#URBACTfest

# From Social Data to Better Cities

#URBACTfest

urbact.eu/city-festival-2026

URBACT CITY FESTIVAL
29-30 September 2026 - Nicosia, Cyprus

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
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Nicosia Municipality

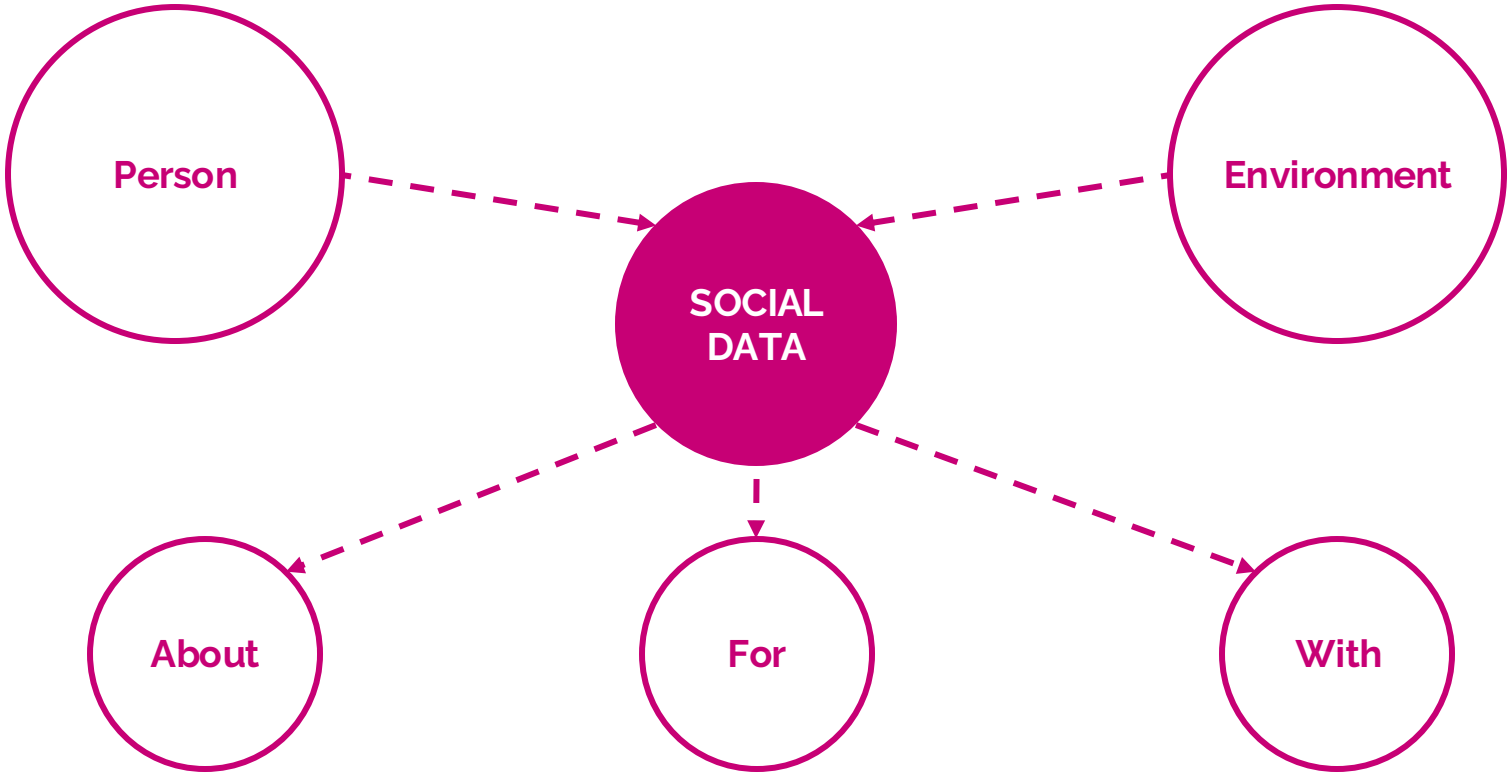
# Welcome!

1. Introduction
2. City actions
3. European perspective
4. Social data for cities

# Why do we talk about social data?

*Social data are **data generated by or about people and communities** that describe social conditions, behaviors, interactions, and lived experiences, and that can be used to inform and evaluate public policies.*

# Why do we talk about social data?

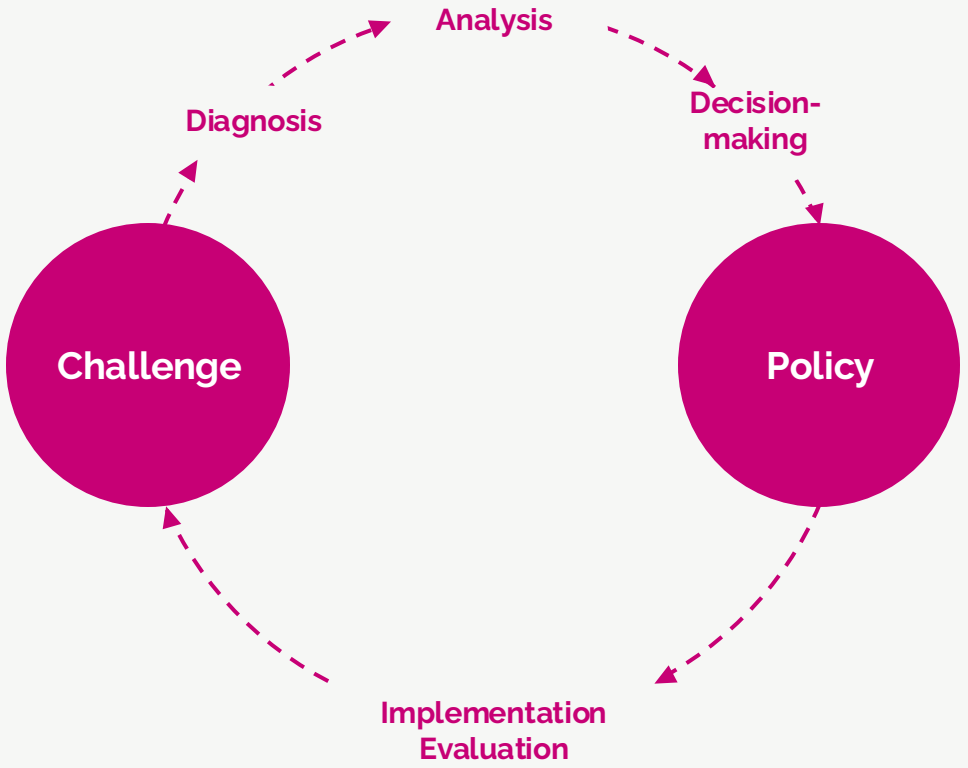


# Social data for social policies

| | |
|---|---|
| Public services, Urban planning, Planning, City centre management, Data integration, Citizen engagement, Spatial planning, Innovation, Financial, Programs, Public service | Participatory Governance |
| Urban economy | Local employment Skills |
| Citizen safety, Safety, Health prevention, Health, Elderly, | Community, Health & Wellbeing |
| Public Space Activation, Green spaces, Public spaces, Water, NBS, Evaluate public space quality, Food policy | Green and public space access |
| Housing, Energy poverty | Housing & Homelessness |
| Cultural, Cultural policies, Sports | Youth & education, Gender incl. Cultural integration |
| Social, Community incl., Migration, Housing support, Access to services, Digitization, Social services, Migrants, Assistance, Migrant inclusion | Digital inclusion, Social integration |
| Public spaces, Public services, Evaluate public space quality | Inclusive mobility |

**SOCIAL POLICIES**

# The social data policy cycle




It consists of four connected stages:

**Diagnosis:** Define the problem and identify the data needed.

**Analysis:** Turn data into insights and evidence for action.

**Decision-making:** Use evidence to design and adapt policies**.**

**Implementation & evaluation:** Track results, learn what works, and inform the next cycle.

Link to Slido

# Join us in Slido!

## Enter to Royal Hall
## Gallery D'Avilla

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# City actions

**Alberto Lorente (ES)-** DARING cities
**Sligo (IE) –** Cities@Heart
**Cinisello Balsamo (IT) –** UR Impact

DARING CITIES

# Social data collection spaces

Alberto Lorente (ES)

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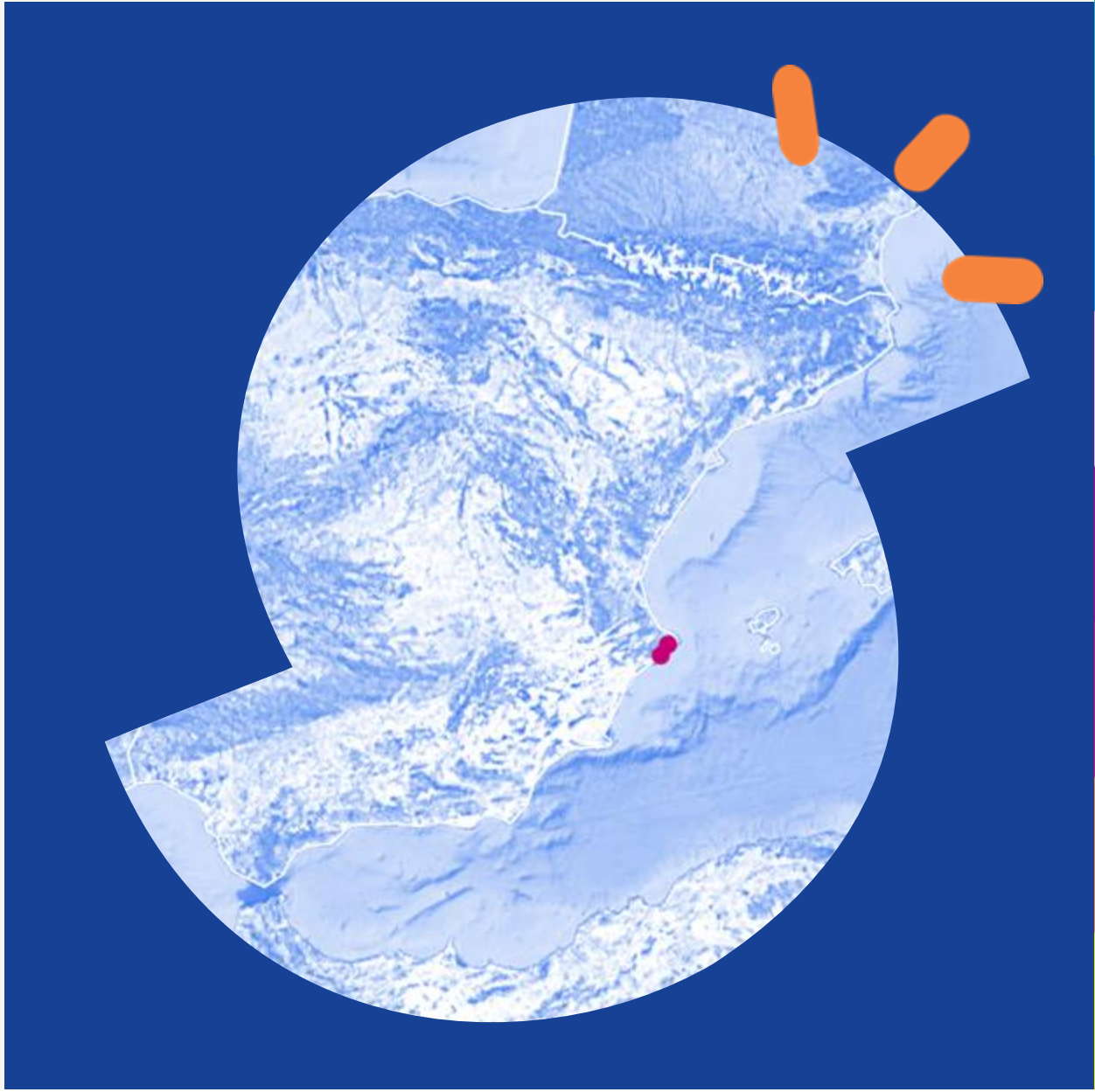
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The city

# Altea

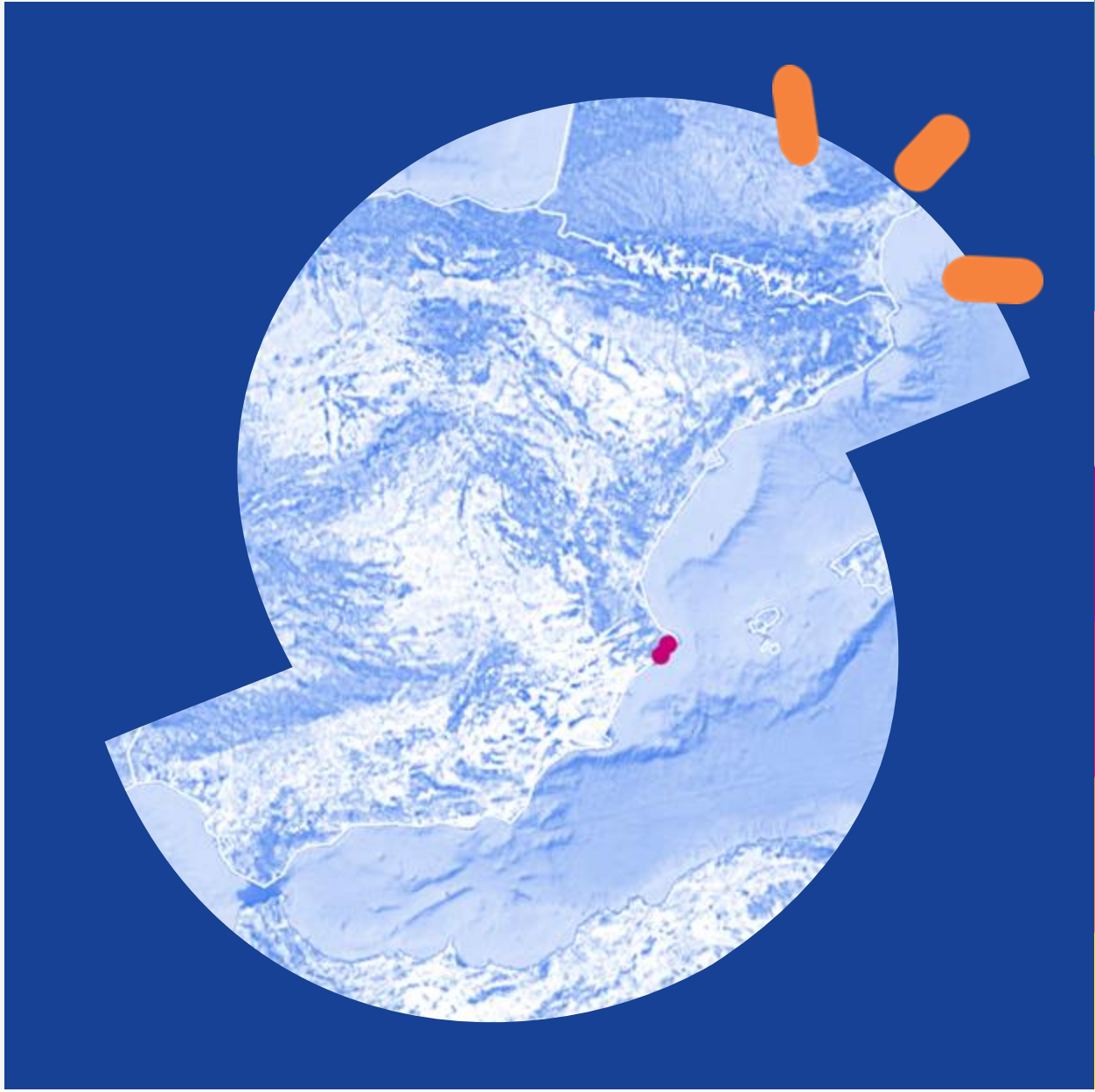
**Country:** Spain
**Population:** 24.592 people (2025)
**Area:** 34.43 km$^2$
**Population density:** ≈714 inhab./km$^2$
**URBACT Network:** Daring Cities

A Mediterranean coastal municipality in the province of Alicante. Its territory combines a relatively compact urban area with coastal landscapes and surrounding mountainous areas. Tourism and its coastal location are key characteristics.



The city

# Benissa



**Country:** Spain
**Population:** 12.317 people (2025)
**Area:** 69.71 km²
**Population density:** ≈177 inhab./km²
**URBACT Network:** OneHealth4Cities

A relatively large municipality on the Costa Blanca, characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern, a historic inland town and an extensive coastal area.

# Key concepts

**Social data is not only data about people; it is also data generated with people.**

**Its value lies not in collecting more information, but in transforming citizens' knowledge and lived experience into concrete public decisions.**

# Starting point

Benissa and Altea started from very different urban challenges. Benissa needed to translate the innovative and potentially abstract One Health concept into a locally relevant strategy. Altea faced a physical and institutional challenge: reconnecting two parts of the town divided by the railway, through a transformation requiring the involvement of multiple administrations and stakeholders. In both cases, collecting social data was essential to understand how people experience these challenges and to turn an initial strategic ambition into a shared and actionable urban policy.





Actions

# Ideas Market

## One Health 4 Cities - Benissa

In Benissa, we transformed a traditional street market into a social data collection space. Through temporary participation stands, we gathered more than 100 proposals from local residents, which were subsequently classified and used to identify priorities for the city's One Health Action Plan.



Actions

# Critical Walk

## Daring Cities - Altea

In Altea, critical walks allowed local and regional stakeholders to assess the proposed tramway area directly on site. Their observations and feedback generated place-based social data on accessibility, mobility, safety, everyday use and local expectations, helping to inform the planning process.



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# Key lessons

- **Start with the urban challenge (political challenge), not with the data.** Define what the city needs to understand or transform before selecting the data collection methods.
- **Social data is also generated with people.** Residents' experiences, perceptions and local knowledge are valuable evidence for urban policymaking.
- **Use accessible methods for complex challenges.** Street-based activities, critical walks and on-site observation make abstract strategies tangible and understandable.
- **Collect data where the challenge happens.** Working in public spaces and directly within the intervention area provides insights that cannot always be obtained through surveys or meetings.
- **Combine different perspectives.** Residents, local organisations, technical experts and other public administrations interpret the same challenge differently. Bringing these views together produces better decisions.
- **Turn participation into structured evidence.** Contributions must be classified, analysed and connected to specific priorities, actions or design decisions.
- **Close the feedback loop.** Cities should explain how the information collected has influenced—or could not influence—the final decision.
- **Use social data to build alliances.** Evidence generated collectively can create common ground between municipalities, communities and other administrations.

CITIES@HEART

# Using data to revitalise and balance the city centre

## Sligo - Edel Doran (IE)

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# Sligo

**Country:** Ireland
**Population:** 20.608 people (2022)
**Area:** 10,3 km$^2$
**Population density:** ≈2,001 inhab./km$^2$

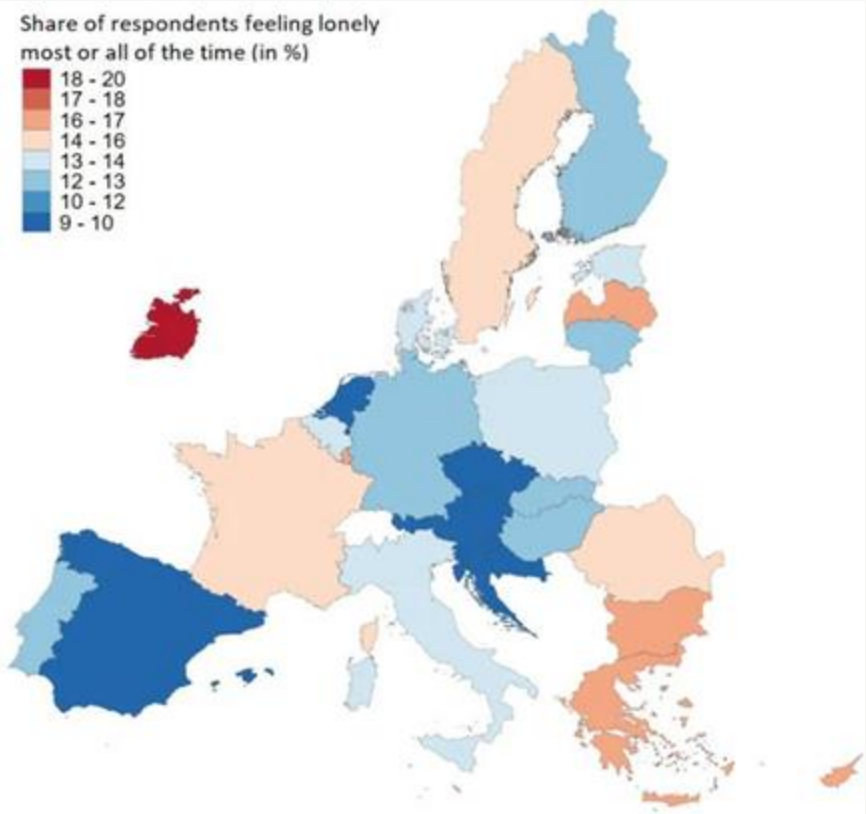
A compact coastal town in north-western Ireland and the main urban centre of County Sligo. It has a considerably smaller population than Cinisello Balsamo, with a strong regional role in services, employment and tourism.

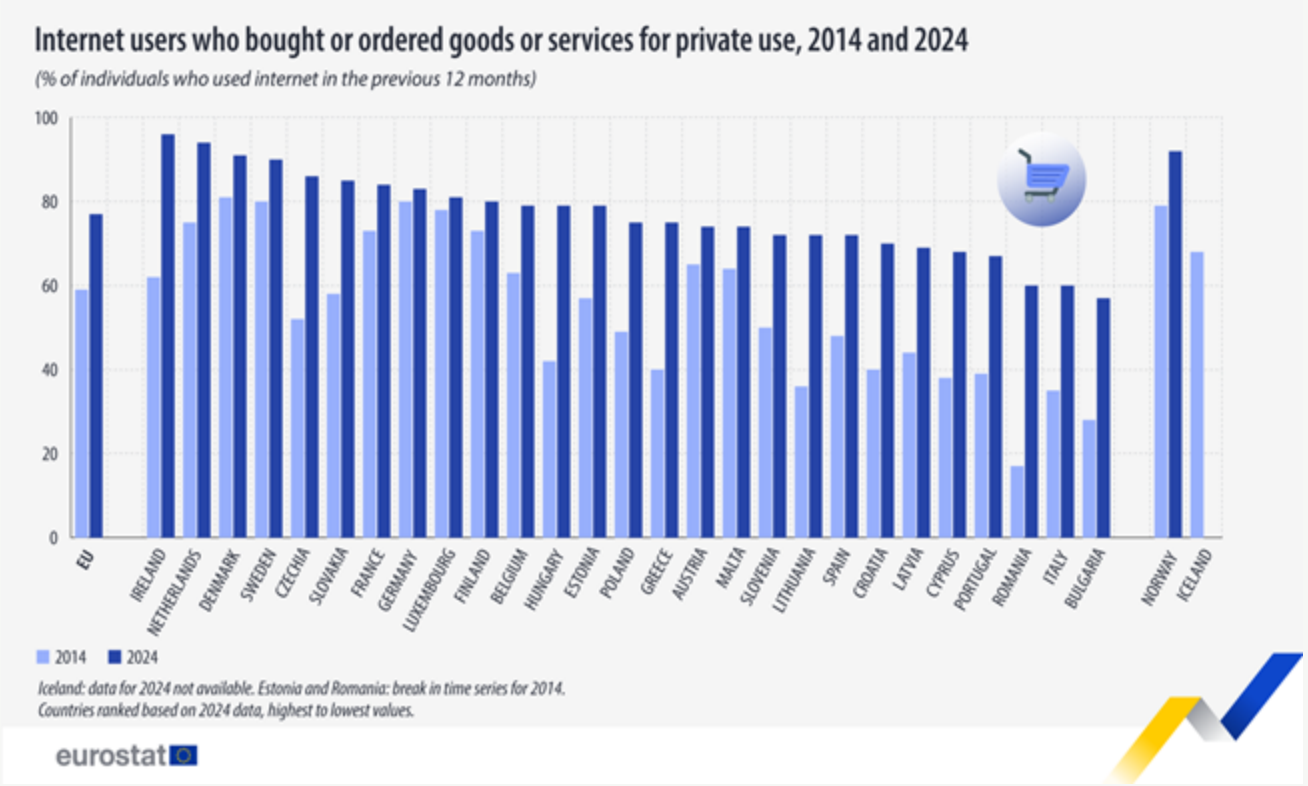


# The challenge

NETFLIX

amazon



# The core mantra



## How can we improve the Five Levers for the Citizens of Sligo?

Eat

Drink

Shop

Be Entertained

Socialise

# The approach





Irish Independent News Opinion Business Sport Life Style Ente

Sligo

News Sport Business Lifestyle Local Notes

**Work begins on transforming a Sligo car park into Queen Maeve Square**

# The result









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# Post event surveys - SLIGO ON ICE

25,000 Attendees for 2024

41% of Attendees came from outside of Sligo for 2025

**Survey Findings**

83.7% ate, drank or shopped while in town for the event.

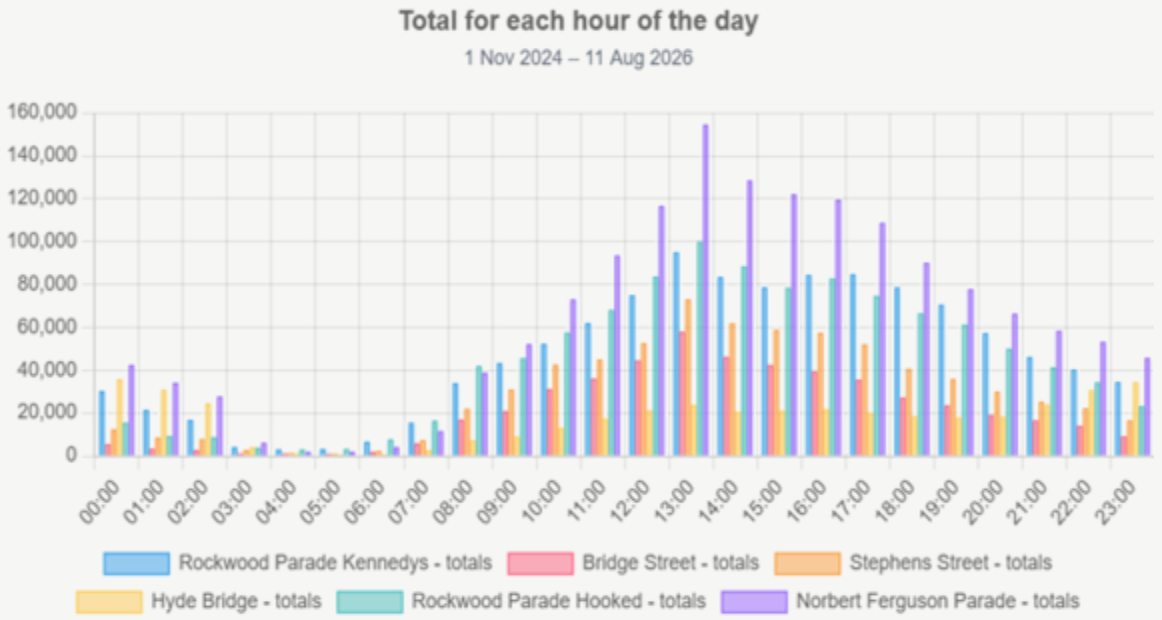
58.1% spent 2-4 hours in town while attending the event.

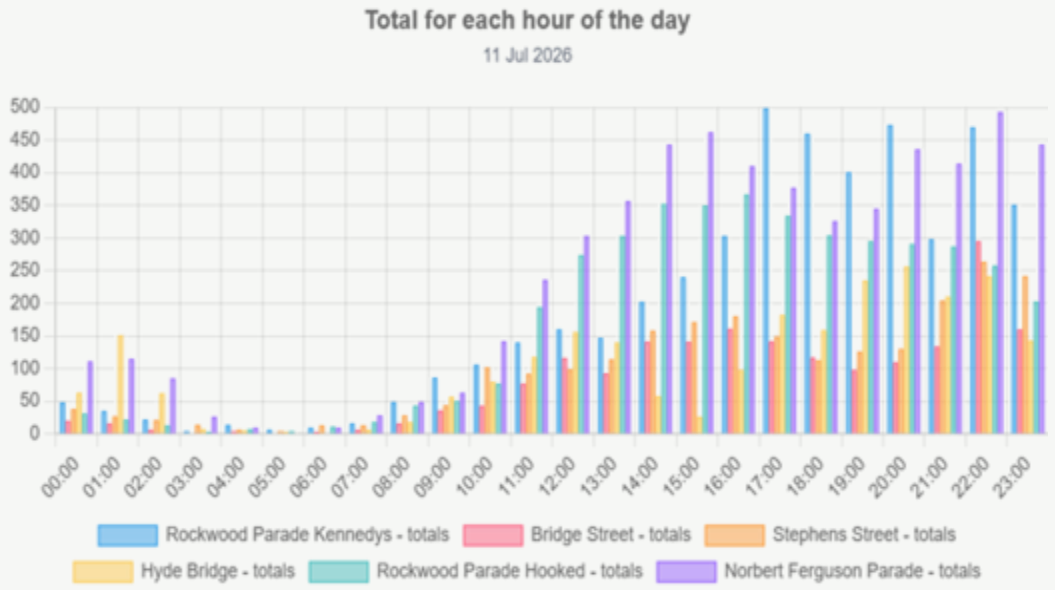
96.5% felt safe at all times during the event.

36% spent €50-100 while in town

81.3% of businesses reported that the event increased footfall to their business.

# Footfall analysis




**The 10 highest-footfall days recorded between 1 November 2024 and 26 August 2026, 9 are directly linked to events held in Queen Maeve Square.**

UR Impact

# Developing shared social indicators through co-creation

Cinisello Balsamo - Massimo Capano (IT)

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The city

# Cinisello Balsamo



**Country:** Italy
**Population:** 74.847 people (2025)
**Area:** 12,72 km$^2$
**Population density:** 5,884 inhab./km$^2$

A highly urbanised and densely populated municipality within the Milan metropolitan area. Its relatively small land area contrasts with a population of almost 75,000 inhabitants, resulting in a very high population density.

# Key Challenge

## Social impact at the center of its urban regeneration interventions: measure results inside and outside the municipality

- High population density and multicultural town
- Ongoing urban transformation, lacked an evaluation and need to measure the long-term impact

# Co-development of the indicators

## Developing a set of quality indicators through an active citizen engagement process

A space for expression and co-design, providing the community with real opportunities to recognise itself as an active agent of change, while at the same time rebuilding a sense of trust that was being lost.



# Results 1/2

**A set of quality indicators to guide actions in a structured and consistent way, a common language for social impact across projects**

**Areas**

1. urban and architectural quality
2. quality of public space
3. quality of housing provision
4. quality of employment
5. social quality and citizens' well-being
6. cultural quality
7. environmental quality

# Results 2/2

Example Cultural Quality

> "The extent to which local memory and testimonies are visible and accessible to residents"

## Indicators

**6.1 Recognition of cultural heritage**

**6.2 Planned enhancement of cultural assets**

**6.3 Diverse and attractive cultural offer**

**6.4 Integration of the local cultural system**

**6.5 Citizen participation**

## Check-list

- Use of preserved and transformed heritage (restoration, reuse, replacement).
- Attention to social history and testimonial values, alongside aesthetic qualities.
- Percentage of residents identifying specific heritage elements as representative of their community.
- Participation of different age groups in cultural activities, including intergenerational programmes.
- Perception of historical continuity,
- Community capacity to narrate and transmit its heritage
- …(add to the checklist)

# Thank you!

Useful link: https://urbact.eu/networks/ur-impact

For more details: massimo.capano@comune.cinisello-balsamo.mi.it

Link to Slido

# Any questions?

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# European Perspective

# Cities of Equality Partnership

Sabrina Abdi — ANCT

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# Cities of Equality: Why This Partnership

## The stake

Making European cities fairer, more inclusive, and more accessible  with intersectionality at the core, so no one is left behind because of age, disability, gender, origin, or socio-economic status.

## Co-led by

ANCT (France) and the Metropolitan City of Rome

## The members : 11 partners, 9 countries

**National authorities:** ANCT (FR), Austria Tech (AT)

**Regions:** Metropolitan City of Rome (IT), Konin Agglomeration (PL)

**Cities:** Varna (BG), Heerenveen (NL), Barcelona (ES), Komotini (EL)

**Networks:** Eurocities, ICLEI, CEMR

**Plus 9 European Commission services** (DG REGIO, DG JUST, DG EMPL, JRC, and others)

# Politique de la Ville: Data-Driven Targeting

Since the 1980s, France has run a targeted national urban policy,“politique de la ville”, to make growth inclusive at neighbourhood level, using objective social data.

**1,609** priority neighbourhoods **6M** people **44%** poverty rate

Neighbourhoods are defined by an objective income criterion. These neighbourhoods are governed through a “contrat de ville”: targeted funding across employment, education, housing, and safety.

Source: ONPV

# Cities of Equality: Three Actions

### Action 1 — Measure

A shared EU framework and data protocols to assess spatial segregation and access to essential services.

### Action 2 — Fund

Mainstreaming equality criteria into result-based EU funding instruments — tested via a 27-country survey.

### Action 3 — Participate

Gathering and sharing innovative practices for citizen participation and co-governance across cities.

# URBACT's Opportunity: EU Funding Rules

## The chain

URBACT networks could become exactly the ground-level evidence base the Cities of Equality Partnership needs an opportunity to open that evidence to a much wider audience.

## The opportunity

Feed URBACT's practice-based evidence into the funding-equality guidebook. Not later,

## Three steps

**Cities of Equality guidebook:** practice-based evidence feeds the funding-equality guidebook; cities get early access to what actually works.

**URBACT networks:** co-created indicators, participatory and social datas,  a testing ground for Action 2's method.

**OECD & international networks:** inclusive growth was never only a French or EU question and discussion can go beyond the EU's border.

Link to Slido

# We'd love to hear from you!

## Please feel free to ask any questions in Slido

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Gallery D'Avilla

# Social data for cities

Mar Santamaria

URBACT Knowledge HUB

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# The Knowledge Hub

One Health 4 Cities

U.R.IMPACT
Prioritising Social Impact in Urban Regeneration

URBACT

CITIES@HEART
TOWARDS A BALANCED CITY CENTRE

NextGen YouthWork

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# The webinars

## Webinar 1.

**What do EU cities really know?**

Cities collect vast amounts of data but still lack a complete picture. This session explored existing data, key gaps, and shared challenges across Europe.

## Webinar 2.

**How to collect and manage data for social policies?**

The session explored how to collect and manage data for reliable, comparable, and policy relevant insights.

## Webinar 3.

**How to interact and draft social policies with data?**

This session explored how social data can identify priorities, engage stakeholders, and support co creation of inclusive policies that respond to community needs.

## Webinar 4.

**How to measure the impact of social policies with data?**

This session explored how to measure whether policies genuinely improve people's lives.

# The webinars

**What do EU cities really know?**

**Webinar 1**

Bologna
Granada
Sligo

**How to collect and manage data for social policies?**

**Webinar 2**

Kuopio
Famalicão
Lyon

**How to interact and draft social policies with data?**

**Webinar 3**

Oulu
Heerlen

**How to measure the impact of social policies with data?**

**Webinar 4**

Cinisello
Balsamo
Glasgow

The Guide

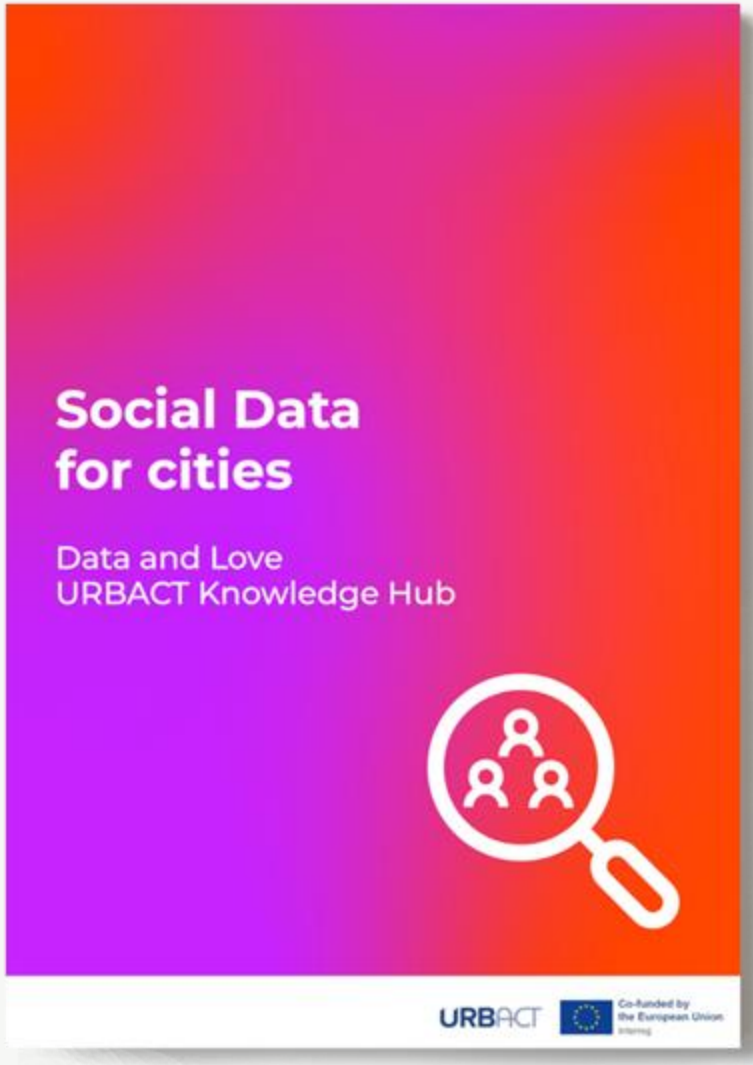
# How to use the guide?

Part 1:
**Why social data**

Part 2:
**Navigating the social data policy cycle**

Part 3:
**Building your city's capacity to use social data**

Part 4:
**The case for change: Why social data matters for cities**




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# The step-by-step framework

The guide provides a step-by-step framework from diagnosis to evaluation that reflects how cities operate in practice. Each stage combines conceptual guidance with real-world city examples, illustrating how practitioners have addressed challenges that may arise in similar contexts. It concludes with reflections on data governance and policy recommendations for cities seeking to advance their practice and for European institutions aiming to support them.

**DIAGNOSIS**

STEP 1

Defining the problem & data needs

**ANALYSIS**

STEP 2

Turning data into insight

**DECISION**

STEP 3

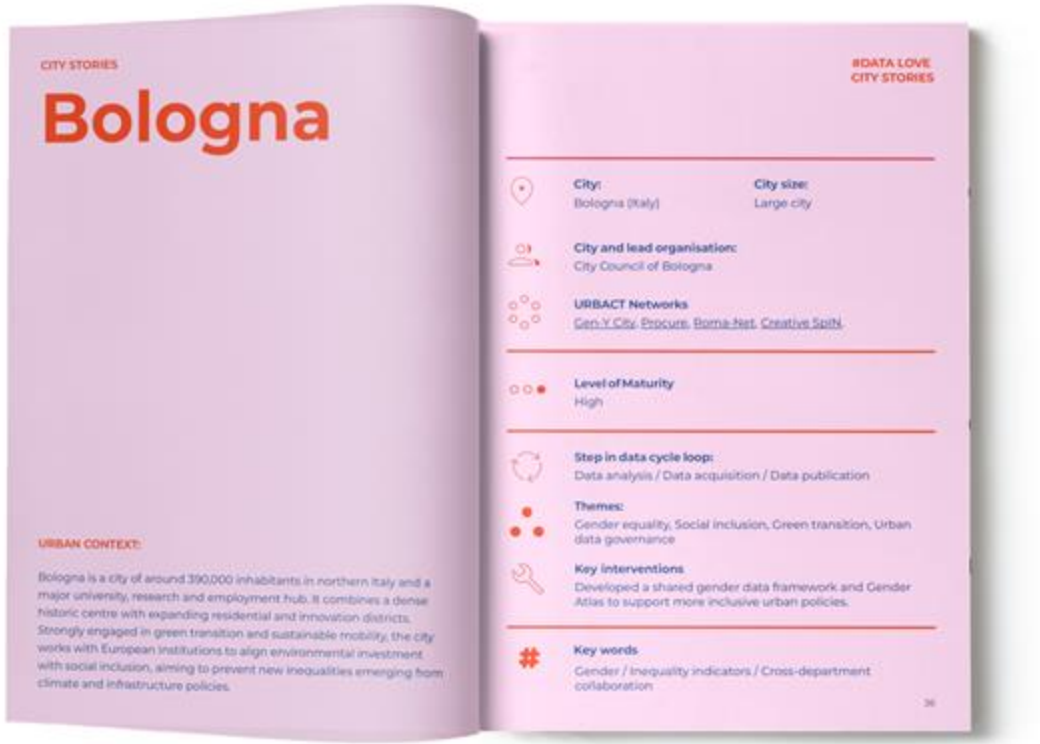
Using evidence to design better

**IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION**

STEP 4

Closing the loop


PART 2:
Navigating the cycle
#DATA LOVE
NAVIGATING THE CYCLE
A Step-by-Step guide
The Social Data Policy Cycle offers a practical framework that connects data to policy at every stage, reflecting how urban governance actually works. The following four steps (diagnosis, analysis, decision, and evaluation) are not a linear sequence to follow once and complete. They are a continuous loop: each stage builds on the previous one, and evaluation feeds back into diagnosis, making the cycle a genuine engine for learning and improvement over time.
Each step is explored through conceptual guidance and real city examples. The featured cities (participants in the Knowledge Hub webinars) are practitioners who have navigated the same tensions and trade-offs that any city working with social data will recognise. Their experience is the backbone of this guide.
DIAGNOSIS
ANALYSIS
DECISION
IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION
STEP 1
STEP 2
STEP 3
STEP 4
Defining the Problem & Data Needs
Turning data into insight
Using evidence to design better
Closing the loop
Fig 6. Steps guide
22


CITY STORIES
Bologna
#DATA LOVE
CITY STORIES
City:
Bologna (Italy)
City size:
Large city
City and lead organisation:
City Council of Bologna
URBACT Networks
Gen Y City, Procure, Roma Net, Creative Spin
Level of Maturity
High
Step in data cycle loop:
Data analysis / Data acquisition / Data publication
Themes:
Gender equality, Social inclusion, Green transition, Urban data governance
Key interventions
Developed a shared gender data framework and Gender Atlas to support more inclusive urban policies.
Key words
Gender / Inequality indicators / Cross-department collaboration
URBAN CONTEXT:
Bologna is a city of around 390,000 inhabitants in northern Italy and a major university, research and employment hub. It combines a dense historic centre with expanding residential and innovation districts. Strongly engaged in green transition and sustainable mobility, the city works with European institutions to align environmental investment with social inclusion, aiming to prevent new inequalities emerging from climate and infrastructure policies.
36

Link to the Guide

# Discover all the resources available on the URBACT Knowledge Hub

https://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub/social-data-management

# Thank you!

URBACT Knowledge HUB