



YOUTH Space Link

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URBACT



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URBACT IV Transfer Network

YOUNth Space Link

Duration of cooperation: 1.11.2025-30.4.2028

Lead Partner: City of Lublin, Poland

Other partners:

- City of Alba Iulia, Romania
- City of Forlì, Italy
- City of Odense, Denmark
- City of Plasencia, Spain
- City of Sofia, Bulgaria
- City of Torres Vedras, Portugal

<https://urbact.eu/networks/youth-space-link>



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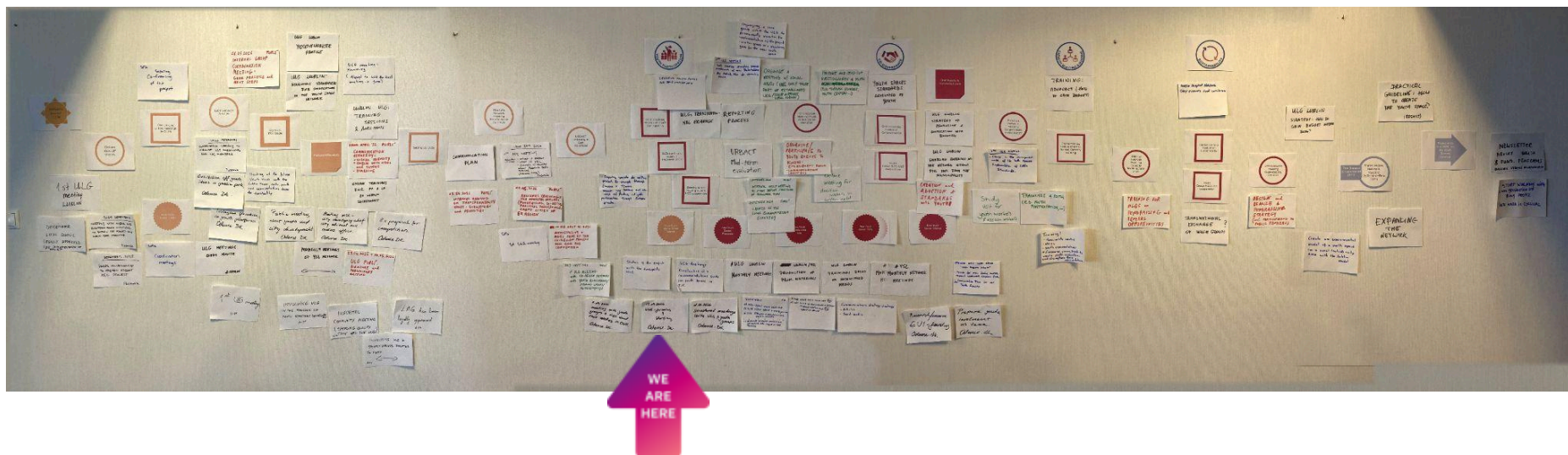
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Network news at one glance

The timeline of the URBACT Transfer Network YOUTH Space Link (Created in Network meeting in Alba Iulia 16.-17.6.2026)



In numbers

TRANSNATIONAL MEETINGS	2
ONLINE NETWORK MEETINGS	3
CITY STUDY VISITS	7
ACTIVE ULGs	4
ULG MEETINGS	9

LOCAL TRAINING SESSIONS	4
LOCAL TESTING ACTIONS	1
SPACES UNDER CONSTRUCTION	5
USED STICKY-NOTES	∞
PRESSURE ON YOUTH	0

Themes discussed

Barriers and enablers of participation, Outreach to diverse youth and neighbourhoods, National and European contexts, Co-governance, Building Youth work competences, Stakeholder engagement, Communications, Exchange of resources within the network, Long term sustainability etc.

Youth Spaces Explained

YOUth Space Link **Transferability study**

Youth Spaces are **youth led, inclusive spaces for youth**. In many ways they are like youth centers, but with the significant distinction that these spaces are for real youth leadership. Decisions on yearly and weekly programmes, what to get to the Space and in general how to develop the space are made by youth using the space. In practice decision making can happen in informal youth groups, on social media groups, voting on toilet walls etc. To enshrine the youth leadership, the Youth Spaces commit to youth de- signed **Youth Space Standards** that guide the design of the physical spaces, dynamics and programme planning.

The Youth Space model is based on experiences from the **City of Lublin in Poland**, but through the cooperation with the YOUth Space Link partner cities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) running the spaces the concept is developing further. This cooperative approach is an important part of the Youth Spaces. They bring together municipalities and their civil society to ensure youth not just the Spaces but further possibilities to grow into active citizens.



NETWORK NEWS

<https://urbact.eu/networks/youth-space-link>

Planning, planning before implementation starts



The July - August period 2026, last months of the Understand phase of the URBACT Transfer Network YOUTH Space Link saw lots of preparations to the Adapt phase starting in September. Among these were:

- **In-person Network meeting** in Alba Iulia, Romania 16.-17.6.2026 and forming **a shared timeline** (above) through the transfer process
- Starting the **preparations for first shared online training module** on Youth Participation
- **Working together on stakeholder engagement** in the URBACT University in Cork, Ireland 24.-28.8.2026

Alba Iulia Network meeting

Network came together for its second in-person Network meeting in Alba Iulia. The main aims of the meeting was to prepare together for the Adapt-phase, experience the local possibilities and

challenges in Alba Iulia and have first workshops on the Youth Participation, mutually agreed first step of the transfer of Lublin Youth Space model.



With so many things to work on, the time to explore realities in Alba Iulia was unfortunately limited. But the network members got to see the space and plans for new Youth Space based on local

Romanian **Zbor-Hub** concept located in the city's big 1700's fortress, local youth led community garden and another

space used by the youth groups leading the National Youth Capital year activities.

The meeting produced a **shared time-line**, adding activities done and planned by the partner cities to and around the timeline presented in the **Transferability study**. To let the transfer process open new possibilities, most of the planned activities cover only time until spring 2027.



Project partners also discussed **management of the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs)**:

- involving diverse stakeholders like NGOs working with diverse communities, students, university enterprises and different municipality departments,
- communication strategies,
- sustainability of the groups,
- internal coordination of youth as multidisciplinary topic,
- spaces for horizontal discussions on youth issues.

As well, there was a discussion of project funding options to ensure the longer sustainability of the transfer process. A side discussion explored the possibility of a youth exchange between the cities.



The meeting included **workshops on Youth participation** led by Youth Space youth workers from the City of Lublin. The workshops explored reasons **why youth would join** Youth Spaces:

- connections,
- things to do,
- food,
- Etc.

Steps to Youth participation:

- Informing →
- Consulting →
- Co-creation →
- Co-management

And **barriers and enablers of participation:**

- **barriers:** ambitions of others, excessive control, the intensity of the process, impatience;
- **enablers:** trust, real influence, mistakes allowed, clear rules, shared responsibility, peer invitations and support, right schedule, allowing youth to be themselves without pressure.

Preparations for upcoming training modules

In the Network meeting in Alba Iulia the upcoming training modules were also discussed and preliminary themes and formats were decided. In general the training activities will include:

- teaser in in-person Network meeting opening a new theme / step of the transfer process,
- 1-3 online training sessions for relevant stakeholders,
- in-person workshops and wrapping up in the next in-person Network meeting.

The themes and timings of the first two modules on Youth participation and Co-governance were discussed deeper. The two modules will involve both municipality and civil society

organisations workers. For **Youth participation central themes** were identified as:

- different forms and methods of youth participation,
- legal framework,
- management of youth participation,
- inclusion of diverse youth,
- exchange between partner cities workers.

For the **Co-governance identified themes** are:

- framing the cooperation (partners),
- effective cooperation strategies,
- legal framework,
- practical management structures,
- join advocacy.

Working on stakeholder engagement in the URBACT University

Almost all of the Network partners were able to join the URBACT University in Cork, Ireland 24.-28.8.2026. This and the University's prepared programme allowed deep dive to stakeholder involvement.



Discussions through the three day events are somewhat summarized in the picture of the Stakeholder engagement board below. Not so surprising for a project centering on youth, municipality & civil society organisations cooperation, most of the identified stakeholders belong to public and civil society sectors, leaving bigger gaps to private and academic sectors and especially to the environment. In the discussions these gaps were raised as points to check locally.

LUBLIN NEWS

<https://lublin.eu/en/lublin/youth-lublin/>

Co-planning and trainings with Youth Space associations

The City of Lublin in Eastern Poland is the Lead partner of the Transfer Network and home of the Youth Spaces model. The Lublin network of Youth spaces started in 2023 with the opening of Hej!, a Youth Space that's establishment was supported by IKEA foundation. The network has since grown to encompass 10 spaces around the city, all run by local youth associations.

As the home of the good practice, Lublin already has strong structures and methods in place supporting the Youth Spaces. Still, through the project the City has already started upscaling these, **reaching out** to more stakeholders, **strengthening the cooperation** with the involved civil society associations and **providing further training** for the youth workers.

First meeting with the Youth Space associations took place already in December 2025, inviting two new organisations to the group. Since the group has already met 6 times, last on 23rd of June with reflection, survey and **assessment of the training needs** taking place between meetings. The meetings have covered wide variety of topics including:

- developing common objectives for the Network,
- common principles of cooperation,
- creation of youth friendly spaces,

- National and European contexts of Youth work,
- Youth Space youth worker profile,
- challenging cases and solutions,
- cooperation with the cultural and education fields,
- promotion of the shared activities,
- exchange of resources within the network.

City of Lublin has also organised 4 training sessions for the network members covering following topics:

- **responding to violence**, psychoeducation and working in the context of peer violence and supporting people experiencing other forms of violence,
- **working with young people with intellectual disabilities**: How to build an inclusive community based on their needs? Training included elements of **Non-Violent Communication (NVC)**: – Observations, Feelings, Needs and Requests,
- **mediation in conflict situations** involving young people and parents, including elements of peer mediation and how to keep boundaries in shared spaces,
- **mediation in practice** – how to help people reach an agreement (including **Christopher Moore's topology**). This training also included new local associations.

ALBA IULIA NEWS

https://www.apulum.ro/index.php/alba_en

Youth led National Youth capital year and new Zbor-Hub

The City of Alba Iulia in Romania has developed local youth work strongly over the past years, resulting in the status of National Youth Capital 2026.

The Youth Capital summer has been full of activities with active youth groups leading the planning and organising (**videos etc. here**).



Having built a local cultural center close to the Roma neighborhood a few years earlier and renovating another space used by youth under a small local

museum, the City got news in June 2026 of funding for the next Youth Space. The new space will be based on a Romanian **Zbor-Hub** concept developed by the national BCR S -bank.

The space, located in the 1700's fortress at the center of Alba Iulia, will provide **space for youth community building, learning, workshops and events**. The secured funding also covers salaries for 2,5 workers and activities. The renovation of the space has been going on through the summer.



The City also hosted the **2nd in-person Network meeting** of the YOUTH Space Link network in June 2026.



FORLÌ NEWS

<https://comune.forli.fc.it/it>

Agreements with NGOs and identifying priorities and training needs

The City of Forlì in northern Italy has been developing its own model for cooperation with youth associations to provide local youth a network of spaces and project opportunities. The cooperation through the YOUth Space Link network strengthens this work. In the spring and summer Forlì has worked on:

- building on the existing local co-design framework,
- establishing an internal working group and preparing the transfer process,
- mapping local challenges and defining transfer priorities,
- consolidating and expansion of the Youth Spaces Network,
- identifying training needs.

The City signed cooperation agreements with three lead organisations **Cooperativa Sociale L'Accoglienza**, **Cooperativa Sociale Paolo Babini** and **Cooperativa Sociale Domus Coop** in the spring. Since that the municipality and the organisations have discussed:

- shared management principles,
- common standards,
- coordinated communication,

Through these and municipality's internal discussions the cooperations with individual organisations have become a more coordinated network.

In March 2026 the municipality also formed an internal working group

consisting of 10 workers across the Education and Youth Policy Department, Information Services, local creative youth center **Fabbrica delle Candele** and Strategies and Management of European and National Funds unit. This working group has become a central space for developing Forlì's approach, for example by identifying local challenges and priorities:

- strengthening youth's role as active actors in community life,
- expanding youth spaces network (for this municipality properties has already been mapped),
- improving cooperation between the Municipality and third-sector organisations,
- involving informal youth groups,
- empowering students,
- addressing negative perceptions of young people among adults,
- improving network management and coordination,
- continuous training.

The internal working group also identified 6 training needs:

- youth participation,
- cooperation with NGOs,
- governance of Youth Spaces,
- youth work and youth-worker competences,
- strengthening NGOs' capacity to access funding,
- youth wellbeing.

ODENSE NEWS

<https://www.ung odense.dk/>

Hearing youth dreams for old hospital area and new Youth space

The City of Odense in Denmark has a long history of youth work as municipality youth work started already in the 1950's. As a forward looking city, Odense is still interested in continuously developing its youth work and network of 34 spaces for youth.



The main development currently underway is the transition of Odense's old central hospital area into a living community, with spaces for youth. As part of the YOUTH Space Link transfer process the city's Youth School organised **events for youth to discuss their needs and wishes** related to the new spaces. Unfortunately, as so often happens in major infrastructure processes the transition to the new

hospital has been delayed, meaning that opening of the Youth spaces is also postponed.

Skab den by du selv vil leve i

UNGES IDEER TIL FREMTIDENS BY

19. marts kl. 17.00

Oplæg:
Byudviklingschef Birgitte JTK Nielsen
- Hvorfor vil vi høre din mening om udvikling i Odense!

Stadsarkitekt Susanne Renée Grunkin
Byudviklinger, der har forandret – og vil forandre – Odense

Chefkonsulent Bo Jessen
- Idékonkurrencen om fremtidens by i OUH-området (deadline 1. maj)

Tema:
Hvordan kan unge sammen få indflydelse på fremtidens by.

 **Læs mere her**
https://ungdomshusetodense.dk/?page_id=1991

 **ODENSE KOMMUNE** 

Delay at one place doesn't stop the development, though, and the City is opening another place in the beginning of the new semester: a youth / maker / music-space in Bellinge old school.

PLASENCIA NEWS

<https://www.plasencia.es/>

Renovating new space for youth and Testing Actions

Though a relatively small city in the western Spain, Plasencia is a strong urban developer participating currently in two URBACT networks with experience from others in the past. This shows in the plans and actions of the City in developing local youth spaces. Through the spring and summer Plasencia has:

- renovated old church and former regional authority youth center to be reinstituted as a municipality Youth space,
- organised its internal working to support the project,
- formed and held first ULG meeting on 29th of June with 12 diverse stakeholders attending,
- organised a first Testing Action, a city cultural festival with local stakeholders in June.



Through the internal and ULG meetings the city is preparing already for:

- next Testing Action, an association fair to be held in autumn,
- holding a meeting with NGOs on co-governance,
- ULG meeting to address the preparation of local Youth Space Standards.



SOFIA NEWS

<https://www.sofia.bg/en/web/sofia-municipality/>

Engaging diverse stakeholders and deep discussions

As a capital and by far the largest by population of the partner cities, the City of Sofia brings in the network a very different scale. For a big organisation Sofia has been able to move fast, even in the midst of internal reorganisation. The city has also been able to commit diverse workers and stakeholders to the development process, including:

- project manager,
- coordinator,
- Youth Activities Expert,
- Communication Expert,
- accountant,
- External ULG Coordinator,
- local youth center workers.

In the ULG formed to support the local implementation the city has been able to gather also:

- young people,
- representatives of non-governmental organisations,
- representatives of Educational institutions,
- experts.

After some internal delays caused by internal reorganisation the City of Sofia was able to convene the first ULG meeting already on 18th of June. The meeting presented the Transfer process and discussed:

- the current state of youth policies and youth spaces in Sofia,
- youth opportunities for active participation in the management

- and development of the Youth Spaces and urban environment;
 - the role of institutions, educational organisations and civil society;
 - the main needs and challenges related to the development of youth spaces,
 - the need to reach different districts of Sofia and ensure equal access for diverse groups of youth,
 - ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes by incorporating them to Sofia Youth Strategy,
 - the next steps under the project
- The expected role, contribution and further development of the URBACT Local Group.

The meeting also identified existing resources for further development like:

- community cultural centres,
- libraries,
- municipal cultural institutes,
- municipal premises,
- spaces managed by NGOs.

The City is also in the process of rebuilding a former kindergarten into an expanded Youth Center in the Nadezhda District. The activities of the center have already been started in a nearby school and will move to new premises in summer 2027.

TORRES VEDRAS NEWS

<https://www.cm-tvedras.pt/>

Designing new Youth Space at cross-roads

The City of Torres Vedras in Portugal, an hour north from Lisbon, has developed multiple diverse solutions to the needs of local youth. This is partially driven by challenges posed by the closeness of the capital and balance between city center and rural parishes, with new political leadership now pushing for changes as well.

The city already has Espaço Primavera, a center hosting the youth offices and spaces for workshops and psychological support, an old shopping mall turned into university space and a makerspace with a close-by study room. Through the spring and summer the City has been also preparing to open a new Youth center in a building located at strategic crossroads from a less well-off neighborhood to city center.



Torres Vedras has engaged different stakeholders to the development early on, organising first planning meeting with municipality workers, decision makers, youth and youth organisations in early March.



Due to internal reorganisation delaying plans, the first ULG meeting took place on 28th of July and included only municipality workers from Youth, Culture, Association and Citizenship & Project and Public Space divisions. The first meeting discussed issues like:

- **Concept:** “Home-like” design, proximity & transit point, $\frac{1}{3}$ of organised activities and $\frac{2}{3}$ of open / free time
- **Facilities:** Collaborative workspace, modular annex, active and relaxed outdoor area.
- **Partnership with BANG Venue:** municipality investment on music tech meeting BANG physical space and activities
- **Governance:** Municipality-Youth-Local association alliance, shared management model for associations, direct outreach in schools, operations run by youth, co-created rules and shared calendar
- **Distance from schools:** How to get youth to visit a space further away from local schools.

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