METACITY

Fundão, Portugal
26 509 inhabitants

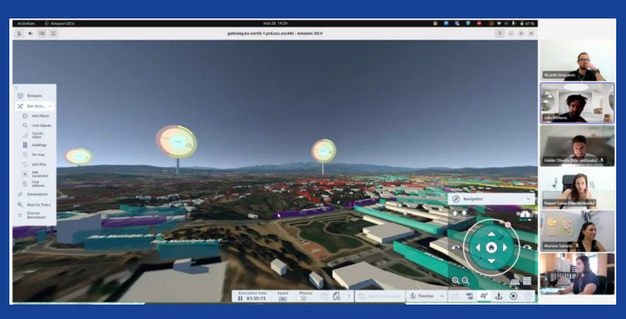
Challenge

In 2022, Fundão faced strong demographic ageing (32.5% of residents over 65), low digital literacy levels, and limited urban planning capacity in a low-density territory (38 inhab./km²), hindering evidence-based decision-making and inclusive, participatory urban governance.

Local heroes

This action relies on the Municipality of Fundão's planning, innovation and IT teams, working closely with local ICT companies, the University of Beira Interior and engaged local stakeholders. Municipal technicians and data specialists co-designed the pilot to ensure the Digital Twin is practical, accessible and adapted to real territorial needs.





Lessons learnt

Start small with a clear use case. Invest in internal capacity-building alongside technology. Use visual tools to bridge technical and political language. Ensure data quality before scaling. Most importantly, treat digital twins as governance tools, not just technical solutions, especially in small and rural cities.

Solution

Fundão Digital Twin – From Data to Inclusive Urban Decisions

Fundão Digital Twin is a digital urban platform tested under METACITY to support smarter and more inclusive decision-making. The pilot integrates spatial data on population density, energy consumption in public buildings and pedestrian access to transport, allowing municipal teams to visualise scenarios and assess impacts before acting. The Digital Twin strengthens evidence-based planning, improves coordination between departments and creates a shared language between technicians, decision-makers and citizens. Expected impacts include better-targeted public investments, increased transparency, reduced planning errors and stronger citizen engagement through visual and immersive tools adapted to a small, rural city context.



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

fundão
365 dias à descoberta

METACITY

Campobasso, Italy
47 519 inhabitants

Challenge

Structural population decline is the main challenge: in 10 years the decrease was almost 7% with progressive aging, contraction of the active population and increasing of youth emigration. Low levels of innovation in public services and urban planning.

Local heroes

The local heroes were the members of the municipality team and the representatives of the University of Molise, local institutions, cultural and innovative companies and young people, who hope to develop Campobasso with innovative ideas and projects, which made the Campobasso ULG active.





Lessons learnt

The extension of the Digital Twin to the entire urban area, the development of immersive visualizations for participatory urban planning, the establishment of a permanent "Digital City Hub" within the CTE Molise open to citizens, businesses and researchers and the improvement of the tourist promotion of the city thanks to experiential virtual tourism

Solution

Digital Twin for Urban Development of Campobasso

Thanks to the Metacity pilot action, the municipality of Campobasso has equipped itself with the digital twin of the historic center of the city which has made it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of an innovative model of management and planning of the urban heritage through digital tools. In this framework, the Digital Twin launched thanks to Metacity functions not only as a technical decision support system, but also as a collaborative governance tool, allowing cooperation between citizens, technicians and public administrators. Through this small-scale action, Campobasso demonstrated how the vision of METACITY – "virtual solutions for real people" – can transform digital innovation into a concrete driver of efficiency, participation and sustainability in the governance of urban environments.



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

Comune di Campobasso

METACITY

ISI, Arta, Greece
41 600 inhabitants

Challenge

Arta is a small city in Epirus, Greece, facing challenges common to many Greek cities, including retaining young people, overcoming outdated or missing digital infrastructure, and revitalizing its local economy to build a sustainable future.

Local heroes



The members of the ULG played a key role in the development of the IAP and the implementation of the Local Action during the project. They actively tested and provided valuable feedback and suggestions to refine and strengthen the action.

Solution

Arta's Digital Shadow

The testing action that was conducted during the METACITY project for the city of Arta served as a pilot action to test the city's capacity to move toward a full digital twin. It integrated spatial data and photorealistic 3D models of key monuments, revealing gaps in available geospatial and urban data and identifying future data requirements. The VR application allowed users to experience Arta's cultural heritage through immersive and interactive environments. By being showcased at various exhibitions and events, both nationally and internationally, the action is expected to increase visitor interest and tourism flows. At the same time, it established a solid technological and conceptual basis for the future development of a full digital twin that supports tourism, cultural preservation, and smarter urban planning.



Lessons learnt

It is important to involve a diverse ULG and actively listen to the ideas, needs, and challenges identified by its members. Actions should be promoted through open events and media channels to encourage citizen participation and feedback. Cities should start with small, realistic pilot actions while maintaining a clear long-term vision aligned with the objectives of the Integrated Action Plan.

URBACT CITY FESTIVAL
URBACT
Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg
ISI INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS INSTITUTE
ATHENA Research & Innovation Information Technologies

METACITY

Písek, Czech Republic
31 121 inhabitants

Challenge

When joining METACITY, Písek faced the challenge of improving transparent communication with citizens and visitors about urban development and cultural heritage, while lacking accessible tools to visualise complex spatial data and engage diverse target groups.

Local heroes

The local community and members of the URBACT Local Group played a key role in the project by actively participating in testing, discussions and experience sharing. Through Smart Písek, the City of Písek connected citizens, experts, cultural institutions, schools and technology companies, creating an open platform for cooperation, learning and the transfer of know-how into future urban projects.

Lessons learnt

Start with a small, symbolic pilot that resonates with local identity. Combine cultural heritage with digital innovation, involve local institutions early, and ensure outputs are accessible beyond VR. Building internal skills and reusable digital assets is as important as the final visual product.

Solution

Visualisation of the Stone Bridge

Písek developed an interactive VR and mobile visualisation of its iconic Stone Bridge as a pilot metaverse application. Based on a historical 3D model created with the Prácheň Museum, the project presents the bridge around 1500 and recreates the dramatic 1768 flood. The visualisation is accessible via VR headsets and mobile devices. It supports tourism, education, and citizen engagement, while testing the city's capacity to work with digital twins and spatial data.
Expected impacts include increased visitor interest, improved understanding of heritage, and transferable know-how for future urban planning projects.



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

SMART PÍSEK

METACITY

Nevers, France
67 408 inhabitants

Challenge

Nevers has made the digital transformation of its territory a key development priority, particularly focusing on the ability of the local authority to integrate innovative technologies into its public services and local policies.

Local heroes

Nevers Agglomération leads the METACITY project with local elected officials and the Connected Campus. Startups develop immersive tools. High schools, students, public agents, and incubators participate in the tests. The URBACT Local Group ensures co-creation with citizens. This network of local actors supports the integration of VR, AI, and the metaverse to boost the territory's appeal.

Solution

Connected Campus Pilot

Nevers Agglomération is investing in Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform training and enhance the territory's attractiveness. Nevers Agglomération is deploying innovative modules in VR and AI to train students, civil servants, and elected officials. Two tools are currently being tested: an immersive public speaking simulator, where AI analyzes and interacts with the speaker, and a stress management module using VR. These training modules are integrated into the Connected Campus to attract and retain students, while supporting the local innovation ecosystem. Initial feedback has been positive: realistic immersion, personalized feedback, and flexible training. The success of the program has led to a renewed partnership and expansion to new audiences.



Lessons learnt

To successfully implement or replicate this initiative: start with a well-defined pilot audience (students, staff...), use concrete training modules, rely on local partners (campus, startups), integrate AI to personalize the experience, evaluate outcomes, and ensure accessibility. Embed the initiative in a broader digital transformation and attractiveness strategy.

URBACT CITY FESTIVAL
URBACT
Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg
nevers AGGLOMÉRATION

METACITY

Razlog, Bulgaria
11 500 inhabitants

Challenge

Low level of digital readiness of the local education system. In 2022–2023, over 50% of schools lacked adequate digital equipment, around 40% of teachers had limited digital competences, and no coordinated local strategy for education digitalization existed, resulting in unequal access to quality digital learning.

Local heroes

The development of the Integrated Action Plan would not have been possible without the joint contribution of the municipality, school leaders and teachers from different schools, local IT and education experts, non-formal community leaders, and regional stakeholders. Together, they provided strategic direction, local knowledge and practical expertise that shaped the plan and ensured its relevance, feasibility and long-term impact on education digitalization

Lessons learnt

Key lessons for cities aiming to digitalise education through a similar approach:
- Build a shared vision early by involving schools, local authorities and external experts from the start
- Start with a pilot action to test solutions before scaling them up
- Invest in teachers' digital competences, not only in equipment
- Ensure coordination at local level to reduce inequalities between schools

Solution

Digital transformation of education

In 2024, we launched a Digital Education Lab as a pilot action to strengthen digital skills in local schools. For the first time, one secondary school was equipped with a dedicated digital learning space and teachers received targeted training to apply digital tools in everyday teaching. More than 120 students participated in hands-on activities focused on digital literacy, creativity and problem-solving. As a result, students gained practical digital skills, teachers increased their confidence in using technology, and the school became a local model for education digitalization that can be replicated across the municipality.



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

РАЗЛОГ

METACITY

Åbo Akademi University, Nykarleby, Finland
7 500 inhabitants

Challenge

Nykarleby, a small city in Finland, wanted to make urban planning more inclusive and future-oriented. Traditional planning methods often felt distant and abstract, making it hard for citizens—especially younger generations—to engage. At the same time, the town needed to develop a digitalization strategy aligned with its overall city strategy, focusing on visualization, participation, and better communication. With limited resources and time, the challenge was clear: how can a small city ombine citizen engagement with digital transformation?.

Local heroes

The initiative was driven by collaboration. Municipal staff, local decision-makers, engaged citizens, and youth all stepped forward to rethink planning. Young people brought creativity and fresh perspectives, while the administration ensured structure and continuity. Åbo Akademi University and Experience Lab played a key role by providing research insights and testing innovative tools, proving that partnerships between academia and municipalities can unlock new ways of working. These local heroes showed that regional networks, innovative leaders, and active citizens can turn big ideas into reality—even in small towns

Lessons learnt

- **Visual tools matter: They make participation easier and more engaging for all ages.**
- **Small cities can dream big: Testing actions is a great way to make integrated action plans concrete.**
- **Collaboration builds trust: Cooperation between citizens, youth, municipal staff, and academia creates better outcomes.**
- **Digitalization needs strategy: Tech solutions should align with long-term goals and governance.**
- **Networks amplify impact: Regional and local partnerships help small cities achieve more.**

Solution

Designing the Square Together: Immersive VR for Citizen-Led Urban Planning

Nykarleby tested immersive VR technology to make planning tangible. Citizens were invited to design the square of their dreams in a virtual environment, transforming abstract plans into interactive experiences. This citizen-centric innovation combined technology, co-creation, and trustful collaboration, creating a space where ideas could flourish and lead to actionable steps for the municipality. The collaboration with Åbo Akademi University and Experience Lab ensured that the process was research-based and future-ready, linking practical testing with academic knowledge.



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

Åbo Akademi University

NYKARLEBY
UUSIKAARLEPYY

METACITY

Újbuda, Hungary
149 812 inhabitants

Challenge

When joining METACITY, Újbuda faced fragmented, paper-based administration with outdated internal rules, limited system integration and uneven digital skills—while an ASP go-live deadline (1 Jan 2026) required moving approvals/contracts/invoices to 100% workflow by Q2 2026.

Local heroes

Key actors are the mayor/deputies and notary, Mayor's Office process owners (finance, filing), institution leaders, plus SMART11 (IT company of the Újbuda Local Government) for DMS One–ASP integration and Média11 (communication company of the Újbuda Local Government) for communication. Key users/super-users and the ULG forum coordinate training and feedback.

Lessons learnt

Treat digital transition as an organisational change programme, not an IT rollout: set up a named key user/super-user network, start with 1–2 pilot workflows, and establish a KPI baseline (lead time, errors, automation) before scaling. Invest in short, plain-language training materials and targeted support for less confident staff, and communicate early that initial slowdowns are normal. Enforce data quality (mandatory metadata) and plan around national-system dependencies

Solution

Digital Transformation in Újbuda - Information Session and Institutional Needs-Assessment Workshop

Újbuda's local action is a staged roll-out (2025–2027) that makes DMS One the single workflow interface and connects it to national ASP systems (Application Service Providers) from 1 Jan 2026. Building on the METACITY testing workshop, we select pilot processes and strengthen a "key user/super-user" network. Priority workflows (commitments, contracts, invoice verification, general approvals) move to 100% e-signature-supported processing by Q2 2026, targeting ⩾90% automatic filing and 90%+ electronic transactions. Expected impacts by end-2026: 30–40% shorter lead times and 25% less rework, ⩾80% e-invoices, improved management dashboards, and better citizen experience through the Újbuda App (⩾25,000 active users; ⩾4 consultations/year).



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

ÚJBUDA
XI. kerület

METACITY

Härnösand, Sweden
24 500 inhabitants

Challenge

Härnösand's main challenge is creating attractive, sustainable living environments while improving communication, building trust, and fostering an inclusive society that attracts newcomers, supports youth, and meets diverse community needs.

Local heroes

Our leaders, both local politicians and officials, actively encourage us to push boundaries, explore new ideas, and experiment with fresh approaches. They show strong trust in us as employees, giving us the freedom to try new methods and take initiative in shaping future solutions. Technichus Science Center has contributed greatly by finding the best design and creating a user-friendly layout of the site.

Lessons learnt

Start small and scale up gradually. Secure early buyin across the organization to build momentum. Create a dedicated working group with people who truly care about the topic. Their passion strengthens ownership, clarifies responsibilities. Seek inspiration from other cities in contexts such as Metacity!

Solution

Härnösand Växer - innovation in urban planning

Härnösand Växer Room is your go-to creative space in the public library — a place where you can explore the future of the city up close. From bold ideas and early sketches to finished proposals and detailed plans, this is where you get to see what's coming next. And even better: you get to influence it. In the room, you can:

- **Interact with the digital twin of the city.**
- **Dive into projects using digital and interactive tools — including a handheld controller that lets you navigate different urban development projects like you're in a game.**
- **Check out and give feedback on city plans currently open for review.**
- **Join presentations, talks, and pop-up sessions about what's happening in Härnösand.**
- **Share your thoughts through surveys and questions about the city's development.**

It's a space built for curiosity, creativity, and especially for young voices who want to shape the city they live in — or the one they dream of.



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

Härnösands kommun

METACITY

Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
105 000 inhabitants

Challenge

Mostar faced the challenge of unclear, and inaccessible spatial representations of its industrial zones, making urban planning, investment communication, and stakeholder coordination difficult. Fragmented data and traditional 2D plans limited understanding of development potential and slowed decision-making.

Local heroes

The URBACT Local Group (ULG), composed of city planners, IT specialists, local business owners, academic partners, and citizen representatives, drove the MetaCity actions. Their collaboration ensured integration of technical expertise, policy coordination, and community needs, transforming digital possibilities into practical urban solutions that benefit governance and public services alike.

Lessons learnt

Developing digital urban solutions requires cross-sector collaboration, clear communication channels, and ongoing stakeholder engagement. Start with small, demonstrable applications (like digital twins) to build trust and capacity, then scale. Align innovation with local priorities to ensure community uptake and sustainable impact.

Solution

3D Visualization of the Industrial Zone Miljkovići

Within the MetaCity framework, Mostar developed a 3D digital visualization of the Miljkovići Industrial Zone as a practical tool for urban planning, investment promotion, and stakeholder engagement. The 3D model integrates spatial, infrastructural, and land-use data to clearly present existing conditions and future development scenarios. It enables city departments, investors, and citizens to better understand zoning regulations, infrastructure capacity, and planned interventions. Expected impacts include improved transparency in decision-making, faster planning processes, stronger investment readiness, and enhanced communication between the municipality, businesses, and the local community through an accessible, visually intuitive platform.



URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

URBACT

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

Grad Mostar