

RE:START

Boosting the attractiveness
of mid-sized cities

URBACT



Co-funded by
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Interreg



Communication Plan

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Introduction

RE:START is a URBACT Transfer Network focused on boosting the attractiveness of mid-sized cities. The network builds on Idanha-a-Nova's [Portugal] good practice in reversing depopulation and creating new pathways for growth, with innovative place branding acting as a catalyst for change. Alongside Idanha-a-Nova, the transfer partners are Jonadi [Italy], Loutraki [Greece], Marina Alta Functional Area [Spain], Nyborg [Denmark] and Khotyn [Ukraine].

The project brings together a number of current policy concepts, including talent attraction and retention, rural innovation, the 'right to stay' and place-based transformation.

Communication Objectives

The central aim of the RE:START communication strategy is to ensure the coherent, structured and effective promotion of the project, thereby strengthening its visibility at both local and European levels.

Main goals:

- Disseminate “Recomeçar Idanha” as a transferable international benchmark initiative;
- Raise awareness of place attractiveness as an overarching and integrated policy concept;
- Disseminate the new knowledge generated throughout the 30-month project;
- Maintain stakeholder engagement in partner cities and make the main project outputs and results accessible and understandable to citizens;
- Support partners in engaging regional and national authorities, where this contributes to their transfer and improvement plans;
- Promote and actively contribute to a Europe-wide conversation on the attractiveness of mid-sized cities.

Local Level

At local level, encompassing local, regional and national dimensions, the communication strategy is based on proximity and the direct involvement of communities and stakeholders in each partner context. The main objective is to build local ownership of the project's activities and results, while promoting active participation and raising awareness among communities.

In this context, the aim is to:

- Inform citizens about the project's initiatives, activities and results;
- Promote the involvement of local stakeholders in the processes developed;
- Strengthen coordination with local public bodies, supporting decision-making processes and the implementation of policies aligned with the project's objectives;

- Ensure clear, accessible and inclusive communication by producing tailored materials and using digital tools with a low environmental impact;
- Disseminate project activities through local, regional and national media, as well as through events and community-based initiatives;
- Maintain stakeholder engagement in partner cities and make the main project outputs and results accessible and understandable to citizens;
- Support partners in engaging regional and national authorities, where this contributes to their transfer and improvement plans.

Transnational Level

At transnational level, the main communication objective is to ensure integrated and consistent dissemination of the project across the European partnership, while promoting cooperation, knowledge sharing and the development of learning networks.

In this context, the aim is to:

- Ensure consistency in the visual and communication identity of the RE:START Transfer Network;
- Promote the dissemination of results, activities and good practices to national and European bodies;
- Enhance the project's visibility through partners' institutional channels, URBACT networks and national contact points;
- Facilitate the flow of information between transnational partners, ensuring coordinated and continuous communication;
- Develop accessible and inclusive content in English, subsequently adapted to the linguistic and local context of each partner;
- Promote institutional and media relations through press releases, promotional events and communication activities targeting local, national and international media;
- Disseminate "Recomeçar Idanha" as a transferable international benchmark initiative;

- Raise awareness of place attractiveness as an overarching and integrated policy concept;
- Disseminate the new knowledge generated throughout the 30-month project;
- Promote and actively contribute to a Europe-wide conversation on the attractiveness of mid-sized cities.

Target Audience

This communication plan distinguishes between two main audience levels: local and transnational. This distinction allows messages, channels and communication objectives to be tailored more precisely to the characteristics of each group, thereby increasing the effectiveness of dissemination and stakeholder engagement.

Local Level

Communication at local level plays a key role, as it is the main means of disseminating and promoting the project's activities, results and achievements among stakeholders in each partner city. It should be direct, clear and focused on making information accessible.

Main target audiences:

- Local administration, particularly city officers, elected representatives and public bodies beyond the project coordination team;
- Local stakeholders, particularly those involved in ULG activities;
- Citizens.

Depending on each partner's local context, these broader audiences may be further segmented so that messages and channels can be adapted more precisely. Relevant groups may include:

- Young people;
- Businesses and entrepreneurs;
- Potential new residents and talent;
- Educational institutions;
- Local organisations, associations and ULG members;
- Local and regional media.

Each partner should prioritise the groups that are most relevant to its own attractiveness challenges, transfer process and communication objectives.

Transnational Level

At transnational level, the communication plan aims to strengthen knowledge sharing, disseminate good practices and promote cooperation networks between countries and regions. Transnational communication also helps raise the profile of the project in broader contexts and supports its strategic positioning at European level.

Main target audiences:

- Non-partner cities potentially interested in the conversation promoted by RE:START;
- The URBACT Programme and other EU territorial cooperation programmes;
- Other EU bodies and initiatives, such as the Harnessing Talent Platform and the Rural Pact, as well as international organisations such as the OECD.

Defining these target audiences enables the communication strategy to be applied in a coherent and segmented manner, ensuring that messages remain relevant and reinforcing the project's impact at both local and transnational levels.

Key Messages

Key messages are a central element of the RE:START communication strategy. They provide a common framework for communicating the project's values, objectives and strategic priorities, while helping partners maintain a consistent narrative across different audiences, channels and local contexts.

Retaining people – creating the conditions for residents to stay, build their future locally and contribute to the long-term vitality of their territories.

Attracting talent – positioning cities and territories as places of opportunity, innovation and new beginnings, capable of attracting and retaining people, skills and investment.

Developing the region – supporting local revitalisation by fostering entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives, strengthening local assets and creating new pathways for sustainable development.

Tagline – *Boosting the attractiveness of mid-sized cities*

Boilerplate – RE:START is a URBACT-funded Transfer Network focused on boosting the attractiveness of mid-sized cities. The network builds on the experience of Idanha-a-Nova [Portugal] in reversing depopulation and creating new pathways for growth, with innovative place branding as a key driver of change. Alongside Idanha-a-Nova, the transfer partners are Jonadi [Italy], Loutraki [Greece], Marina Alta Functional Area [Spain], Nyborg [Denmark] and Khotyn [Ukraine].

The project explores place attractiveness as an integrated policy approach for cities and territories facing stagnation, decline or transition. It examines how attractiveness can act as a catalyst for change, helping cities define clearer directions, mobilise stakeholders and develop stronger value propositions for residents, talent, visitors and investment.

Reusable public-facing messages

To complement these strategic messages, partners may use and adapt a shorter set of messages for social media, presentations, press releases and other public-facing communication materials:

- RE:START helps mid-sized cities become more attractive places to live, work, invest and build a future.
- Attractiveness is not only about bringing people in; it is also about creating the conditions for residents and talent to stay.
- Six European territories are working together to learn from Idanha-a-Nova's experience and adapt tested approaches to different local realities.
- Local identity, stakeholder involvement and innovative place branding can open new pathways for sustainable growth.

These formulations are intended as practical, reusable communication messages. They may be adapted to different audiences and local contexts, provided that the core meaning and overall RE:START narrative are preserved.

Strategic messages by target audience

Strategic message	Main target audiences
Breaking stagnation or decline is possible when communities collectively rethink how they see themselves, strengthen their identity and communicate their ambitions more effectively. This approach can also help cities in transition define a clearer and more consistent direction.	Citizens; City officers; Local stakeholders
Current trends can create new opportunities for mid-sized cities and rural areas to attract and retain population and investment. These include workforce mobility, flexible working arrangements, changing lifestyles, rural innovation and other enabling policy frameworks at European level.	City officers; Other non-partner cities
The experience of Idanha-a-Nova provides a tested reference for small and mid-sized cities seeking to create new and better-focused pathways for growth across different territorial contexts, from remote rural areas to intermediate regions.	Other non-partner cities; URBACT and EU bodies
Place attractiveness is an overarching and integrated policy concept that can help cities develop meaningful value propositions for different target groups — residents, visitors, investors and talent — while building connections between them. Attractiveness is also about the capacity to retain people, skills and investment.	URBACT and EU bodies
Boosting city attractiveness is a collective and organisational challenge. Meaningful, action-oriented stakeholder involvement is therefore essential to achieving lasting results.	City officers; Elected representatives; Local stakeholders

Strategic message	Main target audiences
Innovative place branding can act as a catalyst for change. It goes beyond visual identity and promotional campaigns: it is a way of understanding, strengthening and communicating local identity, values and ambitions in a more compelling and coherent manner.	City officers; Other non-partner cities; URBACT and EU bodies
Strong political endorsement is essential to build and sustain momentum throughout the process.	Elected representatives
Because place attractiveness requires an integrated approach, it may also require closer coordination between municipal departments and, where appropriate, organisational adjustments within local government.	Elected representatives; City officers
Creating new pathways for growth and developing outward-looking visions and communication strategies can help small and mid-sized cities contribute to more balanced territorial development at regional and national levels. Given the limited resources of many smaller municipalities, coordination and support from other levels of government can make a significant difference.	Regional and national governments

Needs and Challenges

The implementation of the RE:START communication strategy must take account of the challenges arising from the project's transnational context. The territorial, cultural and institutional diversity of the partner cities requires a flexible and inclusive approach that can respond to the specific characteristics of each local context.

Key challenges include language barriers and differences in the interpretation of messages and communication content arising from cultural and organisational diversity. Communication should therefore remain clear, accessible and consistent across the network, while allowing partners to adapt content to local realities and the needs of different target audiences.

To maximise reach and engagement, partners are encouraged to use a diverse mix of communication channels, formats and approaches, selecting those most appropriate to their local audiences and communication environments.

As the project progresses, the communication strategy should remain responsive to emerging trends, changing public discourse and developments in the media landscape. Regular reviews of communication practices, messages, formats and channels will help ensure that communication remains relevant, engaging and aligned with the expectations and needs of the project's target audiences.

Common network content will normally be prepared in English. Partners may translate, contextualise and adapt this content to their own local priorities, audiences and communication channels. Such adaptation should preserve factual accuracy, the project's objectives and core messages, the common RE:START identity, and the applicable URBACT and EU communication and visibility requirements.

Communication Channels and Tools

The RE:START communication strategy is based on the coordinated use of different communication channels and tools. These have been selected to reflect the diversity of the identified target audiences while ensuring consistent institutional communication across the partnership.

RE:START mini-website at the URBACT portal

The primary institutional channel for publicising the project. It will serve as the project's "business card" and as a repository for the main deliverables, accessible to anyone interested. The LP will take the lead in keeping the content up to date.

Useful links

RE:START mini-website at the URBACT portal: <https://urbact.eu/networks/restart>

URBACT programme website: <https://urbact.eu/>

RE:START on LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the largest professional social media network. The main purpose of the RE:START LinkedIn page is to share progress and key findings with audiences interested in boosting the attractiveness of mid-sized cities, including city practitioners, experts and organisations. The page will also share relevant news, events and reports from beyond the project, helping to stimulate a wider conversation on the topic.

Partners will play a key role in promoting the page and attracting followers from their local, regional and national networks. When publishing relevant content, partners are strongly encouraged to tag the RE:START LinkedIn page (@URBACT RE:START) from their own accounts.

RE:START visual identity

The RE:START signature is not a standalone logo. It is a visual lock-up combining the project name and tagline with the URBACT and EU identity. Partners should use the official visual assets provided for the project and follow the applicable URBACT and EU communication and visibility requirements.



Partner cities' institutional channels

Partner cities' institutional channels, including municipal websites, social media networks, newsletters and other local communication platforms, will play a key role in disseminating RE:START activities, results and messages to local audiences.

Partners may translate and adapt common network content to their own local context, target audiences and communication practices. This may include adjustments to wording, examples, emphasis, format and channel mix, provided that factual accuracy, the agreed RE:START key messages, the common visual identity and the applicable URBACT/EU communication requirements are preserved.

This flexibility is intended to ensure that communication remains locally relevant and effective while maintaining a coherent and recognisable RE:START identity across the network.

Local media relations

Periodic press releases will report on project milestones and progress at both network and local level.

Meet the Press encounters

At least one Meet the Press encounter should be organised each year to keep local media informed about the project's goals, local work plan, achievements and the city's participation in transnational meetings and activities. These encounters also provide an opportunity to explain the value of the city's participation in the URBACT network.

Hosting a RE:START transnational event provides a particularly good opportunity to organise one of these encounters, including as part of the RE:START meeting agenda. This allows local media to experience the network dynamic and interview representatives from other partner cities.

Lead Expert articles

Three short articles will be published on the project mini-website over the course of the project.

Participation in related external events

To extend the reach of the URBACT transfer journey and connect with relevant platforms and projects beyond the URBACT framework, the LP and LE will seek to participate actively as contributors in at least one relevant international event related to city attractiveness, on behalf of RE:START.

RE:START videos

A set of short videos in which RE:START cities and their stakeholders share their experience of laying the foundations for a more effective approach to place attractiveness, drawing inspiration from both Idanha-a-Nova's good practice and the URBACT method.

Each partner city will produce a short video (maximum 3 minutes) showcasing the work undertaken at local level, particularly stakeholder mobilisation through the ULG. The videos will be shown at the RE:START final ScaleUp event in 2028. In due course, the LP and LE will provide a short common guide for video production.

Ad-hoc graphic design and layout for key project deliverables

Key deliverables, from the Transferability Study to the Transfer and Improvement Plans, will receive appropriate graphic design and layout to strengthen their communication value and outreach.

Common communication workflow and editorial calendar

The Lead Partner (LP) will maintain a shared editorial calendar covering the main project milestones, planned network-level content, expected local communication actions, publication windows and responsibilities. Specific publication dates and content requirements will be confirmed in the shared calendar as each milestone approaches.

The following workflow will be used as a common reference for the main project milestones. T refers to the date of the relevant event or milestone.

Communication window	Lead Partner (LP)	Lead Expert (LE)	Partner cities
T-15 working days	Share the communication brief, key messages, available visual assets and provisional publication schedule.	Provide the main learning angle and relevant technical or thematic input.	Identify the local communication angle and target audiences, and begin translation, adaptation and local media or stakeholder planning.
T-7 working days	Confirm final common assets, tagging conventions and network-level publication timing.	Review key technical or thematic content where required.	Finalise and schedule local announcements and undertake relevant media and stakeholder outreach.
Event / milestone	Coordinate network-level communication and collect relevant content, visuals and partner contributions.	Contribute key insights, messages or quotes linked to the learning process.	Publish relevant local and, where appropriate, live content; use the agreed hashtags and cross-tag RE:START and other partners when relevant.
By T+5 working days	Collect partner links, selected visuals and communication outputs for network follow-up.	Provide key takeaways and synthesis input where relevant.	Publish local follow-up content and provide the LP with links, selected visuals and available basic communication results.

Communication window	Lead Partner (LP)	Lead Expert (LE)	Partner cities
By T+10 working days	Publish or update the network recap, mini-website and editorial calendar, where applicable.	Support the synthesis and communication of key learning and results.	Amplify the network recap through local channels and provide available communication metrics.

Minimum communication expectations

For each major project milestone, partner cities are expected, where relevant, to carry out at least:

- one local pre-event or promotional communication action;
- one local follow-up communication action;
- cross-tagging and cross-promotion of RE:START and partner content, where appropriate;
- timely provision to the LP of relevant links, selected visual material and available basic communication metrics.

RE:START Timetable

As far as possible, the main communication outputs will be synchronised with the following transnational events, which serve as key project milestones:

Network Activation Meeting. Idanha-a-Nova [PT], 24–25 March 2026. The first in-person gathering provided an immersive learning experience focused on Idanha-a-Nova's approach to reversing depopulation and its connection with rural innovation.

Workshop on Innovative Place Branding. Nyborg [DK], 17–18 June 2026. As innovative place branding lies at the heart of Recomeçar Idanha, the workshop explored its meaning and scope, with practical content on transformational narratives, imagery, city target groups and the communication mix.

Webinar Series. October 2026–January 2027. A series of webinars on topics related to place attractiveness, selected by the partner cities, such as next-generation workplaces in small and mid-sized cities, innovative housing solutions, approaches to digital nomads and cultural transformation.

Transfer Clinic. Marina Alta [ES], 23–24 February 2027. Focused on the organisational aspects needed to embed place attractiveness as an approach and function within city government, including skills, breaking down departmental silos, multilevel governance, funding coordination and leadership.

Peer-Review Workshop. Jonadi [IT], May 2027. A peer-learning exercise focused on reviewing early drafts of the Transfer and Improvement Plans, combining workshop-based and follow-up tasks and activities.

Key Study Visit. October 2027. A study visit to another successful experience, beyond Idanha-a-Nova, designed to enrich the transfer process and further develop the RE:START approach to place attractiveness.

ScaleUp Final Event. Loutraki [EL], March 2028. Partners and invited cities will showcase their experiences of boosting attractiveness and adapting and reusing Idanha-a-Nova's good practice. The event will take stock of RE:START's learning and results. It is also hoped that, by then, the event can celebrate the end of the war in Ukraine together with our partner Khotyn.

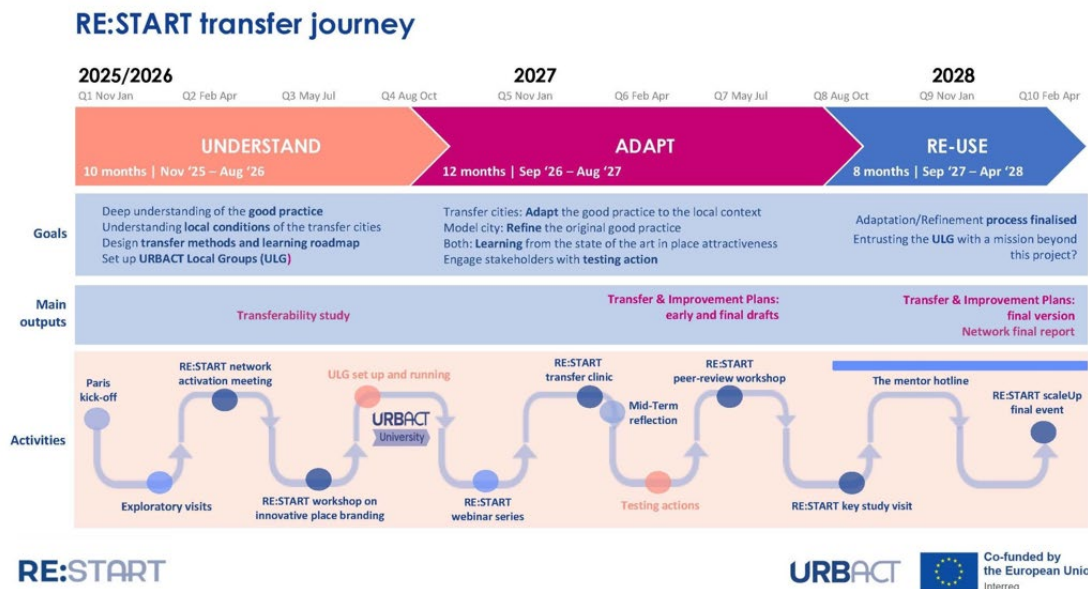
Communication timeline linked to project milestones

The common communication workflow set out above will be applied to the main RE:START project milestones. Specific publication dates, content requirements and responsibilities will be confirmed in the shared editorial calendar as each milestone approaches.

The first two transnational meetings are included as completed reference milestones, providing useful examples and communication outputs that can inform the coordination of future activities.

Project milestone	Date / period	Communication approach
Network Activation Meeting – Idanha-a-Nova	24–25 March 2026	Completed reference milestone. Launch and follow-up content, visual material and lessons learnt may be used as examples for future coordinated communication across the network.
Workshop on Innovative Place Branding – Nyborg	17–18 June 2026	Completed reference milestone. Existing communication outputs may be used as examples of cross-promotion, partner engagement and local adaptation of common content.
Webinar Series	October 2026 – January 2027	Apply the common communication workflow to each webinar, including advance promotion, local adaptation by partners, coordinated tagging and cross-promotion, follow-up communication and collection of basic communication metrics.
Transfer Clinic – Marina Alta	23–24 February 2027	Apply the common workflow, with particular attention to local and media promotion, partner contributions and a network-level recap highlighting the main learning outcomes.
Peer-Review Workshop – Jonadi	May 2027	Apply the common workflow, with emphasis on peer-learning, partner contributions, progress on Transfer and Improvement Plans and the communication of relevant review outcomes.
Key Study Visit	October 2027	Apply the common workflow and use coordinated cross-promotion to connect the host or visited territory, RE:START and the audiences of the partner cities.
ScaleUp Final Event – Loutraki	March 2028	Use an extended communication cycle, beginning earlier than the standard workflow where necessary, to promote the final event, partner videos, project results, key learning and the wider RE:START legacy.

For milestones with longer preparation periods or greater external visibility, the standard workflow may be extended or adapted where necessary. Any adjustments should be reflected in the shared editorial calendar to ensure coordination between the LP, LE and partner cities.



Communication Budget

The table below shows the communication budget allocated to each partner.

Partner	2025	2026	2027	2028	Total
Idanha-a-Nova (Portugal)	€4,500.00	€3,500.00	€2,500.00	€1,500.00	€12,000.00
Jonadi (Italy)	€1,000.00	€2,500.00	€2,500.00	€2,000.00	€8,000.00
Loutraki (Greece)	€500.00	€1,250.00	€1,250.00	€750.00	€3,750.00
Marina Alta (Spain)	€500.00	€1,000.00	€1,000.00	€500.00	€3,000.00
Nyborg (Denmark)	€1,000.00	€6,000.00	€6,000.00	€2,000.00	€15,000.00
Khotyn (Ukraine)	x	x	x	x	x
Total	€7,500.00	€14,250.00	€13,250.00	€6,750.00	€41,750.00

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the RE:START communication strategy will combine output, reach and engagement indicators. This will make it possible to track the implementation of planned communication activities, assess their visibility and reach, and better understand how target audiences interact with the project's content and activities.

Monitoring will be carried out throughout the project, with periodic reviews covering the 2025–2026, 2026–2027 and 2028 implementation periods. The information collected will also support adjustments to communication activities, channels and formats where necessary.

Communication channel / tool	Main outputs / indicators	Responsibility
RE:START mini-website at the URBACT portal	15 updates, approximately every two months	Lead: LP; Contributor: LE
RE:START LinkedIn page	25 posts; 150 followers; 60% of followers from non-partner cities	Lead: LP and LE; Contributors and amplifiers: Partner cities
RE:START visual identity / communication guidelines	Common guidance for the consistent use of the RE:START identity and communication assets	Lead: LP
Partner cities' institutional channels	6 city websites disseminating RE:START information; at least 6 official social media channels sharing or amplifying RE:START content	Lead: LP and Partner cities
Local media relations – press releases and media coverage	30 press releases and/or media pieces mentioning URBACT RE:START	Lead: LP and Partner cities
Local media relations – Meet the Press encounters	15 local media encounters covering RE:START activities	Lead: LP and Partner cities
Lead Expert articles	3 published articles	Lead: LE
Participation in related external events	At least 1 relevant external event	Lead: LP and LE
RE:START videos	7 videos: 6 produced by partner cities and 1 network-level synthesis video produced by the LP	Lead: LP and Partner cities
Graphic design and layout of key project deliverables	7 professionally designed deliverables, including the Transferability Study and Transfer and Improvement Plans	Lead: LP and Partner cities

Reach and engagement indicators

To complement these output indicators, the following reach and engagement indicators will be monitored where data is available:

- social media reach or impressions and engagement, including reactions, comments, shares and clicks;
- RE:START mini-website visits, page views and referral traffic;
- video views and, where available, viewing or completion rates;
- registrations and participation in webinars, events and public activities;
- media mentions and estimated reach, where such information is available;
- partner posts using agreed tags and hashtags, including cross-promotion of RE:START and other partner cities.

These indicators are intended to complement, rather than replace, the output indicators above. Partners should report them using the analytics already available through their existing communication channels, avoiding disproportionate additional reporting requirements.

Monitoring and reporting

Communication data should be reviewed periodically by the LP, with contributions from the LE and partner cities where relevant. Partners should provide available communication results and metrics in line with the shared editorial calendar and agreed reporting periods.

Monitoring should be used not only for reporting purposes, but also as a practical management tool. Where appropriate, results may inform adjustments to content, formats, channels or audience targeting in order to improve the effectiveness of RE:START communication throughout the project.

Contacts

Contact list for RE:START communication representatives in partner cities

Partner city	Full contact details
Idanha-a-Nova	Nuno Capelo – nuno.capelo@idanha.pt
Jonadi	
Loutraki	
Marina Alta	
Nyborg	
Khotyn	
URBACT communication officer	