Greening urban economies

Greening Urban Economies

How change actually happens in cities

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31 March - 01 April 2026 - Nicosia, Cyprus

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Introduction

Small urban choices - Green economy shift

- Cities don't build green economies by design.
- They build them by connecting what they already do.
- A greener urban economy does not always start with a big strategy, a major investment, or a project labelled as "green economy".

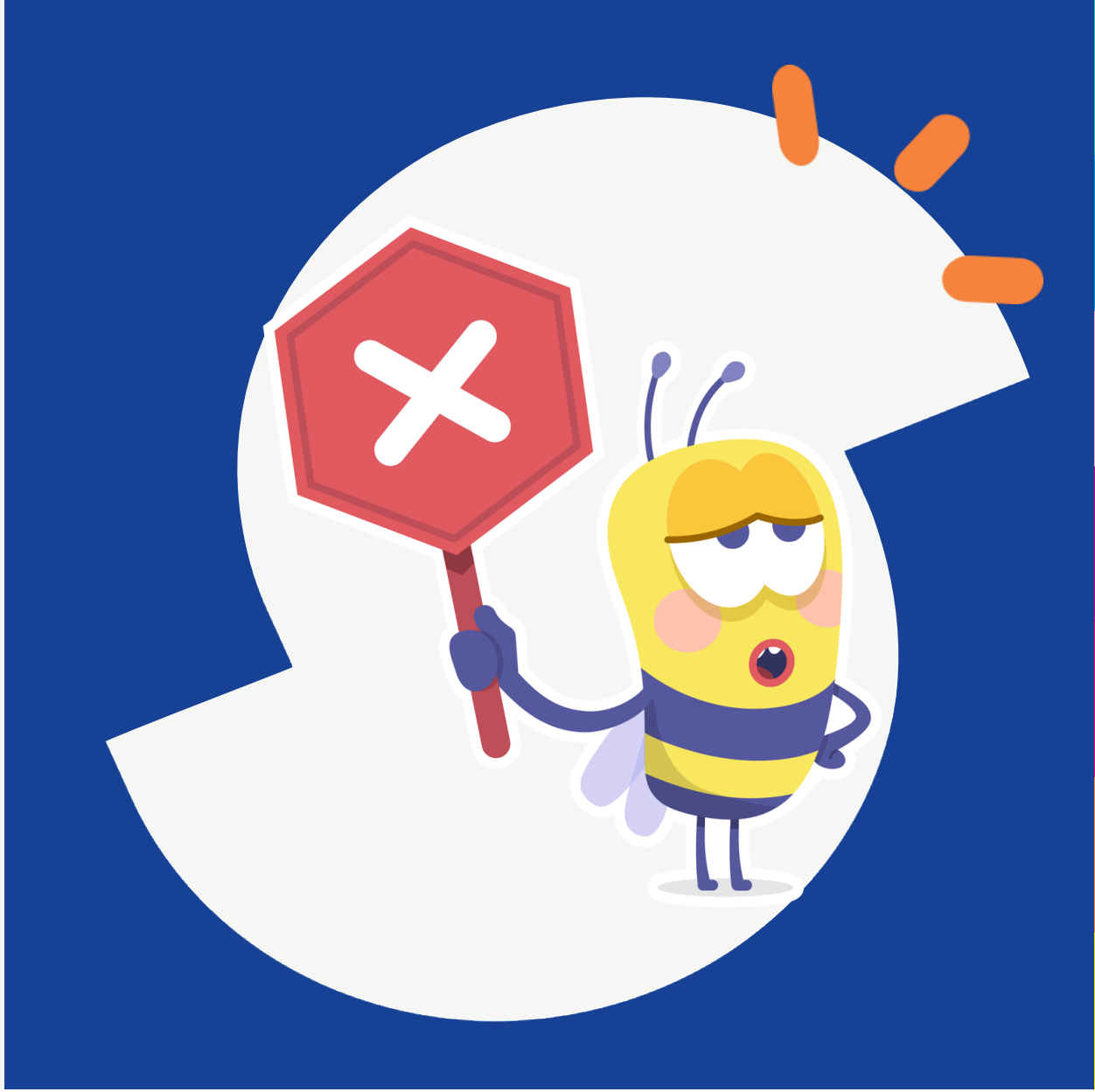


Interaction

First reaction: Go!

When you hear the term “green urban economy”, what is the first thing you think of as a local authority practitioner?

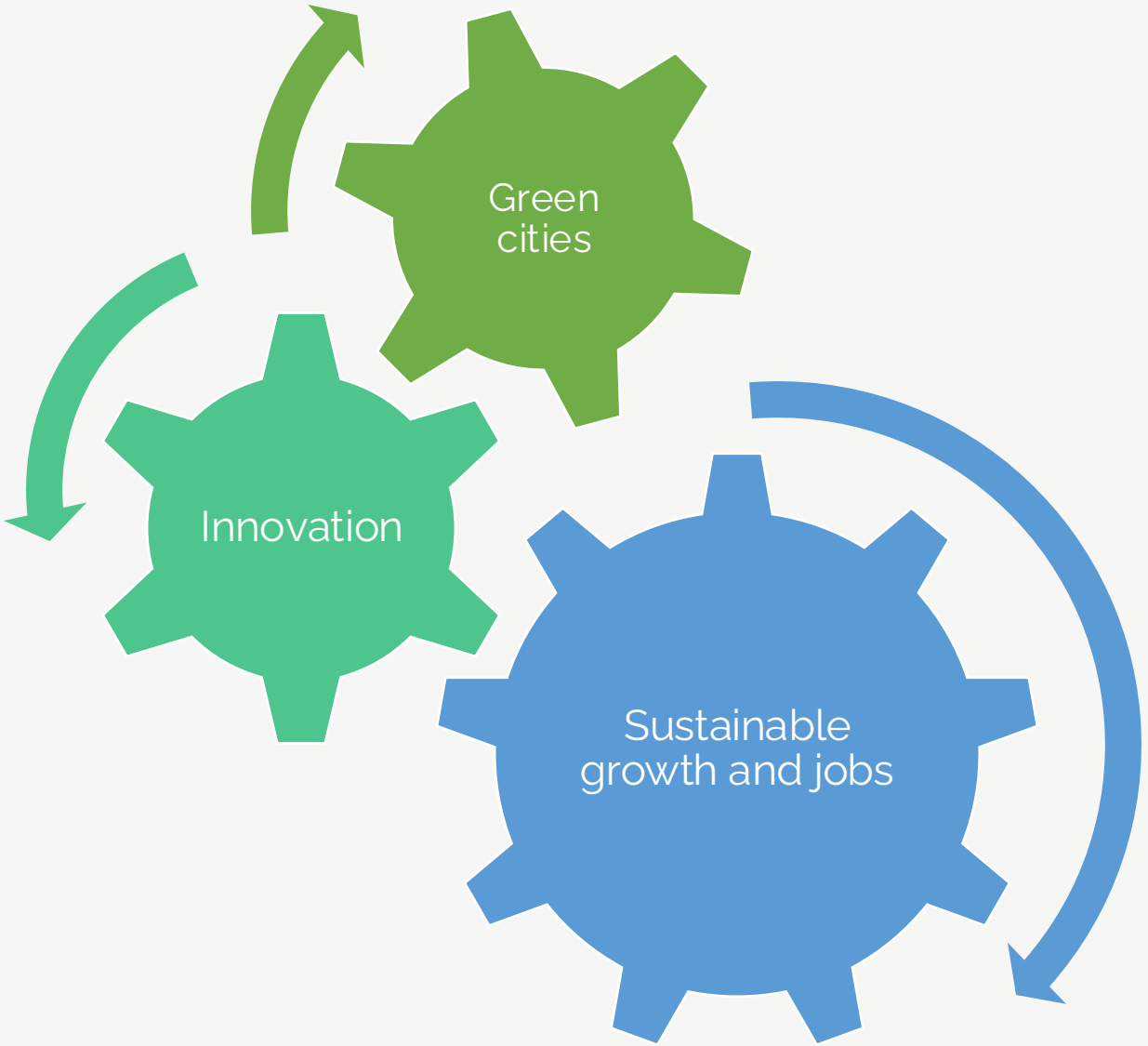
- **This sounds important, but also very broad and a bit vague**
- **What are other cities actually doing?**



Definition

Green urban economy

Green urban economy is one that results in **improved human well-being and social equity**, while significantly **reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities**.



The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Definition

The architecture of a green local economy



1. Health and Wellbeing

- Enables all people to create and enjoy prosperity.



2. Justice, Equity, Equality

- Promotes equity within and between generations.



3, Planetary boundaries

- The green economy safeguards, restores and invests in nature.



4. Efficiency and sufficiency - Resilience

- Geared to support sustainable consumption and production.



5. Good governance

- Guided by integrated, accountable and resilient institutions.

Interaction

Second interaction: Go!

Which in your view is the pillar…:

- **Most obviously linked to ‘’green local economy’’?**
- **Important but rarely named as such?**
- **Less relevant to “green local economy” ?**

Please choose room: Plenary - Eleftheria Square

Discussion

Our guests

- **Ciara O hAodha**, Senior Executive Officer, Fingal County Council, **EcoCore**
- **Mary D'Arcy**, Climate Action Co-ordinator | Climate Action, Meath County Council, **In4Green**
- **Joanna Gańcza-Pawełczyk**, Senior Specialist, Municipality of Wroclaw, **GreenPlace**
- **Oystein Leonardsen**, Programme Director Green Transition, City of Copenhagen, **COPE**
- **Wibke Borngesser**, Project Officer, City of Munich, **LET'S GO CIRCULAR!**

EcoCore Network

Ciara O hAodha, Senior Executive Officer, Fingal County Council, EcoCore Lead Partner

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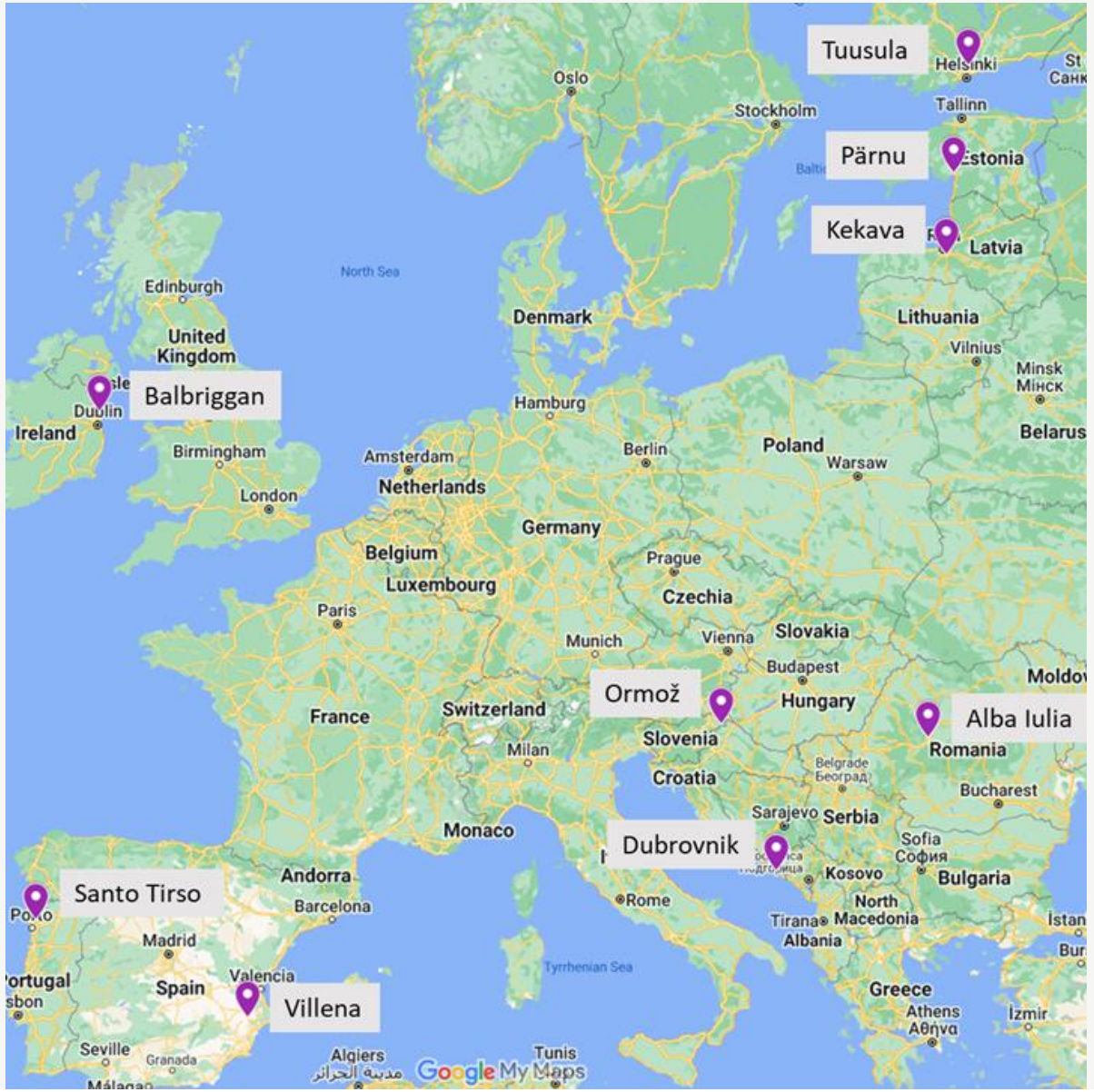
EcoCore Network

- Accelerating the **green transition** in small cities in strategic transport corridors
- **Build capacit**y in small cities to address climate change
- Promote **sustainable economic developmen**t
- Work with business to transition to low carbon **energy** sources and sustainable **mobility** options



EcoCore Network

- Leading the green transition
- Working with business stakeholders
- Telling the story



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In4Green Network

Mary D'Arcy, Climate Action Co-ordinator | Climate Action, Meath County Council, In4Green

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In4Green Network

A collaborative network of industrial cities from across Europe with a shared commitment to:

- lead transformative change within European industry and
- drive the sector towards a greener, more sustainable future. Comprising cities from diverse backgrounds,

Objective

In4Green aims to reshape and modernise industrial areas by improving local governance and policymaking while benefiting from the collective expertise and experience of the partner cities.



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In4Green Network

Two Years in Review

Key Challenges

- **Stakeholder engagement** has been the most common difficulty. Cities struggled to keep a wide range of actors — from SMEs to large industries, institutions, and citizens — consistently involved in the process.
- **Balancing ambition and capacity** proved demanding. Partners often had to reconcile long-term strategies with limited time, funding, and human resources.
- **Coordination and alignment** across diverse actors and departments was another recurring theme, especially in contexts with overlapping priorities or complex governance structures.
- **Cultural change** emerged as a challenge, particularly for cities engaging in international cooperation for the first time, where explaining the value of "soft" projects required persistence.

Main Achievements

- **Co-creation of Integrated Action Plans** stands out across the network. Many cities emphasise the value of participatory processes, consensus-building, and multi-level governance in shaping their plans.
- **Strengthening local collaboration** has been a defining result. Several partners highlighted the creation or consolidation of Local Action Groups, embedding a culture of cooperation and shared vision for the green transition.
- **Concrete outputs and strategies** were also achieved: from sustainability plans integrating green technologies, to embedding circular economy and digital innovation into IAPs, to effective partnerships with stakeholders that will continue beyond the project.
- **Community impact** is evident. Bringing new citizens, businesses, and local actors into the sustainability conversation has expanded ownership and created momentum for action at city level.

Download our Playbook

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GreenPlace Network

Joanna Gańcza-Pawełczyk, Senior Specialist, Municipality of Wroclaw, GreenPlace Lead Partner

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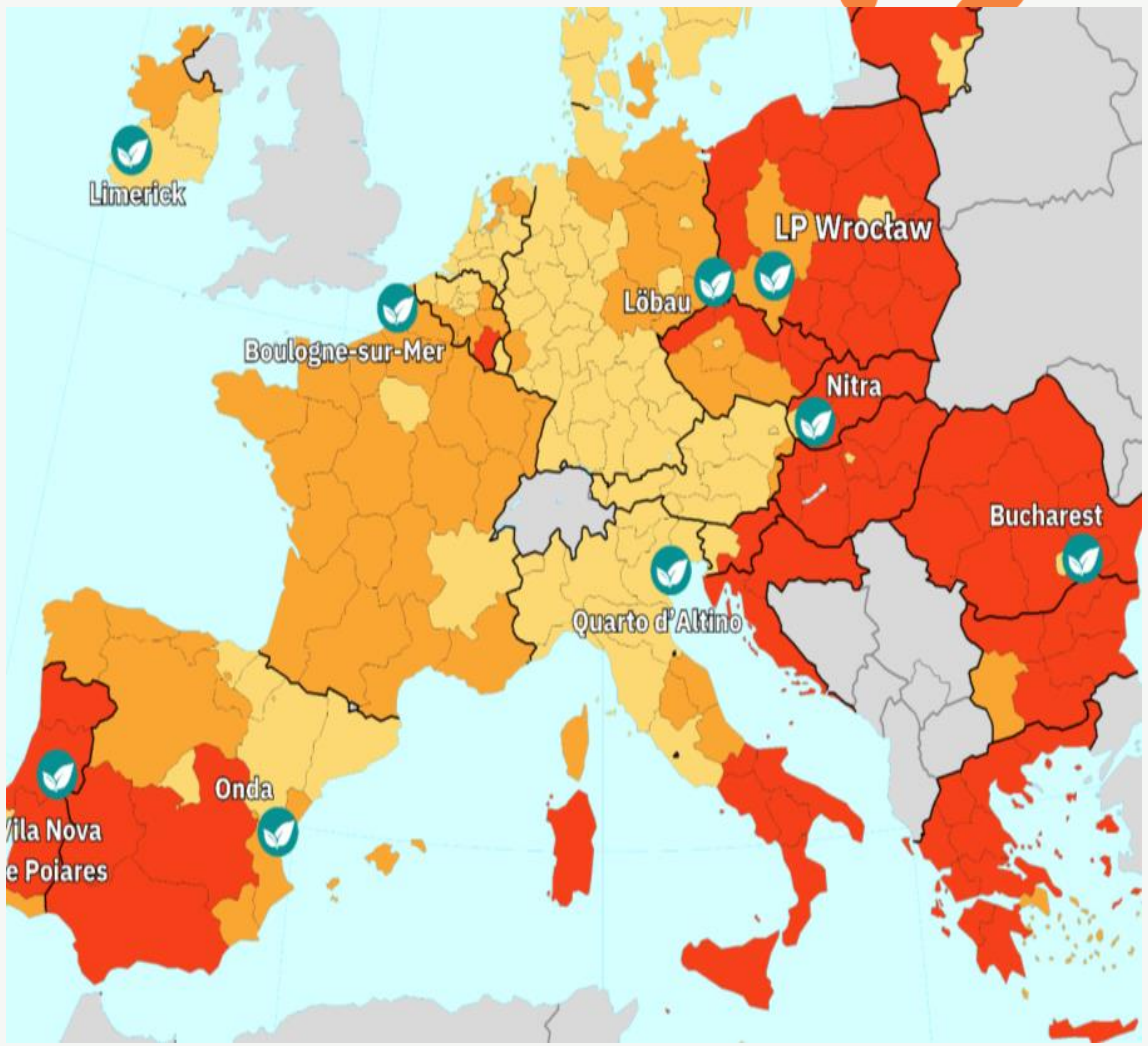
GreenPlace Network

Transforming forgotten urban spaces into places that are valuable for residents, with their active involvement.



GreenPlace Network

- Rejuvenate unused urban areas
- Using social participation tools
- Introducing Nature Based Solutions (NBS)



COPE Network

Oystein Leonardsen, Programme Director Green Transition, City of Copenhagen, COPE Lead Partner

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COPE (Coherent Place-based Climate Action) network

- Will **unlock the green potentials of citizen action through**:
  - A place-based approach
  - Recognizing citizens and local action groups as fundamental stakeholders working to accelerate the green transition.
  - Municipality as a facilitator



A green and just transition in cities is key to achieving carbon neutrality in Europe by 2050

By actively engaging communities that have traditionally been left out of climate action, COPE increases the scope and impact of municipal policies

LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Wibke Borngesser, City of Munich,
LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Lead Partner

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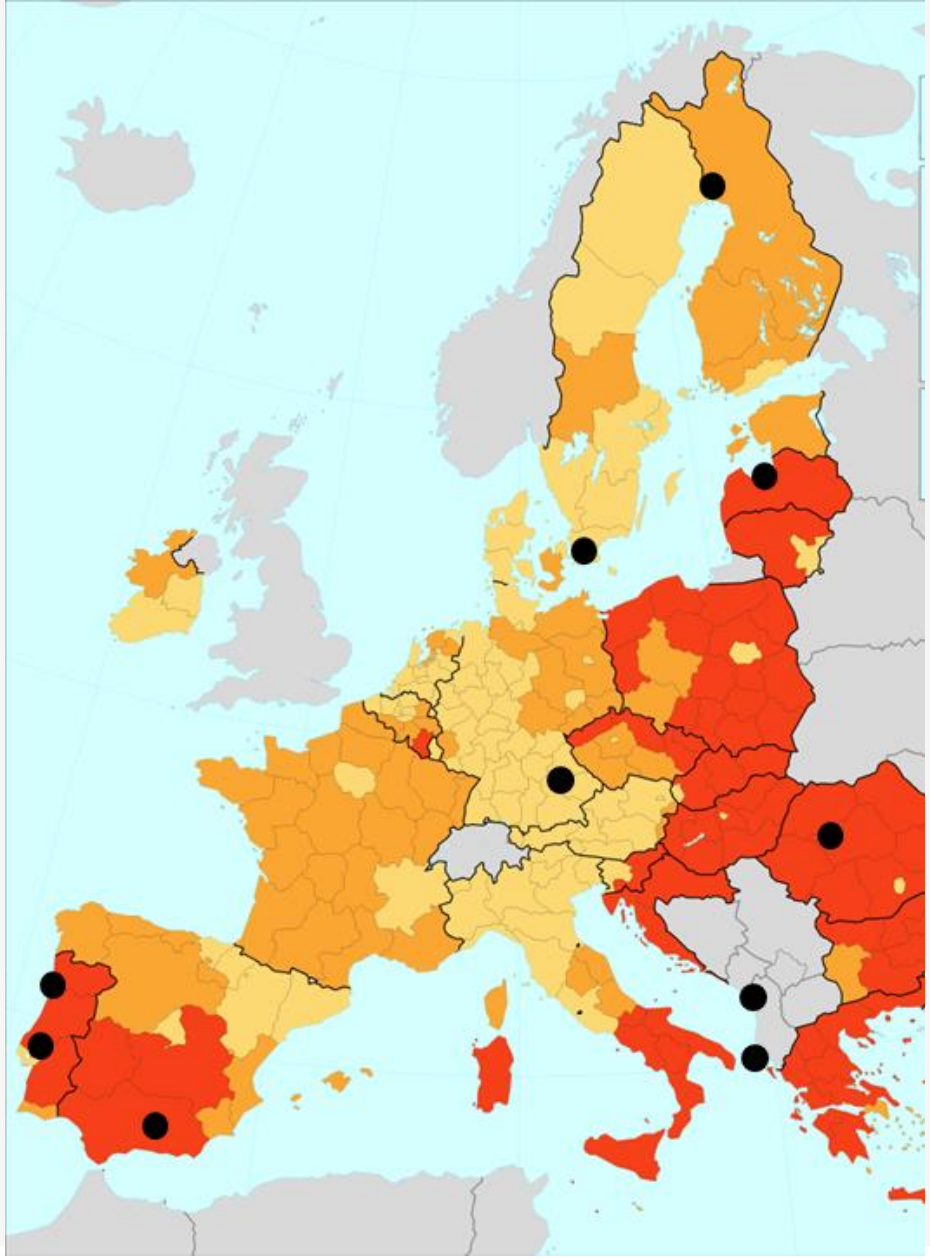
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- Munich (DE), Lead Partner
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- Corfu (GR)
- Guimaraes (PT)
- Granada (ES)
- Lisbon (PT)
- Malmö (SE)
- Oulu (FI)
- Riga (LV)
- Tirana (AL)



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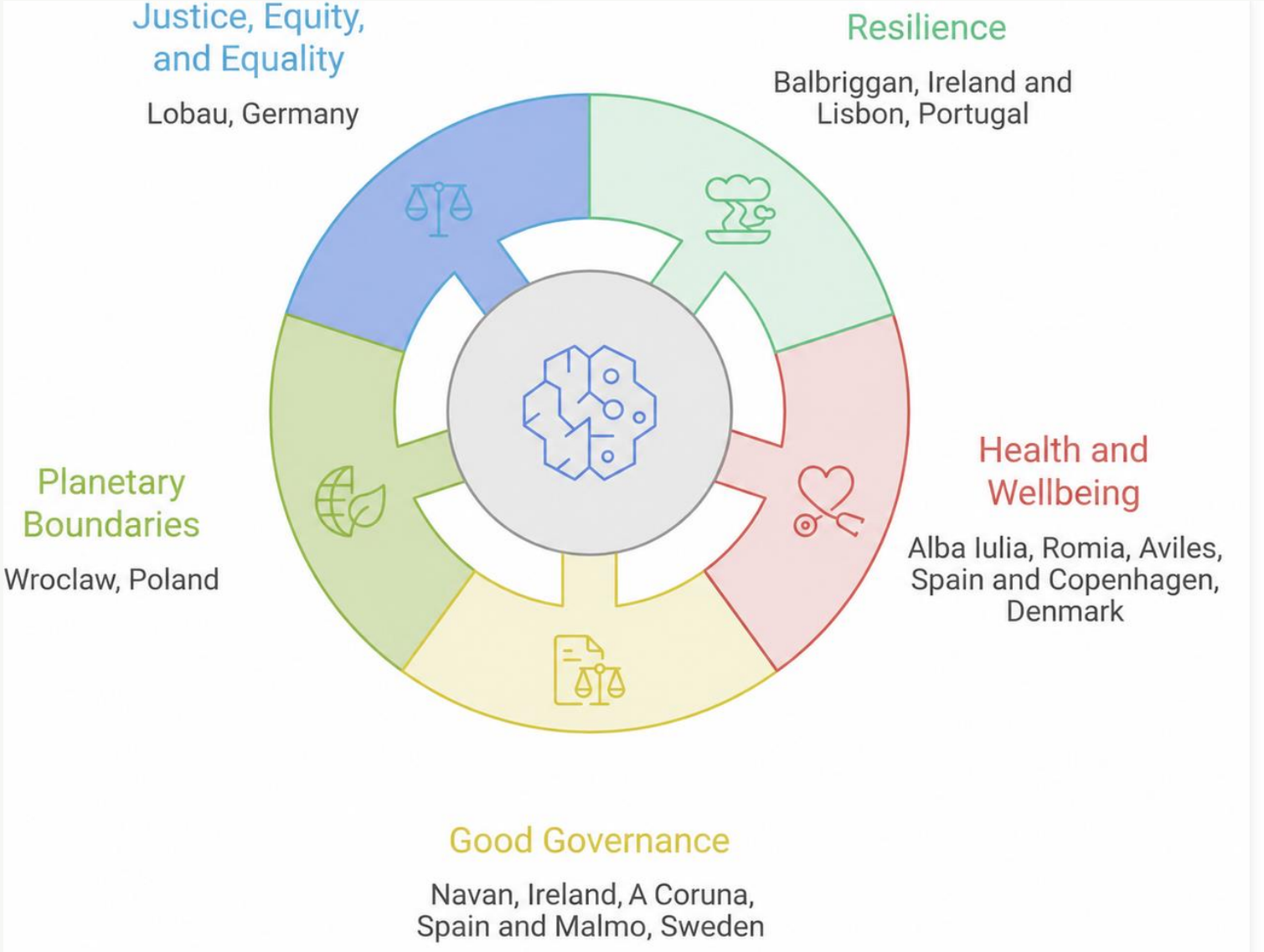
- Draft circular economy strategies
- Design actions
- Enhance the roles of local authorities



Greening urban economies pillars

Examples from the Networks

Good practice examples



EcoCore

Pillar: Resilience

Balbriggan, Ireland

Integrated Planning for Industrial Development

- Planning Framework
- Support a diverse industrial ecosystem
- Balbriggan sustainable mobility plan
- Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan
- Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor



EcoCore

Pillar: Health & Wellbeing

Alba Iulia, Romania

Green & Smart Mobility

- Green Electric Bus Route
- Improved public transport accessibility
- Improved sustainable mobility options
- Integrated Urban Mobility Dispatch Centre
- Intelligent Cities Challenge



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Pillar: Governance

Navan, Ireland

Thrive Centre of Business Excellence: enabling business transition together



- Navan's green transition is being built **together** through **partnerships** between businesses, enterprise supports, local stakeholders and Meath County Council.

- Through the **Thrive Centre of Business Excellence**, the town is creating a shared platform to support green, digital and circular business transformation.

- The **Integrated Action Plan developed through In4Green** helps connect skills, innovation and business support, turning ambition into long-term action for Navan's economic transition.

Pillar: Health & Wellbeing

Famaliçao, Portugal

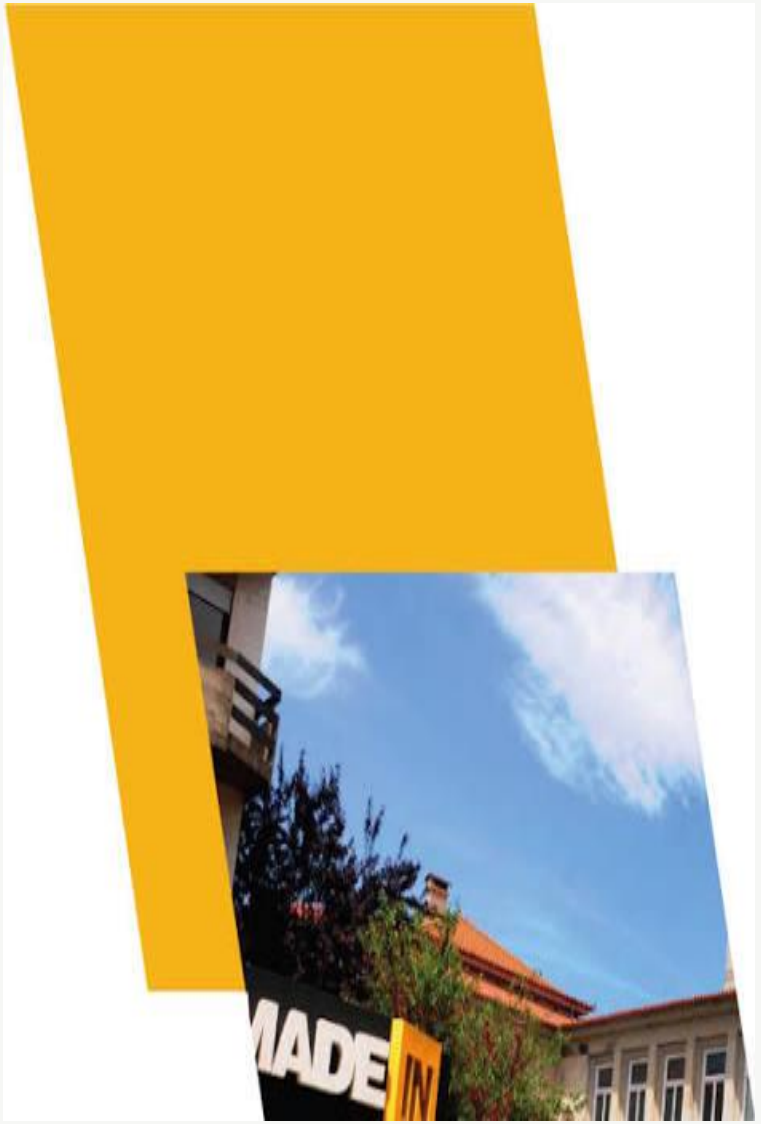
Created IN : from production to value creation

Famalicão is a strong industrial city.

- Its ambition is **not only to produce more**, it is to **create more value** through innovation, creativity and sustainability.

- With **Created IN Famalicão**, the city connects actors to bring knowledge closer to industry and accelerate the transition from ideas to real business solutions.

- The strategy supports **innovation missions** inside local companies, promotes **research and innovation labs**, and recognises businesses that are already moving towards more **sustainable and innovative models.**



Discussion

EcoCore & In4Green

Q&A

Ciara, local authorities cannot deliver the green transition alone. From EcoCore, what advice would you give cities trying to engage businesses and build a shared vision for a greener local economy?



Greening urban economies pillars

Examples from the Networks: GreenPlace & COPE

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GreenPlace

Pillar: Planetary boundaries

Wrocław, Poland

Former Popowice Depot

- Creating a new, recreational, open to public **green zone** on the site
- Testing **green** and **water** management solutions **(NBS)**
- Reuse of existing structures **reducing material use** and environmental pressure (garden forniture, soil)
- Building a stronger **sense of community** to maintain the place
- **Temporary uses** to reduce barriers to participation

Before



After













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GreenPlace

Pillar: Justice, equity & equality

Löbau, Germany

Former Nuddle Factory

Revitalisation of post-industrial site into **inclusive public space** through:

- **Open-access activities**
- Strong **co-creation** model
- **Temporary uses** to reduce barriers to participation
- Support for **local economy** and **community empowerment**
- Addressing structural **challenges** (refugees, elderly, families)

















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COPE

Pillar: Governance

A Coruna, Spain

A Neighborhood Rewriting Its Story

The neighborhood begins to tell its own story.

- Local associations come together under a **shared structure.**
- A new neighborhood brand reshapes its image and **energizes community life**.
- **Digital murals** bring facades to life, while **interactive routes** reconnect residents with their shared past.
- **Technology, culture, and participation** weave together.



COPE

Pillar: Health & wellbeing

Copenhagen, Denmark

Citizen Gardens Seeds Community Building

- A collaboration between the administration, residents and stakeholders **to share a direction** for the green transition.
- A local climate group consisting of residents and local stakeholders ensures that there is **room for conversations.**
- **A food community** is created with different agendas and to engage multiple local user groups to foster community and climate actions.



Discussion

GreenPlace & COPE

Q&A



Greening urban economies pillars

Examples from the Networks: LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Pillar: Governance

Malmö, Sweden

Resource Hub in Malmö

- **Arena for collaboration** and knowledge exchange for new circular opportunities
- Local actors
- Resource **coaching, workshops, and network** meetings
- Goal: making business **more circular** and finding matches for industrial symbiosis



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LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Pillar: Resilience

Lisbon, Portugal

Circular tourist pass

- **Guide tourism** activity towards more sustainable and circular practices
- Develop a **business model**
- Promote local activities linked to **circular tourism**, 50 potential partners



Discussion

Q&A



Thank you!

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Discover the Knowledge Hub on Greening Urban Economies!



urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/greening-urban-economies

Useful resources

Webinar "What is a thriving green urban economy?"

What are green urban economies and how can cities harvest the opportunities they offer? What are the entry points for cities who want to start their journey towards a greener urban economy?

URBACT cities have the answers! Watch the recording from the webinar of 13 November 2025 and discover the stories of five URBACT networks actively building greener urban economies in their cities: COPE, EcoCore, GreenPlace, In4Green and Let's Go Circular!

Learn more

How to create a greener urban economy? Stories from URBACT cities

Discover more stories on how to green your urban economy with the presentation from the URBACT session "How to create a greener urban economy? Stories from URBACT cities" that took place at the Smart City Expo World Congress on 5 November 2025.

Learn more

Municipality as a facilitator of green transition

Building sustainable and inclusive societies requires governance models that actively engage people and empower them to contribute meaningfully to collective decisions. When participation becomes a core part of governance, it strengthens trust, accountability, and shared responsibility.

Discover how to put in place such governance models in your city with the resources below!

Learn more

Digitalisation, industrial innovation and regeneration

Rapid technological evolution is transforming the way cities function, driving the need for urban spaces that accommodate new kinds of activities - from localised food systems and energy infrastructure to electrified mobility and digitally integrated urban services. At the same time, many conventional industrial roles are losing relevance. As a result, this shift creates a foundation for reimagining and renewing urban areas.

Learn how to green your urban industries with the resources below!

Learn more

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