, physics, biology, geography, and mathematics. Support staff are also being sought - a psychologist, a social worker, a special needs teacher and a speech therapist," according to Sandra Purmale, deputy head of the Valmiera Regional Education Board.

A significant 2021 survey of young people (850 responses) highlighted numerous key issues including:

- Lack of opportunities for youth to express their opinions and be heard
- Limited information about available opportunities
- A lack of trusted individuals dealing with youth needs
- Low levels of motivation and interest (attributed to the virtual environment and social situation)
- Insufficient places for constructive leisure activities
- Educational challenges, including school dropouts

The policy context

Valmiera is a relatively new local authority, having been established in 2021 from 8 municipalities all with their own approach to youth.

Youth work is one of Valmiera's development tasks set out in its Sustainable Urban Development programme for 2022-2028. This includes a thematic action programme designed to reduce school dropout rates and enhance educational quality. In line with the national Child Rights Protection Law, a municipal child rights protection programme is being developed, designed to coordinate national, municipal and civil society inputs. This will involve coordinated inputs from education, social services, health care, police and youth work.

Informed by national law, Valmiera municipality involves civil society organisations in service delivery to young people, which is coordinated by the local Youth Affairs Advisory Committee. This body will provide the nucleus of the URBACT Local Group (ULG), as we discuss below.

¹¹ <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/education/08.08.2024-valmiera-struggles-to-tackle-teacher-shortage.a564328/>

Delivery Infrastructure

In relation to young people, Valmiera has a number of existing assets on which it can build and which might be of interest to other WISH CITIES partners. These include wide ranging services offered by the four local youth centres (Valmiera, Rūjiena, Burtnieki and Trikāta) which include:

- A Youth Council (so far only operating in the city centre)
- Day camps
- A volunteering programme
- A Youth Initiative Competition
- A summer employment programme
- Various thematic events in line with EU and global trends related Green Deal, inclusivity and digitalization

Valmiera also runs a youth initiative idea competition which has an open call and a budget of €5750 to support successful projects.



Figure 16: Publicly for the Valmiera young ideas competition

The city offers well-established youth activities. In Valmiera there is the Valmiera Youth Centre "Vinda", which provides education and adult non-formal education classes, and the Valmiera Youth House, where young people can spend their free time, while outside Valmiera there are 5 youth centres - in Rūjiena, Mazsalaca, Naukšēni, Burtnieki and Trikāta, supported by a tradition of highly professional youth work in Latvia. Overall, the structure needs improvements in the whole municipal territory.

State of play on the ULG

Valmiera has an existing Youth Affairs Advisory Committee which involves the key local agencies focused on youth. This includes a mix of local government agencies, education boards and NGOs working with children and young people. This body functions well and the intention is to reorganize this existing group as the Valmiera ULG.

Assets and Barriers to Transfer

The following table summarises Valmiera's assets and barriers in relation to the innovation transfer process:

Valmiera	
Transfer Assets	Transfer Barriers
Committed enthusiastic local team Experience of other EU youth projects Existing framework of youth interventions Political support Personal approach in youth work Access to funding	Very different context from the metropolitan city of Milan Deep structural issues – population sparsity and weak transport links

Conclusion – motivation and areas of interest

Valmiera recognises the issues of youth poverty, segregation and inequality. Its motivation for taking part is to learn from other cities about ways to improve services and, consequently, the wellbeing of its young residents.

Transfer potential measure

Based on the available information and exchanges, the assessment is that Valmiera is medium, in terms of its transfer potential.

2.2.6 Dublin

The city in a nutshell

Located on Ireland's east coast, Dublin is the capital city with a population of 1.2 million. Spanning an area of 115 square kilometres, it is a bustling metropolis surrounded by scenic rural areas, with a population density of around 10,400 people per square kilometre.

Dublin's history dates back over a thousand years, and its rich heritage is reflected in iconic landmarks like Dublin Castle and St. Patrick's Cathedral. The city serves as the country's economic, cultural, and political hub, with key industries including technology, finance, education, and tourism.

Dublin is a dynamic, global city. It boasts a vibrant international community and actively participates in a wide range of European Union and global initiatives, solidifying its position as an influential centre of commerce and innovation.

The snapshot of youth in Dublin City

Dublin is a dynamic city with a youth population of approximately 200,000, making up about 17% of the total population. Historically a hub for commerce, culture, and education, Dublin is increasingly defined by its growing tech sector and innovation-driven economy. This transformation brings a wealth of opportunities for young people, particularly in technology, finance, and creative industries.

However, Dublin faces challenges common to major cities, including youth unemployment and housing affordability. Recent data shows that youth unemployment rates, although improving, remain a concern. Additionally, young people in Dublin are impacted by rising living costs, particularly in the housing market. The city also faces disparities in access to education and social services, with certain areas experiencing higher levels of deprivation. Ensuring that Dublin's youth can access the opportunities brought by its economic growth is a key priority moving forward.

The policy context

Against the backdrop of a rapidly growing and diversifying population, Dublin City has a well-defined commitment to improving the well-being of its young people and ensuring inclusive opportunities for all.

Dublin has been recognised for its progressive social policies and its focus on community-based development. The city has dedicated municipal services aimed at supporting children, adolescents, and young people, including:

- Youth and Community Development Services
- Education and Lifelong Learning Initiatives
- Sports, Arts, and Cultural Inclusion Programs

To foster collaboration and an integrated approach, Dublin City Council actively works with community organizations, NGOs, and educational institutions to address youth needs.

Dublin's youth-focused policy framework is guided by the Dublin City Development Plan and the Children and Young People's Services Plan (CYPSP), both of which emphasize:

- Equitable access to cultural, sports, and recreational facilities for young people
- Enhancing safe and sustainable mobility within the city
- Ensuring youth voices are integrated into local governance and decision-making
- Preventing social exclusion and addressing youth poverty
- Expanding mental health and well-being programs for children and adolescents

Dublin City has a strong tradition of youth participation, supported by initiatives such as:

- **The Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Council)** – a structured platform for young people to contribute to policy discussions.

- **Youth-Led Civic Projects** – engaging young people in shaping public spaces and services.
- **Community and Voluntary Sector Partnerships** – ensuring marginalized youth have a voice in local governance.

Delivery Infrastructure

Dublin City has a well-developed infrastructure supporting youth well-being, with key elements including:

- **The Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme** – a government initiative aimed at addressing health inequalities through targeted community interventions, supporting mental health, physical activity, and social inclusion for young people.
- **Dedicated Community Offices within Dublin City Council**
- **Collaborative partnerships with educational institutions and private sector stakeholders**
- **City-wide youth networks and advocacy groups focused on participation and inclusion**

Challenges and Opportunities



Figure 17: Dublin Youth Council members meeting the City Mayor, source Dublin City Council

While Dublin has made significant progress in youth-focused policy and service provision, challenges remain, including:

- Rising housing costs and urban affordability affecting young people's independence
- Ensuring digital and economic transitions benefit all youth equally
- Adapting best practices from international examples to the local context.

State of play on the ULG

Although Dublin has joined the network quite late, it has previous experience of establishing an URBACT ULG, albeit with a different policy focus. It's well-established framework for youth and children's services should also enable the establishment of its URBACT Local Group.

Assets and Barriers to Transfer

Dublin has several strengths that position it well for innovation transfer and adaptation, alongside some potential barriers that may need to be addressed.

Dublin	
Transfer Assets	Transfer Barriers
Strong political commitment to youth well-being Established youth participation structures Integrated approach to service delivery - Existing experience in cross-sector collaboration Strong data and research ecosystem -	Balancing multiple policy priorities Engagement of marginalized youth A complex governance structure. Resource constraints in certain areas Ensuring effective use of data for policy impact

Conclusion – Learning & Exchange

Dublin is eager to share its experiences and expertise while also learning from other cities in areas such as data-driven youth policy, innovative participation models, and inclusive urban development strategies. The city remains committed to fostering a dynamic, inclusive, and youth-friendly environment that ensures opportunities for all young residents

Transfer potential measure

Dublin has entered the network late, without participating in either the ITN Kick-off or the Network Deep-Dive meetings. This means there is some catching up to do. However, provided the commitment and people resources are in place, the city can bring a wealth of experience to the table, as well as the potential to transfer the learnings from the Milan project.

Section 3: Synthesis, transferability and methodology

3.1 Synthesis and Transferability

Despite the diversity of the network partnership, there is a high degree of synergy amongst these cities both in terms of the challenges faced and the need for innovative solutions. This is summarised in the table below, which shows levels of experience across the network in the different WISH MI modules.

Table 2: Partners experience levels in the network modules							
Module/Partner	Pori	Gaia	Korydallos	Cartagena	Valmiera	Dublin	Milan
Youth co-design	Green	Green	Red	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber
Youth data	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Green
Neighbourhood Hubs	Green	Amber	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green
Ambassadors	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green
Digital portal & catalogue	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Green
Participatory youth budget	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red	Red	Red
Youth Forum	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red

Key: Green = highly experienced, amber = mid experience, red=low experience

The original WISH-MI project was a large-scale well-resourced innovation pilot project. Transfer Partners are not expected to prepare to transfer the model in its entirety, but to adapt those elements that are the best fit for their local challenges. There are high levels of commitment and enthusiasm within the network to do this.

3.2 Network methodology

Before outlining the methodology, it is important to state what it can and should help the network achieve. We identify the three key elements as:

- *Promoting deep learning about the UIA innovative practice*

Throughout the network journey, time will be reserved to explain, discuss and analyse the Milan WISH-MI model. This is not a linear learning journey, so learning loops will be embedded in the methodology to enable partners to frequently check-back on their understanding.

- *Enabling in-depth learning and exchange amongst all partners*

All of the WISH-CITIES partners bring valuable knowledge and experience to the network. Beyond the WISH-MI model, transfer partners bring expertise in relation to co-design with young people, participative budgets, youth councils and one-stop shops. The transnational exchange meetings will provide space to explore these experiences.

- Building the capacity of ULG Co-ordinators and the development of Investment and Continuity Plans

The ULGs are at the heart of the project and Co-ordinators must be supported to engage and sustain the active input of ULG members.

3.2.1: Our Network Principles

The WISH-CITIES methodology is underpinned by a number of key principles:

- *The URBACT method is at the core of our work:* the culture, tools and methods established by the network should inspire transfer partners to embed them in their local activities.
- *Carousel transfer model:* All partners will take part in all of the transnational exchange meetings. The Lead Expert will complement this with bilateral support to the partners
- *Hybrid transnational working:* We share a commitment to reducing carbon emissions, for example by mixing in-person and online meetings, and using URBACT's green-meetings guidance to encourage sustainable behaviours
- *Modularity:* To support the adaptation and transfer process, we will modularise the UIA innovation project to create a set of elements that encourage flexible replication
- *Start with the end in mind:* Throughout the project, partners will be encouraged to reflect on what successful transfer means for them, as well as considering the funding possibilities from the earliest point.

3.2.2 Methodology and Tools

Methodology

Based on these principles, the core components of the WISH-MI methodology are set out in Table X.

Table X: Core Methodology			
Component	Number	Objective	Format
Transnational Exchange Meetings	5	Showcase transfer partner and focus on one specific theme	Interactive two-day in person events – focus on modules and host city assets
Online Network meetings	6	Network management and Lighthouse webinars	Space to invite 3 rd party Lighthouse Cities linked to our modules
Bilateral expert meetings	28 (4 per partner)	Expert support during stages 2 and 3	Online meetings focused on adaptation and Investment/Continuity planning
Programme level activity	4	ITN-wide learning and exchange opportunity	Organised by the URBACT PS
Mid-Term Review	1	Provide a mid-point snapshot of network progress	Survey of partners and peer review session in TEX 3 (Cartagena)

Each component enables the transfer activity and generation of outputs as follows:

Transnational Exchange (TEX) Meetings

TEX meetings will take place over a two-day period, hosted by one of the Transfer partners. Each TEX will focus on one of the WISH-CITIES innovation modules, providing an opportunity to explore them in close detail. These meetings also allow transfer partners to showcase their assets, and each TEX will include a sit visit or activity, highlighting an example of local good practice.

Table 3 sets out the schedule:

Table 3: WISH-CITIES TEX Schedule			
TEX Number	Host	Date	Modular focus
1	Vila Nova de Gaia	May 2025	Participatory Youth Budget Youth Strategy
2	Dublin	September 2025	Youth-led civic projects
3	Cartagena	November 2025	Youth Council
4	Pori	March 2026	Neighbourhood Hubs
5	Milan/Brussels	June/July 2026	Final Event

Each TEX will also provide space to support partner activity in relation to the key stage and to check-in on progress through tools like the peer review.

To improve linkages between the network and local level, partners will be encouraged to invite the most relevant ULG member/s to each TEX, depending on their thematic focus.

Co-designed between the Lead Expert and all partners, the TEX sessions will also include a network management slot and each meeting will generate a summary report.

It is anticipated that between transnational meetings the partners will work with their ULGs to implement their learning and will feedback on progress to the wider network at the following Transnational Meeting.

Online Network Meetings/Lighthouse Webinars

These meetings have three core functions. The first is to provide a regular point of connection between network partners so that continuity is maintained throughout the network journey. The second is to create a window on the wider world, enabling us to invite Lighthouse Cities related to our innovation modules to share their experiences with the network partners.

The potential line up is still under discussion amongst the partners, but potential contributors include:

- Berlin and Rome on use of nature and green spaces as ‘digital-detox’ opportunities for young people

- Rotterdam on the use of mentors and role models for young people
- Glasgow on the role of culture in youth engagement
- Vienna on youth participation and representation
- Barcelona on supporting migrant wellbeing

As a third dimension, the webinars will provide scope to focus on URBACT's cross-cutting themes of Green, Digital and Gender-Equal cities. The webinars will be open to all ITN partners and the network will mobilise Ad-Hoc expertise to support these activities.

Bilateral Expert Meetings

The Lead Expert will provide bilateral support to each partner throughout the course of the network journey. This focal point for this will be four bilateral meetings held approximately:

- Spring 2025 – focus on stakeholder engagement, ULG and early adaptation ideas
- Summer 2025 – focus on adaptation and local experimentation
- Autumn/winter 2025 – focus on Investment/Continuity Planning and funding
- Spring 2026 – focus on finalising the Investment/Continuity Plans

Specific dates will be negotiated in line with each partner's availability.

Expert days will be managed in order to ensure there are enough to provide sufficient guided support around the Investment and Continuity Plans. This important support package will include:

- The development of a bespoke Guidance Note on Investment Plans for the WISH CITIES, with an accompanying template.
- Research around EU strategies and policy agendas that link to the activities of WISH CITIES
- Research around EU and other sources of funding which could be utilised to deliver upon the Investment Plan.
- Advice around using the URBACT method and participatory approach in developing the Investment Plans.
- Support and guidance with developing monitoring and evaluation approaches, including the development of indicators.

Mid-Term Review

The MTR is scheduled for autumn 2025. The process, which will include a survey of partners and an MTR feedback session, scheduled for November 2025, provides a useful opportunity to fine tune the network's operations ahead of the final stage. The network will mobilise Ad-Hoc expertise to support the MTR process.

Tools and inputs

A variety of tools and methods will be employed at appropriate stages of the network journey. These may include URBACT tools such as:

- The Stakeholder Engagement Mapping tool (as the ULGs are being finalised)
- The Newspaper of Tomorrow (future visioning)
- OPERA – to support the development of local experimentation
- The Performance in Policy Making guide to support Investment/Continuity Planning

The Lead Expert will also bring tools from his own wider experience, including the Innovation Transfer Matrix, Back-casting workshops and the peer-review models.

The Innovation Transfer Matrix will be implemented to provide a structure for the adaptation process. This will offer a menu of modules to the partners, enabling them to select and refine those most relevant to their own context. One overarching module will be assigned to all partners (including the Lead Partner) whilst the others will be options, with partners expected to select at least two.

In recognition of the significant experience some transfer partners bring, the Innovation Transfer Matrix will include modules beyond the WISH-MI model. These will be modules which transfer partners have established experience. This will enable the Lead Partner to select from these options as they look to strengthen their own approach.

Table 4: Innovation Transfer Matrix							
Module/Partner	Pori	Gaia	Korydallos	Cartagena	Valmiera	Dublin	Milan
Youth co-design	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Improved youth data	X		X	X	X	X	X
Neighbourhood Hubs	X		X				X
Ambassadors	X	X					
Digital portal & catalogue	X			X			
Participatory youth budget			X			X	X
Youth Forum					X		

An interpretation tool will be developed to support partners to approach the modules. This will utilise some key questions such as:

- Why have we selected this module?
- What does successful transfer look like? Can we visualise this?
- What is the current state of play in our city related to this module?
- How might it be developed at the local level?
- Are there prototyping opportunities?
- What assets can we build on?
- Which key local stakeholders can we mobilise?

- What resources can we bring?
- How will we measure impact?
- What's our pitch?

The Innovation Transfer Matrix will provide a focal point for the initial series of bilateral meetings in February and, collectively, in the online meeting scheduled for mid-April.

3.3. Network roadmap and outputs

The Network Roadmap is illustrated in Figure 18, below. It includes the outputs and all of the activities set out in the description of the methodology.

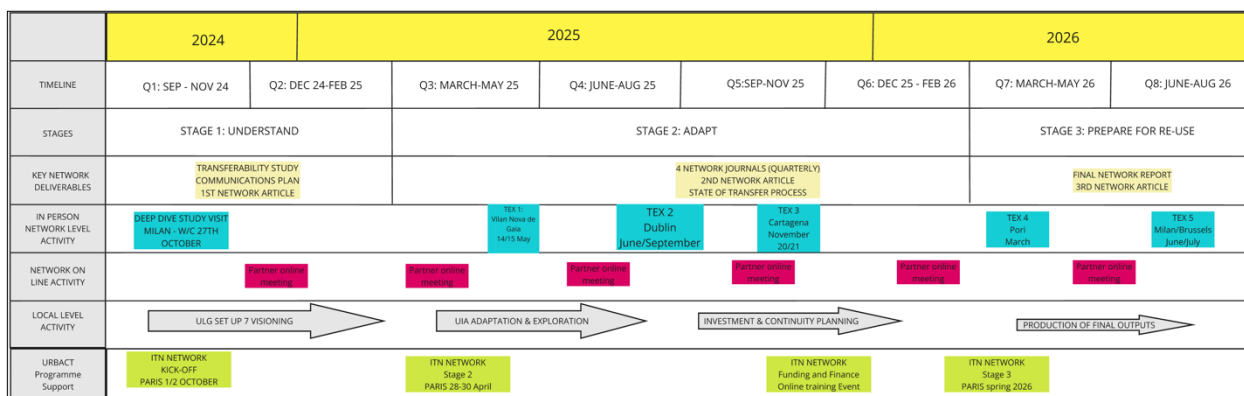


Figure 18

The network outputs are also summarised in the table below:

Table 5: Network output schedule			
Outputs	Quantity	Responsible	Deadline
Transferability Study	1	Lead Expert	End Stage 1
Network Communication Plan	1	Lead Partner	End Stage 1
In person network meetings	5	Lead Partner, Lead Expert & host partner	Throughout the project
Online network meetings	4	Lead Partner and Lead Expert	Throughout the project
Quarterly network journals	3	Lead Expert	Quarters 4-7
Network Articles	3	Lead Expert	1 per stage
Network Final Report	1	Lead Partner and Lead Expert	Final quarter
URBACT Local Group	1 per partner	All partners	End Stage 1
Continuity Plan	1	Lead Partner	Final quarter
Investment Plan	1 per Transfer Partner	Transfer Partners	Final quarter

3.4 Communications and dissemination

The network has produced a Communications Plan to ensure the project's activities and results reach the relevant audiences, which includes policy-makers and practitioners working with children and young people. The network has its own URBACT web page, as well as a presence on Linked in and in addition will mobilise existing partner channels, rather than creating lots of new short-term ones.

Our communication work will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Maximise the dissemination of the network's learning and results at the national and international levels
- Strengthen connections between network partners and stakeholders
- Connect with external stakeholders interested in the project – at EU, national and city level
- Locate the network's activities within the wider urban policy context – utilising channels linked with EUI, Eurocities and other sources
- Build connections with other URBACT ITNs, with which there are synergies