



URBACT



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Interreg

Plan Einstein Academy

URBACT Innovation Transfer Network

Network Journal #4

Jan - Jun 2026

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A. Network recap

‘Plan Einstein’ and ‘Plan Einstein Academy’

Plan Einstein Academy is a two-year URBACT ‘Innovation Transfer Network’ working to transfer Utrecht’s ‘Plan Einstein’ concept to five other European cities.

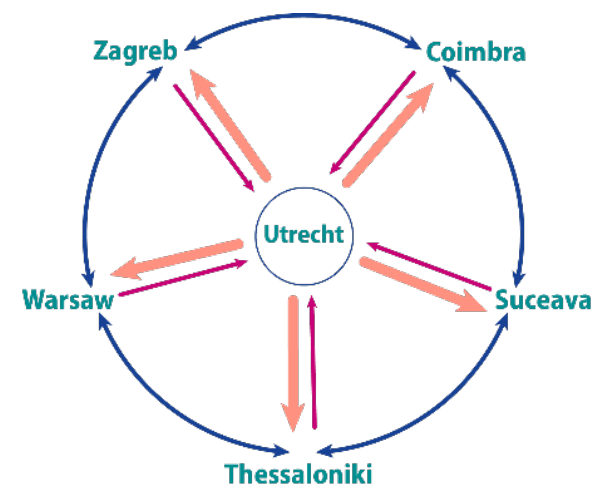
Plan Einstein is an innovative approach to local neighbourhood-level social cohesion bringing diverse local residents together as equals through open welcoming spaces and a diverse range of activities for socio-cultural engagement and personal development.

One of the strengths of Plan Einstein for its transfer is that local implementation can be very flexible. Spaces and activities can be very different from one location to another – so long as the principles of openness and inclusivity are respected.

Plan Einstein may include a co-housing component bringing together newcomers and neighbourhood members. Implementation is best applied through an ecosystem approach – not isolated activities.



The network partnership

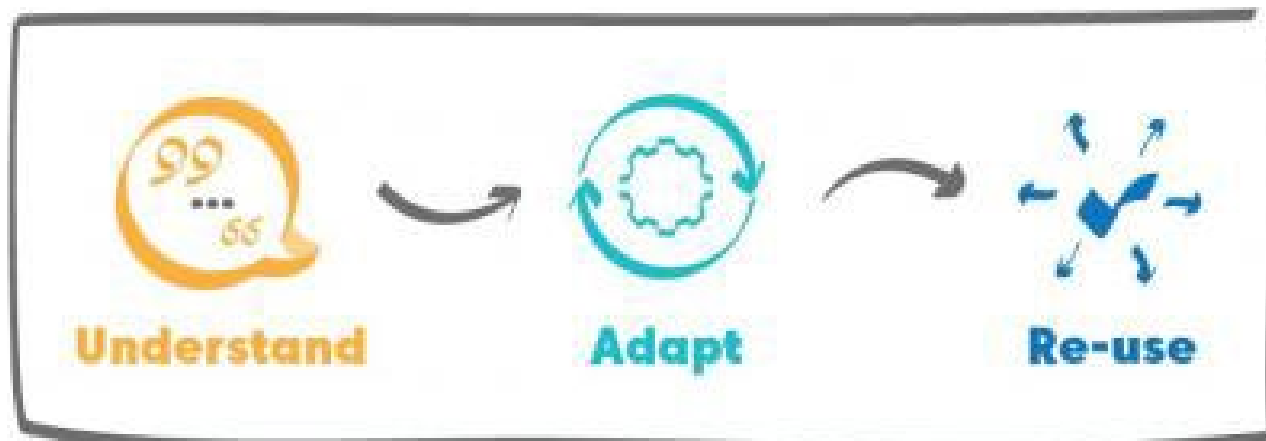


Network journey so far...

The first six months of the network (Sep 2024 - Feb 2025) were the '**Understand Phase**' – focused on building a solid understanding of Utrecht's original innovation - see [Network Journal #1](#).

From March 2025, the Network moved into its '**Adapt Phase**' – where the focus was on exploring how the original innovation could be adapted for implementation in the five partner cities. [Network Journal #2](#) introduced each of the five transfer partner cities and examined their initial ideas and approach for transferring Plan Einstein to their local context. [Network Journal #3](#) then looked at how that thinking was evolving during the course of the project and lessons from some of the testing actions.

In this edition, we find out about the **final plans developed by each partner city**, including the ongoing plans for continuation of Plan Einstein in our original innovation city, Utrecht. We also look at what lessons we have learned as a network about how best to plan the transfer of Plan Einstein to different local contexts.



Key milestones in the period Jan-Jun 2026 (Preparing for Transfer)

1. Online network meeting on ULG developments, 6 Jan 2026
2. Online thematic networking meetings: social entrepreneurship; & funding (TEX7), Jan-Feb 2026
3. Bilateral health checks and Investment Plan review sessions with each partner, Feb 2026
4. In-person network meeting in Coimbra (TEX8), 25-27 Mar 2026
5. Network Final Event in Thessaloniki (TEX9), 24-26 Jun 2026
6. Publication of [second network article](#) focused on the network journey

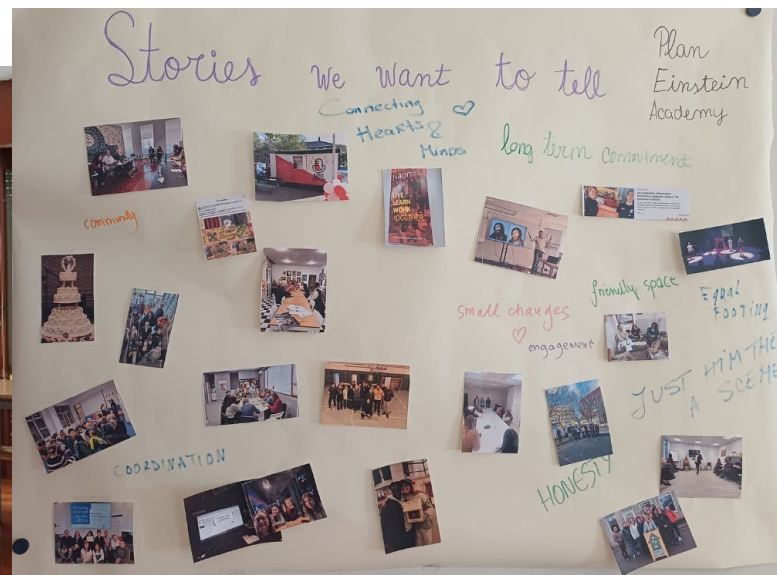


Network partners met in Thessaloniki (Greece) for the final in-person network event in June 2026. It was a moment to celebrate the network journey and share plans for the future.

In-person network meeting in Coimbra, 25-27 March 2026

Network partners came together for a transnational meeting (TEX8) in Coimbra in late March 2026. This 2.5-day meeting notably provided opportunities to:

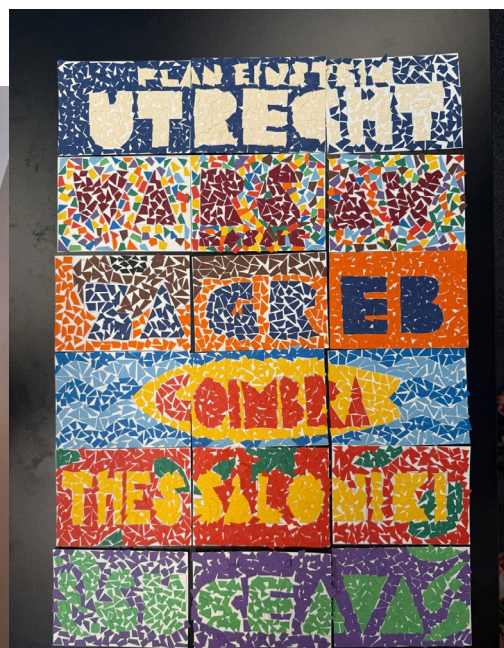
- Conduct Peer Reviews of each partner's emerging Investment Plan.
- Share experiences from the small-scale testing actions.
- Take inspiration from Fundão (URBACT Weldi Network).
- Reflect on the network journey so far & our 'stories to tell'.
- Visit local services and meet local stakeholders in Coimbra.



Final network meeting in Thessaloniki, 24-26 June 2026

Network partners came together for the final transnational meeting (TEX9) in Thessaloniki in late June 2026. This 2.5-day meeting provided a moment to:

- Celebrate the journey of each partner city.
- Experience Plan Einstein-type activities in person.
- Reflect on relevant social housing approaches.
- Visit local services and meet local stakeholders in Thessaloniki.



B. Continuity of Plan Einstein in Utrecht

1. Utrecht

Our Lead Partner city of Utrecht has a clear plan in place to continue the Plan Einstein social innovation.

Plan Einstein as official city policy

Already following the original Urban Innovative Action (UIA), 2016-2019, Plan Einstein became **official policy of the City of Utrecht** – gaining unanimous support in 2019 across the political spectrum. This has meant that – even though the original pilot location needed to close at the end of the UIA project – the city had already established more than one Plan Einstein location before the URBACT Plan Einstein Academy started.

Continuity Plan overview

The Continuity Plan contains three main elements:

1. Maintaining existing Plan Einstein locations.
2. Creating new Plan Einstein locations.
3. Reinforcing the supportive Plain Einstein ecosystem.

Maintaining existing Plan Einstein locations

Utrecht is committed to maintaining the four Plan Einstein locations created 2019-2024 for as long as possible.

1. Plan Einstein Haydn: an attractive, open space for meaningful encounters set up from 2019 in a loft space next to Utrecht's longest standing refugee shelter.



2. Plan Einstein Pahud: a reception facility with co-housing and shared indoor and outdoor spaces created in 2023 through a partnership with the national reception agency (COA).

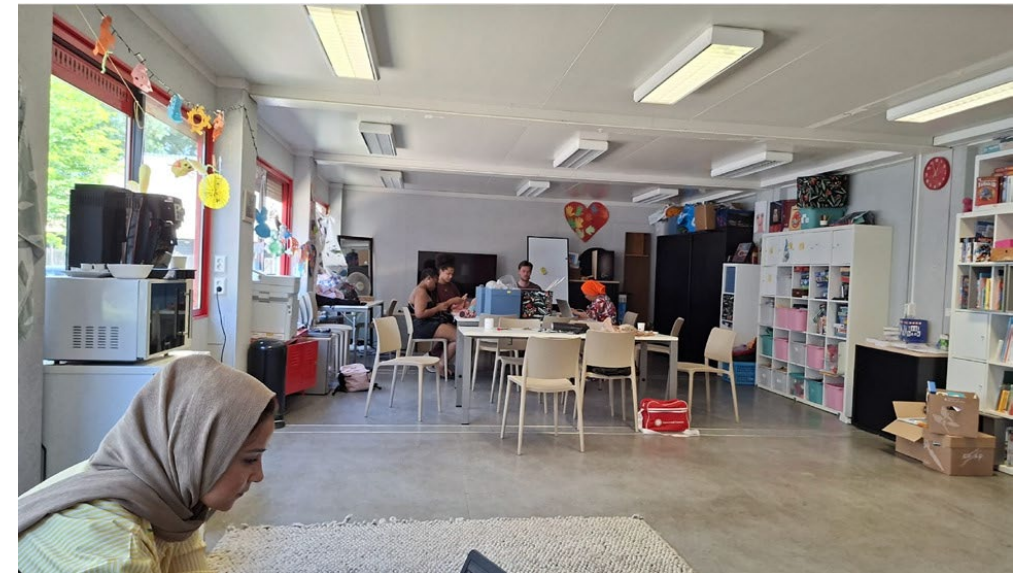


Maintaining existing Plan Einstein locations

3. Plan Einstein Hercules: an attractive, open space for meaningful encounters in a neighbourhood where lots of Ukrainian refugees are housed was opened in 2024.



4. Plan Einstein Star Lodge: a small open, welcoming space for meaningful encounters was created at the existing reception centre located at Biltsestraatweg.

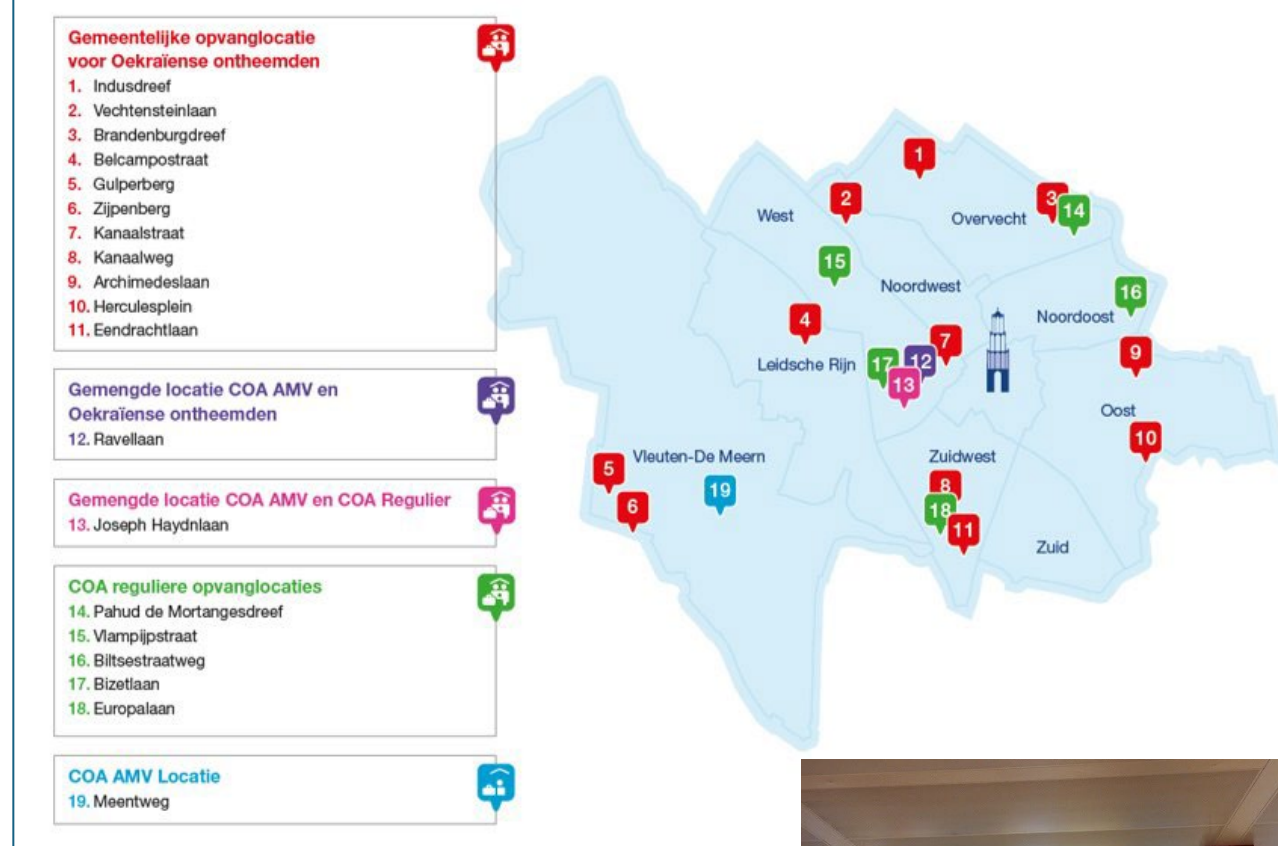


Creating new Plan Einstein locations

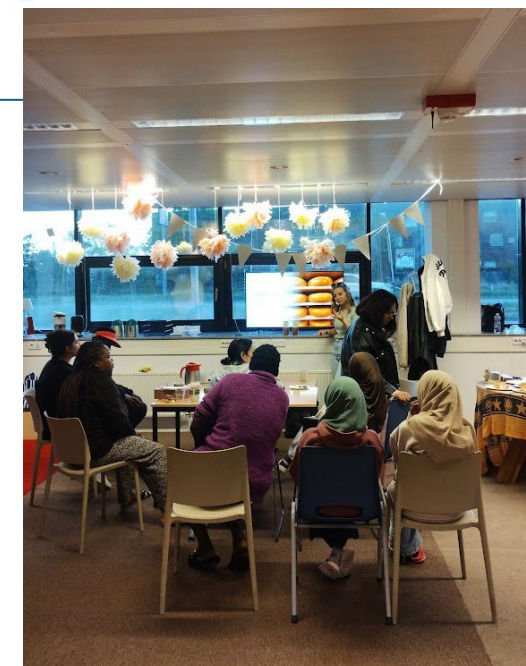
Utrecht aims to continue rolling out the Plan Einstein philosophy across its network of reception facilities (shown on the map, right).

Already during the course of the project, it opened two more Plan Einstein locations.

Plan Einstein Vlampijpstraat is a new temporary reception centre opened for three years in May 2025. It includes a small free open space where many activities take place.



Plan Einstein Europalaan: a new reception facility only for women and children was opened with an initial capacity of 130 people. Ongoing work aims to increase capacity to 330 people and to develop a more open, welcoming space for meaningful encounters.



Reinforcing the supportive Plain Einstein ecosystem

Beyond the creation of ever more Plan Einstein locations, the city aims to expand and reinforce the **ecosystem of community actors delivering inclusive activities for both social networking and personal development purposes**. These take place both within the Plan Einstein locations set out on the previous pages and in partner premises, creating a **network of Plan Einstein ‘hubs’** across the city.

Call for Tender: Launched by the City of Utrecht in 2026 to support activities to implement the Plan Einstein approach focused both on social networking and personal development. This seeks to empower community actors to deliver what is needed within their neighbourhoods, rather than attempting to plan everything centrally.

Stakeholder consultations: Twice a year, meetings will be organised with all the partners in the Plan Einstein ecosystem to identify needs, explore new ideas and reflect on opportunities and challenges.

Steering Group: A Plan Einstein Steering Group – representing a continuation of the URBACT Local Group – will continue to meet every month to oversee the implementation of Plan Einstein activities and ensure that the principles of the approach are being respected.

Innovation Group: A small group – including representatives of the City of Utrecht and Utrecht University – will meet regularly to identify strategic opportunities to take Plan Einstein forward, including internationally.

C. Partner Cities' Local Transfer Plans

1. Zagreb (HR)

Transferring Plan Einstein to a pilot neighbourhood

Zagreb's immediate plan is to **implement the Plan Einstein philosophy in the pilot neighbourhood of Travno** - selected due to its proximity to the Porin Reception Centre and its existing network of community actors.

The intention is to create **three open welcoming spaces** for meaningful encounters in Travno and the surrounding area in: a cultural centre; a library; and an intercultural social centre. These will host an increasing **variety of inclusive activities** to support social encounters and personal development of all – from language and entrepreneurship classes, to an intercultural choir and fashion shows.

To increase the coherence and impact of the approach, the **neighbourhood stakeholder group** established under the project will continue and, increasingly, leadership will pass from the Municipality to the neighbourhood actors themselves.

Zagreb also incorporated **Plan Einstein into its new 5-year integration programme** and has the medium-term ambition of rolling out the approach across the city, including the strategic decision to decentralise its new Welcome Centre for migrants & refugees.



2. Thessaloniki (EL)

Creation of a local Living Lab

Thessaloniki's approach to the transfer of Plan Einstein is based around the **creation of a 'Living Lab' in the target neighbourhood of Giannitson** – selected for its dense residential fabric, social mix and as the location of the Blue Solidarity Centre (previously Blue Refugee Center).

The Living Lab seeks to engage diverse local actors in an **incremental process of developing and expanding inclusive activities** as they build their confidence, capacity and ambition. A school will provide the local anchor for neighbourhood activities also engaging residents, parents, pupils and local civil society associations.

Next steps are to **stabilise and maintain the community garden** developed as a testing action during the project, explore additional spaces and ideas, and secure micro-funding for new activities. The intention is to gradually strengthen coordination mechanisms and activate additional spaces, with **regular low-threshold inclusive activities**.

Ultimately, the aim is to demonstrate the durability and impact of an empowered local approach to fostering social cohesion and explore **replication in other neighbourhoods**.





3. Warsaw (PL)

A new network of welcoming spaces

Warsaw's approach to the transfer of Plan Einstein has been to create a **network of five nearby welcoming spaces in the heart of the city**: a Multicultural Centre funded by the City and run by an NGO; the Intercultural Centre for Social Development run by the City; two Neighbourhood Activity Places (MALs) established under the Warsaw2030 Strategy; and a community cafe run by a refugee.

The five host locations have joined together to present their offer of **inclusive activities under a common platform** – and to enhance communication and coordination between them to make better use of existing resources and maximise their positive impact.

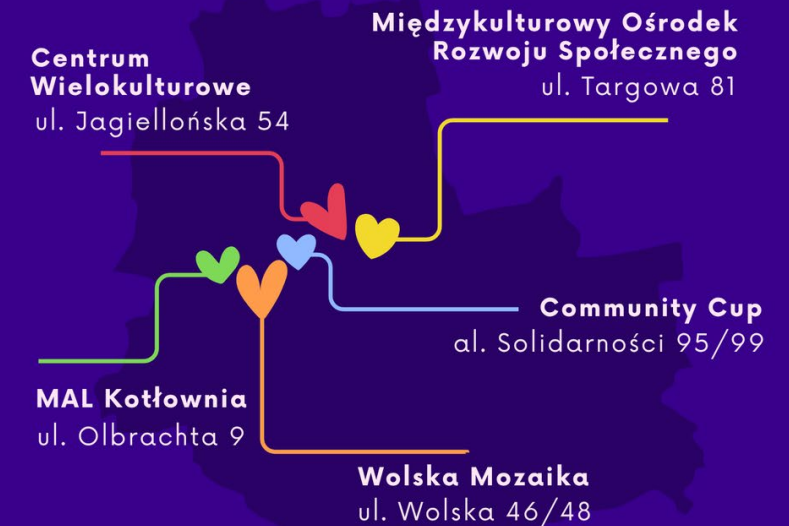
Further plans include: targeted improvements of the five locations to enhance their qualities as open, welcoming spaces; **regular activities aimed at promoting personal & professional development of all**; and communication and promotion activities to increase awareness of the available spaces, activities and the overall Plan Einstein approach.

Plan Einstein Academy in Warsaw



Discover places in Warsaw that welcome connection and meaningful encounters. Scan the QR code to see current events.

welcoming places



4. Coimbra (PT)

A Social Investment Plan

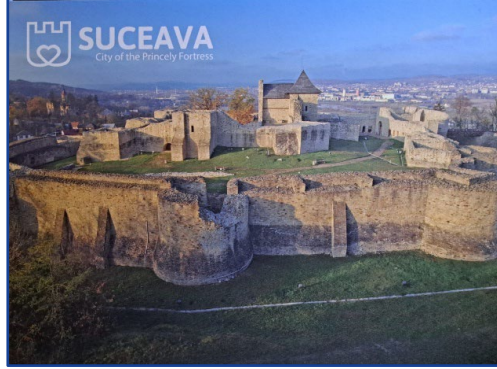
The Intermunicipal Community of Coimbra Region's approach is based on making a “long-term commitment to strengthening the social foundations that make inclusion possible”. Rather than one-off projects or activities, its Investment Plan is focused on **mobilising partnerships, municipal capacities, community resources and existing initiatives** to build something more coherent and impactful.

Efforts to strengthen intermunicipal cooperation, partnerships and shared learning around the Plan Einstein philosophy include the creation of a **living repository of inclusive practices** across the region to share and inspire. Various **governance bodies** have been confirmed to ensure both regional oversight, and cooperation and exchange between municipalities and other stakeholders.

Coimbra also worked to support long-term implementation of the Plan Einstein philosophy by **integrating inclusion priorities into new Migrant Integration Plans** at both intermunicipal and municipal levels. This has provided measures to enable and support the kinds of open, inclusive activities that Plan Einstein promotes.

Another key strand is **communication to promote inclusive mindsets** through positive narratives and dialogue.





5. Suceava (RO)

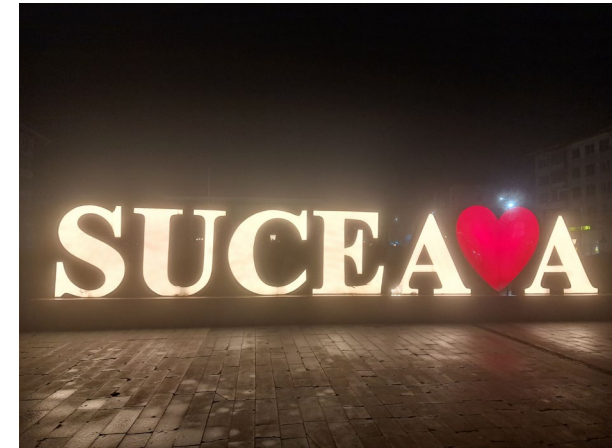
New spaces for meaningful encounters

In Suceava, the priority actions are the development of open, welcoming spaces for meaningful encounters in the city. Notably, the Municipality is planning to restore and **convert a disused space in the town centre** into such a location.

They are also aiming to **adapt part of a multifunctional centre** built with European regional development funding into an open welcoming space in the Itcani neighbourhood outside the city centre.

The plan is to fill these spaces with **diverse personal development and socio-cultural activities** aimed at all-comers from the local areas. The organisation of such actions is supported by the **maintenance of the local stakeholder group** (ULG) following signature of a formal agreement between representatives of local administrative institutions, sectoral agencies, NGOs and key migrant communities.

They are also exploring ideas around how to incorporate Plan Einstein into mainstream cultural activities, such as **more inclusive programming in local museums and the theatre** and encouraging more inclusive approaches within local sports clubs.



D. Messages for other cities

What have we learned about Plan Einstein?

Through the course of the network exchanges, visits and discussions, we have continued to refine our understanding of what Plan Einstein is and how to communicate it to others. Key messages and concepts are:

- ☐ Plan Einstein is more than a migrant inclusion project; it is an innovative model of community-based social cohesion that **aims to benefit all residents in any local** area – not targeted sub-groups.
- ☐ Plan Einstein is best conceived as a **neighbourhood-based approach** to support social cohesion (see “the benefits of a neighbourhood-based approach” below).
- ☐ Plan Einstein promotes meaningful encounters between all people living locally and **opportunities for the personal development of all**. It is about facilitating a natural process of social transformation.
- ☐ Plan Einstein **can contain a co-housing component**, but it is not an absolute requirement.
- ☐ Plan Einstein requires **engaging as broad a range of local stakeholders as possible in an ecosystem**. As well as socially minded NGOs, it is helpful to engage libraries, schools, sports clubs, cultural associations and other bodies already active in the local community to see how their activities can be opened up.

What have we learned about transferring Plan Einstein?

- ✓ Plan Einstein is **relevant for any city** regardless of size, or level of economic development. Adaptability to specific local contexts is built into the fundamental principles of the approach.
- ✓ Plan Einstein is **flexible enough to be applied to vastly different neighbourhood community profiles** – whether in the context of a refugee reception centre or a neighbourhood where the only newcomers are there for economic or lifestyle reasons.
- ✓ Implementing Plan Einstein can often be about **rethinking existing activities and spaces** to make them more open and inclusive – as much as creating totally new activities and opening up totally new spaces.
- ✓ It is usually possible to find Plan Einstein-type activities already taking place within a city or neighbourhood. However, **implementing Plan Einstein is about turning what are often isolated, ad hoc activities into something more integrated, coherent and impactful** through an ecosystem approach.
- ✓ As well as specific activities, cities can also usefully think about **how to create an enabling environment for local Plan Einstein approaches** – e.g. ensuring that policy and funding support inclusive activities rather than forcing projects to focus on individual ‘target groups’ separately.

The benefits of a neighbourhood-based approach

Adopting a neighbourhood-based approach to the transfer of Plan Einstein provides numerous benefits, which are relevant for any city to take into account. Notably, it:

- ✓ Enables working with and engaging a **highly diverse set of local community actors** – including actors whose activities within the community are already funded and/or already enjoy active local participation.
- ✓ Supports the creation of **meaningful encounters at the level that is *most* meaningful** – within the communities and neighbourhoods in which people live.
- ✓ Offers a means of **more clearly identifying and addressing real local needs** in ways that can build and attract broad public support and engagement of a diverse local community.
- ✓ Makes it **easier to plan a more coherent, tangible and integrated set of local actions** – rather than a broad but disparate set of actions dispersed too thinly across the city as a whole.
- ✓ Offers the **promise of producing demonstrable change in targeted neighbourhoods** as a showcase for other parts of the city – as has been the case in the original good practice city of Utrecht.

E. Final steps and Network outputs

Final activities of the network

With a view to a) successfully concluding the network; b) maintaining momentum and progress in the partner cities beyond the network; and c) spreading awareness of the value and potential of the Plan Einstein approach in other cities beyond the network partnership, the following final activities and steps are foreseen:

- ✓ Development of an extended partnership and submission of a **new network application** under the 2026 URBACT Call for 'Action Networks'.
- ✓ Finalisation of **each Transfer Partner's local Investment Plan**
- ✓ Finalisation of **Utrecht's Continuity Plan**
- ✓ Publication of a **Network Final Output** presenting Plan Einstein and the approach to transfer adopted by each city partner with key messages for transfer
- ✓ Publication of a short **compendium of Plan Einstein-type inclusive activities** to inspire local actors.
- ✓ A **final network video** presenting Plan Einstein and the story of each city partner
- ✓ Publication of the **final network article** highlighting the potential transfer of Plan Einstein to other cities across Europe and the available network outputs.