NextGen YouthWork

Aarhus, Denmark
330,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Vulnerable youth in Aarhus face a digital divide due to lack of access and inadequate skills. This creates barriers to societal participation and increases the risk of marginalization as public services become increasingly digital.

Local heroes

Our actions are driven by the Urbact Local Group (ULG), a platform for stakeholders and young people. Key partners include Aarhus Municipality's Social Affairs & Employment Department, the local NGO FO, and the House of Generations, who provide the essential pilot environment for social innovation. This collaboration ensures that solutions are practically relevant and strategically grounded.

Lessons learnt

- Use pilot projects as a strategic tool to test initiatives before a large-scale rollout.

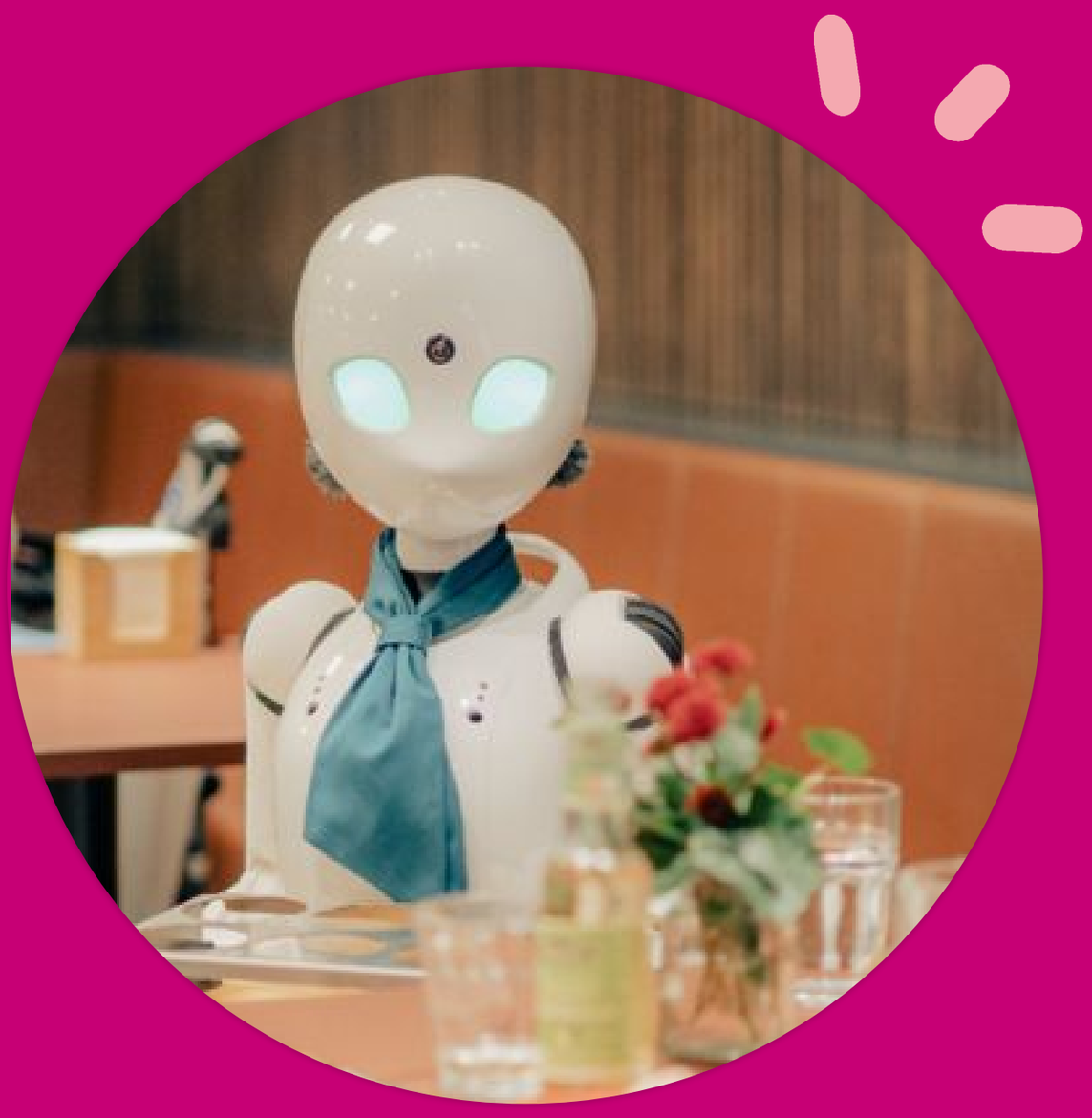
- Involve young people directly to ensure solutions meet their specific needs.

- View technology as a pathway to participation rather than a barrier.

Solution

The Robot Café

We have launched the Robot Café at the House of Generations to fight social exclusion. Young people facing barriers like anxiety or mobility issues operate telepresence robots remotely from home to serve café customers. This allows them to gain professional hospitality experience and master advanced digital protocols without being physically present. Our goal is that at least 10 youths complete this training, bridging the gap to the labor market.



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CITY OF AARHUS

NextGen YouthWork

Cartagena, Spain
219,777 inhabitants

Challenge

Transforming municipal communication to make it accessible, approachable, and representative: centralizing information, reducing territorial inequalities, tackling isolation, and strengthening the link between young people and the institution through commonly used digital channels.

Local heroes

The local heroes have been the ULG's youth associations and collectives, along with young people and partner organizations. Through regular meetings and participatory methodologies, they identified challenges, narrowed the institutional gap, and co-designed new forms of digital communication tailored to young people.





Solution

Whatsapp Channel

In 2025, Cartagena launched WhatsApp as an official channel, alongside digital information kiosks and a redesigned youth website.

The creation of this WhatsApp channel is not only a response to young people's communication needs; it is also an effective strategy to encourage their active participation in the community, strengthen the social fabric, and promote a sense of belonging. Its target audience will primarily be young people aged 14 to 35.

The channel was piloted at the Associations Fair with 41 organizations and more than 300 young people, providing immediate and accessible information, reaching young people who are disconnected from traditional channels, and reinforcing a hybrid and inclusive model of youth work.



Lessons learnt

Some things for other cities to keep in mind:

- **Train youth workers and associations in digital and hybrid tools.**
- **Involve young people and stakeholders in participatory meetings.**
- **Actively listen to their needs and experiences.**
- **Combine online and in-person activities.**
- **Use digital channels that are accessible and engaging for young people.**
- **Co-design content with young people to boost participation.**

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juventud

Ayuntamiento Cartagena

NextGen YouthWork

Eindhoven, Netherlands
245,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Vulnerable youth withdrew from physical meeting places and became mainly active online, making traditional youth work unable to reach them while professionals struggled to connect effectively in digital environments.

Local heroes

This action is made possible by the dedication of youth workers from Lumens and Pitstop, supported by the Municipality of Eindhoven, WIJEindhoven, Garage2020, MediaWise, EDUX, and the Eindhoven Library. The Youth Panel plays a crucial role by giving continuous input, ensuring the digital youth work approach truly matches young people's needs.

Lessons learnt

Involve youth early and often; co creation ensures relevance. Build a shared vision among partners before starting. Invest in digital skills for youth workers. Maintain regular cross sector meetings to align progress and keep momentum.

Solution

Digital Youth Centre

In 2024 we brought together youth workers, digital experts, and young people to co create Eindhoven's first Digital Youth Centre. Through workshops, surveys, and testing sessions, youth shaped the platform themselves. By 2025 the pilot launched on Discord, offering safe spaces, guidance, and activities. As a result, more vulnerable youth are now reached online, and youth workers connect with them in ways that finally match their digital lives.



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EINDHOVEN

NextGen YouthWork

Iași, Romania
316,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Iași hosts one of Romania's largest youth populations, with about 60,000 students in six universities. Yet in 2022 there was no public Youth Center, and only limited services for vulnerable groups. This makes dedicated public and private youth initiatives essential.

Local heroes

In Iași, the private sector led most youth-focused digital transition initiatives by creating programs that empowered and connected young people, such as Civic Heroes and People of Design. Dedicated spaces like FabLab and Zbor Hub Youth Center offered places to learn, collaborate, and engage with businesses. These initiatives filled a major gap left by the public sector and built trust through youth co-creation.

Lessons learnt

- **Encourage business sector to get involved in community.**
- **Listen to youth people ideas and needs, even when you think they are not realistic and be open to learn together with them about the best solutions to their problems.**
- **Establish strong partnership with all the stakeholders of the community – public – busines -universities/education institutions – civil society /YOUNG PEOPLE**

Solution

Empower Youth in Iași

The 'Zbor Youth Hub', launched by the private sector in Iași, provides ongoing workshops, training sessions, youth networking, and employer–jobseeker meetings. Its agenda reflects young people's real needs: safety and support, freedom of expression, fake news awareness, access to opportunities, and personal empowerment.
The five directions of the program are: entrepreneurial education, digitalization and AI, personal development, sustainability and lifestyle.
In its first year, Zbor Hub organized events such as 'AI Unlocked', 'We did it, guys', and 'SkillUp League' engaging over 5,000 participants.



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NextGen YouthWork

Klaipėda, Lithuania
160,000 inhabitants

Challenge

When Klaipėda joined the URBACT network, youth workers lacked digital skills, access to licensed tools, and data to guide decisions. COVID-19 exposed gaps in online engagement, digital methods, and capacity to reach young people effectively.

Local heroes

This action required strong cooperation between Klaipėda City Municipality, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, youth centres, NGOs, the Youth Coordinator, SMK College, the public library, and the URBACT Local Action Group, whose active involvement shaped relevant and practical solutions.

Lessons learnt

Invest in people before technology. Practical, hands-on training works best. Involve youth workers early in planning, pilot tools before scaling up, and ensure long-term municipal support to sustain digital innovation in youth work.

Solution

Digital Capacity Building

From 2023, Klaipėda piloted capacity-building trainings and digital tools for youth workers. Four hands-on trainings reached 46 professionals, improving skills in video, AI, and digital engagement. Data-driven tools were tested to improve youth work quality, leading the municipality to fund ongoing digital capacity building beyond the project.



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Klaipėda

NextGen YouthWork

Oulu, Finland
210,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Oulu's wide geography leaves young people in peripheral areas with unequal access to services. Growing demand for well-being-focused leisure highlights the need for accessible options that reduce loneliness.

Local heroes

This work would not have been possible without the dedication and professional expertise of Oulu city's youth workers, supported by an agile and adaptable organisation that is ready to adopt new ways of working and develop services that meet young people's evolving needs.

Lessons learnt

Here are couple of things to keep in mind for this:

- **Engage staff early through open dialogue — shared understanding builds commitment and strengthens the case to decision-makers.**

- **Embrace all dimensions of digital youth work, as young people live across digital activities, environments and tools.**

Solution

Digital youth work 2.0 model

Our main objective is to develop digital youth services that better respond to young people's needs and emerging trends. During the project, we carried out five testing actions to explore new ways of meeting young people and offering them achievable leisure activities. These insights and feedback from young people led to an action plan to develop a digital youth work 2.0 model. The goal is to strengthen well-being, participation and equality, and prevent social exclusion.

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OULU

NextGen YouthWork

Perugia, Italy
160,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Perugia has 33,000 residents aged 15–34. As digitalisation grows, vulnerable youth spend more time online, increasing isolation. The challenge is to bridge the gap between their digital lives and youth workers' limited training and resources to reach them online.

Local heroes

The initiative is led by the EU Projects and Youth Policies Departments of Perugia, with strong involvement from the URBACT Local Group, bringing together the Youth Services Center, ITS Umbria Academy, youth associations, Fondazione Perugia, the University of Perugia, POST, health services, and third-sector youth workers.

Lessons learnt

Create a hybrid model blending physical and digital spaces, so young people can participate in ways that suit them best. Equip youth workers with training in AI, social media, and digital facilitation to engage youth proactively. Involve young people in co-design, and build communities of practice to share knowledge, bridge gaps, and ensure inclusive participation.

Solution

AI Creative Lab for Youth and Youth Workers

The lab included 6 training sessions on artificial intelligence, with over 100 participants, both online and in person. The participants then showcased their projects in two exclusive events: THE AI SESSIONS – LIVE CREATION SHOW (April 12 @ Centro Servizi Giovani), where youth presented their projects to music industry professionals, producers, artists, and creatives; and SONIC VISIONS – AI EXPERIENCE (April 26 @ Casa Roghers), an immersive public screening of AI-generated music videos. Piazza del Melo became a digital arena under the stars, offering the audience a unique audiovisual journey created by AI.



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Comune di Perugia

NextGen YouthWork

Tetovo, North Macedonia
85,000 inhabitants

Challenge

At the time of joining URBACT, the Municipality of Tetovo lacked strong youth support systems: post-COVID social isolation, high screen use and cyberbullying, few public youth spaces, and limited institutional channels for youth voices in local decision-making.

Local heroes

This action would not be possible without the Municipal Local Economic Development (LED) Department, the Education Department, the Local Youth Council and secondary schools. Their cooperation ensures institutional support to young people, coordinated activities and the integration of youth needs into local development policies and actions.



Lessons learnt

Listen to young people from day one and give them real responsibility, not just a seat at the table. Create safe spaces where they can meet, talk and be active. Work closely with schools and municipal departments, keep communication open, and start small—visible changes build trust and motivate youth to stay involved.

Solution

Youth Center

Inspired by URBACT partner cities, in 2025 Tetovo, together with the Local Youth Council, opened its first Youth Center. Blending physical and digital spaces, the center equips youth with VR tools, laptops and mentoring. Today, 17 members lead debates, Shark Tank challenges, art events and forums—strengthening participation, digital skills and mental well-being while giving young people a real voice in their city.



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KOMUNA E TETOVËS · MUNICIPALITY OF TETOVA · ОПШТИНА ТЕТОВО

NextGen YouthWork

Veszprém, Hungary
55,247 inhabitants

Challenge

According to a 2022 survey targeting young people living in the city, only 8.16% of them wish to remain in Veszprém: 21.5% of 13–25-year-olds envision their future abroad, while 15.4% would move to another Hungarian city.

Local heroes

Opening the 'For You' Youth Club in 2024 was implemented by the local Family Support and Child Welfare Institution, inspired by good practices showcased at project meetings in Oulu and Cartagena. Created during the Veszprém European Capital of Culture 2023 year, a community space became available as a location. A ULG member representing the Family Support Institution and a newly employed young psychologist have been key operators of the club.

Lessons learnt

Keep in mind for this action:

- **Survey the needs before designing services, etc.**
- **Engage with teachers personally to invite groups of young people to test new programmes of the club**
- **Provide individual psychological counselling and conversations for free, for young people and also for their parents**

Solution

'For You' Youth Club

Inspired by experiences at project meetings and study visits, an active member of the ULG initiated this pilot action. A survey with 340 responses from 13–19-year olds was conducted, then a venue and staff was ensured for the new For You Youth Community Space with free services, offline and online board games. Individual mental health counselling, thematic workshops for parents and youth, leisure activities, volunteering opportunities, career guidance and other programmes have been offered.



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VESZPRÉM
A KIRÁLYNÉK VÁROSA

NextGen YouthWork

Viladecans, Spain
67,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Viladecans has 17,800 young people. When joining URBACT NextGen YouthWork, its main challenge was engaging diverse youth—especially 18+, non-organised and vulnerable groups—amid a digital divide and unequal participation. This showed the need for a more youth-responsive local administration.

Local heroes

This action has been led by the Culture and Youth Unit of Viladecans City Council, with the key involvement of the URBACT Local Group, including youth workers from Can Xic Youth Resource Centre, the Communication, Digital Transformation and Social Innovation-departments, and local youth organisations. Young people themselves played a central role through co-creation and participation.



Lessons learnt

Develop hybrid youth work models combining digital and physical spaces. Start from youth voice and co-creation to ensure relevance and trust. Invest in digital skills for youth workers and adapt communication to platforms young people already use, while maintaining meaningful face-to-face relationships.



Solution

Human resources, Equipment, Hybrid Youth Communication, and Engagement Model

Within the Integrated Action Plan, Viladecans tested a hybrid approach to youth communication and outreach, aligned with the four IAP lines of action: Human Resources, Communication Strategy, Facilities and Urban Environment, and Youth Participation. The city reactivated its TikTok channel as part of the Communication Strategy, co-creating content with young people and reinforcing youth participation in shaping messages and formats.



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AJUNTAMENT DE VILADECANS