Residents of the future

Alba Iulia, Romania
74.400 inhabitants

Challenge

Alba Iulia faces a structural demographic challenge marked by youth outmigration and an ageing population. Despite stable numbers, the city is losing residents aged 14–35 due to education, career opportunities and housing constraints, affecting labour market strength and civic vitality.

Local heroes

Young people involved in the Capital Youth programme, the Municipality of Alba Iulia, youth organisations, educational and cultural institutions, and members of the URBACT Local Group working together through a participatory approach.



Lessons learnt

- **Young people stay where they feel involved and trusted**
- **Youth policies work best when co-created, not imposed**
- **Participation builds long-term resilience in cities**

Solution

Capital Youth – youth empowerment and participation programme

Capital Youth is a programme that strengthens the role of young people in Alba Iulia by supporting youth-led initiatives, civic participation and skills development. It creates structured opportunities for young residents to engage with local institutions, education providers and civic life, while gaining visibility, experience and responsibility.

The programme helps young people see Alba Iulia as a place where they can grow, contribute and build a future.



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PRIMĂRIA MUNICIPIULUI ALBA IULIA

Residents of the future

Iisalmi, Finland
20.800 inhabitants

Challenge

Iisalmi faces population decline driven by youth outmigration, skills mismatch and limited integration of newcomers. Despite a strong industrial base, the city struggles to attract and retain skilled workers and young families, affecting long-term economic vitality.

Local heroes

The City of Iisalmi, local companies, employment services, community organisations and members of the URBACT Local Group working together to support newcomers and workforce integration.



Lessons learnt

- **Promotion works best when linked to real welcoming measures**
- **Attraction must be followed by integration and support**
- **Clear messages and pathways help newcomers stay**

Solution

"Bridge to Iisalmi": a campaign to attract and welcome new residents.

Iisalmi developed a targeted campaign to attract new residents and skilled workers, linking promotion with welcoming and integration measures.

By highlighting jobs, quality of life and remote work, and supporting newcomers through information, social activities and matchmaking, the approach helps people choose Iisalmi and successfully settle and stay.



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IISALMI

Residents of the future

Mangualde, Portugal
18,300 inhabitants

Challenge

Mangualde faces long-term population decline driven by youth outmigration and changing life and work patterns. While the city offers good living conditions, many residents leave for education and career opportunities elsewhere, and newcomers need support to build social ties and local connections.

Local heroes

The Municipality of Mangualde, local schools, community organisations, associations and members of the URBACT Local Group working together to design and deliver welcoming activities.



Solution

Welcoming and community-based integration actions

Mangualde developed and tested welcoming actions focused on building connections between newcomers and the local community.

Through schools, public spaces and community events, the city promotes interaction, shared experiences and a stronger sense of belonging.

These actions support integration, improve everyday life and help new residents see Mangualde as a place to settle and stay.



Lessons learnt

- **Direct conversations with residents reveal real needs and strengths**
- **Listening to everyday experiences improves integration actions**
- **Personal contact builds trust and long-term belonging**

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mangualde município

Residents of the future

Mantova, Italy
49,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Mantova faces demographic pressure driven by youth outmigration and an ageing population, with housing constraints adding to the challenge. Despite strong cultural assets and quality of life, many young people leave for education and employment elsewhere, and local opportunities remain limited.

Local heroes

The Municipality of Mantova, cultural institutions, educational organisations, local associations and members of the URBACT Local Group working together to connect culture, learning and community life.



Lessons learnt

- **Cultural assets are stronger when linked to everyday life**
- **Visibility of opportunities supports retention**
- **Collaboration improves local impact**

Solution

Connecting culture, education and local opportunities

Mantova tested actions that use cultural heritage and local networks to better connect residents, students and institutions.

The approach focuses on improving access to information, participation in cultural life and links between education, skills and local opportunities, helping residents see clearer pathways to stay and engage with the city.



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COMUNE DI MANTOVA

Residents of the future

Plasencia, Spain
39,800 inhabitants

Challenge

Plasencia faces population decline driven by youth outmigration and limited visibility of local opportunities. Many young residents leave after education, while newcomers often lack clear entry points into city life, services and social networks.

Local heroes

The City of Plasencia, cultural and sports institutions, municipal services and members of the URBACT Local Group collaborating to design and deliver the Welcome Kit.



Solution

Welcome Kit and access to city life

Plasencia developed a Welcome Kit designed to help newcomers quickly understand and access city services, public spaces and cultural life.

The action combines practical information with free or facilitated access to local facilities, helping new residents connect with everyday life and build a sense of belonging from the start.



Lessons learnt

- **First contact shapes long-term attachment to a city**
- **Clear access to services supports integration**
- **Everyday experiences matter for retention**

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Ayuntamiento de Plasencia

Residents of the future

Saint-Quentin, France
53,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Saint-Quentin has experienced long-term population decline following industrial restructuring and job losses. While quality of life has improved, the city still faces a strong image gap, with many residents and outsiders perceiving it through its industrial past rather than its current strengths.

Local heroes

The City of Saint-Quentin, residents, students, educational institutions, civil society organisations and members of the URBACT Local Group actively involved in co-creating green and welcoming initiatives.



Solution

Improving city image through quality of life and green actions

Saint-Quentin tested actions focused on improving quality of life and reshaping the city's image. These include the transformation of former industrial areas, the creation of micro-forests with citizens and students, and welcoming tools for newcomers.

The approach links environmental action, participation and communication to promote a more positive and realistic city narrative.



Lessons learnt

- **City image changes through lived experience, not slogans**
- **Involving residents builds pride and ownership**
- **Green and participatory actions support long-term attractiveness**

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SAINT QUENTIN

Residents of the future

Saldus, Latvia
27,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Saldus faces population decline driven by youth outmigration and limited local job opportunities. Many young people leave for education and work elsewhere, while the local economy needs stronger support to create sustainable employment and reasons to stay.

Local heroes

The Municipality of Saldus, local entrepreneurs, community organisations and members of the URBACT Local Group jointly developing and activating the business and community hub.



Solution

Small business hub and community-based entrepreneurship

Saldus tested the transformation of a former school building into a small business and community hub. The space supports entrepreneurship, cooperation and local initiatives, offering affordable premises, shared services and a place to connect.

By strengthening small businesses and local jobs, the city improves everyday economic stability and attractiveness.



Lessons learnt

- **Local entrepreneurship supports population retention**
- **Shared spaces strengthen collaboration and initiative**
- **Economic stability improves long-term resilience**

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Saldus

Residents of the future

Šibenik, Croatia
42,600 inhabitants

Challenge

Šibenik faces population change driven by youth outmigration, ageing, housing pressures and seasonal tourism labour. Young people lack access to affordable housing and stable, year-round opportunities. Incoming migration partly offsets decline but creates integration challenges.

Local heroes

The City of Šibenik, cultural institutions, creative sector actors, entrepreneurs, civil society organisations and members of the URBACT Local Group collaborating across sectors.



Lessons learnt

- **Integrated approaches reduce dependency on seasonality**
- **Culture and creativity support local resilience**
- **Collaboration across sectors increases long-term impact**

Solution

Work–life balance in Mediterranean style

Šibenik developed an integrated approach focused on work–life balance, combining the benefits of Mediterranean living with modern, knowledge-based and remote work.

The city links digitalisation, investment in better jobs, housing solutions and the cultural and creative economy to support stable, year-round living. This combination creates realistic pathways for people to live well, work productively and stay.



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Grad Šibenik
City of Šibenik

Residents of the future

Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina
30,000 inhabitants

Challenge

Trebinje faces population decline driven by youth outmigration, limited job opportunities and uneven access to modern services. Many young people leave for education and work, while the city needs stronger digital capacities to support economic development and quality of life.

Local heroes

The City of Trebinje, public institutions, civil society organisations, experts and members of the URBACT Local Group working together to assess needs and design realistic digital actions.



Solution

Digital readiness and integrated digital transformation

Trebinje tested a digital readiness analysis to assess capacities, skills and systems within the local administration and public institutions.

Based on real data, the city defined a phased approach to digital transformation, linking tourism, agriculture, energy and public services.

Digital tools are used as a practical means to improve services, support the local economy and strengthen everyday life.



Lessons learnt

- **Evidence-based analysis leads to realistic solutions**
- **Digitalisation works best as a step-by-step process**
- **Technology supports quality of life when linked to real needs**

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ГРАД ТРЕБИЊЕ