Hydro-Heritage Cities

Chalandri, Greece
77 102 inhabitants

Challenge

While Chalandri pursues pro-active green-blue transition and innovation policies, it suffers from 'in-silo' operation and scattered among departments data. This generates higher financial, labour and time-related costs, limiting cross-sectoral synergies, holistic approaches, informed decisions and higher impact of municipal action.

Local heroes

Establishing an Urban Lab as a horizontal and cross-enabling structure between the Municipality of Chalandri, expert knowledge and inhabitants seems like a Greek folk-dance orchestration. Anyone can lead and nobody can dance alone. Staff and elected councilors from 4 city departments, Chalandri's development agency, geospatial and participatory urban design experts and dozens of citizens took part in the ULG and its pilot actions.



Participatory mapping - ULG testing action

Funding

Our funding strategy relies on a diversified model combining municipal, national (Greek Green Fund, Partnership Agreement – ESPA and Social Economy & Innovation programmes) and European funding (ERDF). The urban lab may also generate revenue through collaboration with universities and research institutions, and utilize endogenous resources via crowdsourcing and community and stakeholder partnerships.

The Plan

From projects to policy: Building Integrated Urban Governance

Our goal is to expand the UIA-Cultural H.ID.RA.N.T. project integrated and participatory method across policy fields and the City's operation.
We aim to develop the institutional and technological capacities via an urban lab, able to facilitate a shift to more data-based, collaborative and holistic approaches to policy design and implementation. In other words, to move from a single issue/project working mindset to a systemic practice. With focus on establishing a multilevel governance culture and a community-driven policy making, we aim to enhance processes, tools and spaces for active citizenship, democratic and transparent city management, and the sense of common ownership and belonging.



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Municipality of HALANDRI

Hydro-Heritage Cities

City of Roeselare, Belgium
67 628 inhabitants

Challenge

In Roeselare, the river Mandel once shaped industry, streets and daily life, but is now largely hidden underground. Water projects were mainly treated as technical works, with culture and heritage involved too late.

Local heroes

The residents of Krottegem and the canal area, especially people who remember working, living or growing up near the water, together with IOED RADAR, the Province of West Flanders, heritage volunteers, guides, artists, schools and city services, bring forward stories, images and lived experience. Their input gives the hidden Mandel a human voice and turns infrastructure into shared heritage.

Funding

The Roeselare pilot is funded through the Interreg North-West Europe SLOWTOUR project, with a local budget of €519,000. Interreg NWE covers up to 60% of eligible costs, or €311,400. The remaining 40%, or €207,600, is provided as local match-funding by the City of Roeselare.

The Plan

Make the hidden Mandel visible: An immersive heritage experience

Roeselare will create an immersive physical and digital heritage tour around the Canal Roeselare-Leie, Krottegem and the hidden Mandel. The experience combines historical research, citizen stories, oral history, archival photos, guided discovery and artistic interpretation. It reveals how water shaped local industry, streets and everyday life, even where the Mandel now runs underground. The investment adds a heritage and community layer to the canal redevelopment. Expected impact: stronger neighbourhood identity, earlier cooperation between water management, public works, culture and heritage, more public engagement and a richer visitor experience.



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ROESELARE
is 'r voor jou

Hydro-Heritage Cities

Roma Capitale, Italy
2 797 266 inhabitants

Challenge

Roma needed to reconnect underused cultural and environmental heritage with urban life. The Aranciera di San Sisto, although central and historic, remained marginal, while climate vulnerability and water stress highlighted the need for new regeneration models.

Local heroes

The project relies on a strong local alliance involving Roma Capitale, Sapienza University of Rome, schools, the Italian Geographical Society and Third Sector organisations. Teachers, students, gardeners, researchers and community groups have already contributed to participatory activities and educational paths. Their cooperation is essential for transforming the Aranciera into a long-term civic, environmental and cultural hub capable of connecting heritage, sustainability and social inclusion.

Funding

The Investment Plan combines municipal, regional, national and European funding sources. Support may come from Roma Capitale departments, Lazio Region programmes, NRRP funds and EU programmes such as URBACT, LIFE, Horizon Europe. Additional contributions are expected from foundations, utilities, private sponsors and in-kind support from universities and community organisations.

The Plan

Urban Social Greenhouse Cultivating Communities in Aranciera di San Sisto

The Investment Plan transforms the restored Aranciera di San Sisto into an "Urban Social Greenhouse": a sustainable public space combining environmental education, social inclusion and hydro-cultural heritage enhancement. The project integrates renewable energy systems, rainwater collection and climate-conscious urban gardening activities. Between 2026 and 2030, the plan foresees educational programmes with schools, training activities for migrants and participatory initiatives connected to water awareness and urban resilience. The estimated investment for the first three years ranges between €130,000 and €172,000, aiming to create a replicable pilot model for other hidden hydro-cultural heritage sites across Rome.



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Hydro-Heritage Cities

Serpa, Portugal
4 600 inhabitants

Challenge

The Nora and Aqueduct of Serpa are in a state of structural degradation that conveys a negative image, reduces their tourist appeal, prevents the utilization of an important water resource and reflects a lack of commitment to preserving historical, cultural, and environmental value for future generations.

Local heroes

The main local heroes in Serpa were and will be its own population, mainly from projects and entities like the Senior Citizens Academy, schools and artistic companies, for their involvement and motivation, but also for continuing to demand change. The strategic coordination and technical structure will be ensured by the municipality through its departments in conjunction with regional and national partners (government authorities), supported by scientific and educational partners (local schools and universities).

Funding

The plan will be financed through municipal resources, regional programmes in Alentejo, national instruments for heritage and water management, and several European funding programmes supporting culture, environment, climate adaptation and community development. Additional contributions from local partners and community organisations may complement these public sources.

The Plan

A strategy for sustainable heritage and water management and for cultural activation

The restoration of a national heritage site at risk will strengthen Serpa's attractiveness as a cultural and tourist destination. The integration of innovative solutions (recovery of water-lifting system, monitoring water resources) will demonstrate how hydraulic heritage can contribute to climate adaptation, environmental education, and the valorisation of ancestral knowledge.
The added value of this project lies in rehabilitating a unique heritage site, promoting water sustainability, engaging the community, and generating long-lasting benefits for Serpa and the wider region, positioning the Nora and the Aqueduct as an inspiring example of how the past can drive innovative solutions for the future.



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serpa município | terra forte

Hydro-Heritage Cities

Sombor, Serbia
41 814 inhabitants

Challenge

Existing plans for our canal network relate mainly to the needs of industry, water transport and maintenance, in a word, infrastructure. The broader potential of the canals, such as their social, cultural and tourist promotion is not considered. We aimed to integrate the canal into all aspects of city life.

Local heroes

We tried to include as many different groups of people as possible: sports clubs, artists, historians, politicians and a water management company. They were so inspired by our project that we had a hard time choosing whom to feature.



Sombor ULG meeting on a boat trip along the Great Bačka Canal

Funding

Our sources of funding will be the City of Sombor, provincial ministries, Serbian government ministries, the World Development Bank, and EU funds.

The Plan

The Great Bačka Canal in Focus: Investment Plan for Sombor's Hydro-Cultural Heritage

Our vision and our plan is to activate a section of the Great Bačka Canal and its surrounding areas in the wider periphery of the City of Sombor. We have planned around twenty projects along the canal. The most important are: 70 km cycling paths along the canal in four phases, planting 58 km tree lines along the canal, refurbishment of the abandoned railway bridge and old pumping station and their reuse as a small museum dedicated to a Great Bačka Canal exhibition. Aside from the museum function, the station will also become a venue for community functions, such as small cultural events, and a new marina with ancillary facilities in the settlement of Bezdan.



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Hydro-Heritage Cities

Elche, Spain
238 293 inhabitants

Challenge

Elche's UNESCO-protected Palmeral landscape faced severe environmental pressure from climate change and water scarcity. Key hydraulic infrastructures were deteriorated or fragmented, creating an alarming visibility and governance gap across generations.

Local heroes

The project coordinates an essential local triangle led by the Ayuntamiento de Elche's Department of Heritage. Key operational delivery is co-driven by the technical water utility Aigües d'Elx and the historical institutional expertise of the Comunidad de Regantes de la Acequia Mayor del Pantano. Alongside them, the local community, schools, and cultural foundations actively champion this shared environmental stewardship.

Funding

The €5.21 million investment relies on a blended public-investment model. Capital works combine municipal co-financing with proven provincial grants. Sectoral lines leverage competitive Generalitat Valenciana subsidies for agricultural infrastructure and digital transition, reinforced by European environmental instruments like LIFE and Horizon Europe.

The Plan

Elche Investment Plan: Reactivating the Historic Hydraulic Backbone

Elche will safeguard its UNESCO living landscape by executing a massive €5.21 million integrated investment package. The proudest cornerstone is the complete €2.5 million rehabilitation of the historic irrigation canals and the 4,000-meter Canal del Desvío. By deploying real-time sensors and telemanaged valves, the plan integrates modern reclaimed water into traditional huertos. This structural restoration guarantees long-term environmental resilience, creates an accessible educational network, and restores continuous water visibility directly to urban public spaces for future generations.



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