U.R. Impact

Ballymahon, Ireland
2 700 inhabitants

Challenge

Ballymahon has a diverse and ageing population, with limited social infrastructure and ownership of challenges and opportunities for the community to lead change.

Local heroes

The Ballymahon Town Team, along with the Bridgeways Family Resource Centre have championed the idea of a Men's Shed in the town over the last number of years and Bridgeways have provided space for them to meet until they find a more permanent home, allowing them to become established.



Lessons learnt

Here are a few things to keep in mind for this action:

· Bring people that have already done this together with the local community to allow them to learn from them,

· Identify a space that the Men's Shed can use for meetings and workshops.

Solution

New community structures to embed community ownership: Men's Shed

In 2025, we held a public community meeting inviting Men's Sheds from other parts of the county to meet with the local community that were interested in being part of the Men's Shed. Local men learned from visiting Men's Sheds, recognized the opportunities, and established a Men's Shed in Ballymahon. So far, 30 people have joined, demonstrating both the town's need and the potential for the community to come together and build structures that support itself.



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U.R. Impact

Bielsko-Biała, Poland
164 000 inhabitants

Challenge

Before joining the URBACT network, the city center faced challenges such as vacant commercial premises, a lack of incentives to attract visitors, and low levels of engagement and local identity among residents living in the area. By 2030, the challenge is to transform Biała's city center into a thriving socioeconomic hub of the city.

Local heroes

This would not have been possible without the commitment of local authorities, municipal institutions, university, entrepreneurs, NGO's and residents.



Lessons learnt

Before taking action:
- ensure you have inventoried ongoing and planned activities,
- identified key action areas and stakeholders,
- included all measures in a dedicated plan while assessing their interlinks to achieve the intended objective.

Solution

A dedicated action plan

As a result of the plan, by 2030 Biała's center has become a vibrant, modern socio-economic hub integrating residential, educational, cultural, and business functions. Key investments, including a medical university branch and the "Pedanteria" cultural center, drove revitalization and attracted residents, students, and entrepreneurs. Housing upgrades, reuse of vacant buildings, renewable energy, and support for local businesses improved quality of life, strengthened the economy, and reinforced the city's identity, making the center an attractive place to live and work



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City of Bielsko-Biała

U.R. Impact

Bovec, Slovenia
3 100 inhabitants

Challenge

Bovec faces rapid ageing and youth outmigration due to limited education and job opportunities, strong seasonality from tourism, and a lack of attractive spaces and activities that build community engagement and belonging.

Local heroes

This action started as an idea of a local volunteer, whose vision was heard and supported by the Municipality of Bovec. It would not have happened without the Municipality, the URBACT Local Group, ARC NGO, schools, senior associations, volunteers, PRC Tolmin and the future Buška Izba coordinator.



Lessons learnt

Here are a few things to keep in mind for this action:

- involve youth and residents from the start and let them co-design the programme,
- keep activities regular and predictable,
- communicate informally and visually, and
- ensure a coordinator is in place to connect partners and maintain long-term participation.

Solution

Buška Izba: Youth, Coworking and Community Connection

In 2024–2025, for the first time, Bovec tested Buška Izba as a shared space combining youth activities, coworking and intergenerational cooperation. Together with ARC NGO, young people co-designed and promoted gaming nights, film screenings and creative workshops. In parallel, the municipality opened a temporary coworking space (Feb–Jul 2025) and organised 5 entrepreneurship workshops with the regional development agency. Seniors joined monthly board game evenings, while children attended creative workshops, strengthening community bonds across generations.



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Občina Bovec

U.R. Impact

Broumov, Czech Republic
7 200 inhabitants

Challenge

In 2023, Broumov faced limited services and few attractive activities for youth, driving significant outmigration—around 600 young residents have left in recent years. The downtown has seen major depopulation, with many shops and bars closed, leaving the central square inactive and harming the local economy. About 10% of the population is Romani.

Local heroes

The local heroes are primarily all the residents of the city—those who live here and do business here. At the same time, a big thank you goes to all the employees of the city council and its organizations, non-profit organizations, and other actors who devoted their time and energy to this project.



Lessons learnt

- It is necessary to create space for the involvement of as diverse a range of population groups as possible.

- Do not be afraid to take unpopular measures that will lead to an improvement in the local situation in the long term (e.g., restricting car access to the city center)

Solution

Businesses and Municipality Together for Downtown Revival

We formed a diverse ULG including local entrepreneurs and met to discuss their needs and challenges. This led to an initial action plan to revitalize the city center: we installed uniform outdoor furniture for businesses and organized events to attract people back downtown. We also supported shop window and signage renovations, created a service map, trained city staff in participatory planning, and established a city center coordinator to connect the municipality and entrepreneurs.



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BROUMOV

U.R. Impact

Cinisello Balsamo, Italy
75 000 inhabitants

Challenge

The City lacked a strategy that placed social impact at the center of its urban regeneration interventions. The City used to invest in many different projects, but they were fragmented and lacked an evaluation system to measure their long-term impact

Local heroes

This would not have happened without the involvement of neighborhood residents and public servants in a process of defining impact indicators, as well as a training programme focused on prioritising social impact.



Lessons learnt

Here are a few key points to keep in mind for this action:

– Engaging citizens helps strengthen their sense of belonging to the city and contributes to building resilient communities;

– Training public servants enables them to design integrated projects that are coherent with one another and capable of delivering effective impact;

– Defining a set of indicators helps guide action in a structured and consistent way.

Solution

Looking for Social Impact: regeneration starts with People

In the past, the City carried out many urban regeneration projects, but without measuring their long-term impact. Thanks to the methodological and capacity building approach of the URBACT programme, the City adopted a new way of working, putting people at the center and defining success together. Public servants, local stakeholders, and neighborhood residents collaborated to develop a tool for monitiring and assessing the social impact of projects. Today, the city plans to extend this approach to upcoming projects, fostering impactful and lasting change together with citizens.



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Comune di CiniselloBalsamo

U.R. Impact

Hannut, Belgium
17 500 inhabitants

Challenge

Keep the vibrancy of the city centre despite the crisis faced by retail thanks to a new business centre built five minutes walk from it.

Local heroes

This won't be possible without innovative politicians, civil servants and businessmen. Their efforts ensured strong governance, aligned the project with citizens' needs, and fostered pride. They guided leisure activities, improved pedestrian links, and coordinated a public–private partnership that balanced diverse interests, making the city centre revitalization possible.

Lessons learnt

- Establish the needs and desires of the citizens and cultural partners as the place will host the library, the cultural centre and a concert hall
- Find the private partner that will be able to collaborate with the public interests of the project
- Go on engaging the stakeholders without the Urbact issue calendar in mind

Solution

Urban Regeneration through Public–Private Partnership

The plan is based on five pillars.
- Mobility will enhance pedestrian links between the city centre and the future business hub, upgrading walkways with art and safety measures to make them attractive and family-friendly.
- Retail engagement will involve local businesses in new opportunities.
- Architectural design will visually connect the new building to Hannut.
- Governance will ensure strong stakeholder cooperation to keep the area lively 24/7.
- Communication will promote the new space beyond the city and showcase local opportunities.



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hannut est à vous

U.R. Impact

Kamza, Albania
146 000 inhabitants

Challenge

Develop structured methods to engage stakeholders in urban decision-making and strengthen municipal staff capacities in strategic urban, social, and economic planning through new approaches and tools.

Local heroes

The city's young people, in continuous collaboration with municipal representatives, building on the positive political will to strengthen and structure this cooperation.



Lessons learnt

1. We recognize the crucial role of engaging local stakeholders in planning urban, economic, and social development.
2. As a municipality, we acknowledge the strategic value of participating in European programs, especially Interreg initiatives.
3. We understand the importance of planning actions and interventions using multi-stakeholder, inclusive, integrated, and sustainable approaches.

Solution

Engage young people in the municipality's decision-making processes.

With the aim of planning the generation of social impact through urban regeneration processes in our city, we engaged local youth and representatives from various municipal departments in a series of local meetings. Beyond the IAP themes, these meetings sparked a dynamic collaborative process with open dialogue and constructive debate. The IAP governance will mainly involve local youth and municipal representatives, ensuring the continuity of this collaboration.



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U.R. Impact

Mértola, Portugal
1 300 inhabitants

Challenge

Mértola's historic center faces depopulation, aging, housing pressure from tourism, heritage-regeneration tensions and climate risks requiring integrated action for regeneration.

Local heroes

This action would not be possible without the community—especially residents and their Association—along with young people, local entrepreneurs, organisations in the Historic Centre, and urban planning and heritage technicians ensuring guidance.



Lessons learnt

Here are few things to keep in mind for this action:

- Organise meetings with the businesses to present the programme and the benefits for them,

- Let businesses decide who they will take as a mentoree.

Solution

Urban Rehabilitation Plan for the Historic Center of Mértola

We invited the community to take part in a shared revision of the 1995 Safeguard and Enhancement Plan for Mértola's Historic Centre and are now advancing this process together. This is the central action of our strategy, from which all other initiatives stem. With residents at the core, we are co-creating a renewed vision that safeguards historic values while promoting people-centered urban regeneration, rebuilding sociability, strengthening belonging, and ensuring a vibrant, inclusive future.



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MÉRTOLA
CÂMARA MUNICIPAL

U.R. Impact

Murcia, Spain
470 000 inhabitants

Challenge

Murcia's southern neighbourhoods were physically and socially cut off from the rest of the city by century-old railway tracks and the Segura River, limiting access to services, jobs and leading to unequal development. The project needed real citizen input to guide regeneration.

Local heroes

This action relied on a strong coalition, with neighbourhood councils mediating between Murcia City Council teams, the UR Impact ULG, and local residents to host sessions and boost participation. Local cultural institutions helped attract people, while the University Observatory supported data analysis to ensure citizen ideas informed decisions.



Lessons learnt

The key take-away for Murcia was the importance of making regeneration understandable and "visible" before construction benefits are felt, as citizens need to understand and see what steps are being taken and progress is being made.

Solution

South Connection Itinerant Exhibition + Agora Labs

Murcia launched a travelling "South Connection" exhibition to explain the regeneration project clearly and collect feedback where people already are. First hosted in the Artillery Barracks (a key cultural hub in the south), it then moved across affected neighbourhoods. The exhibition used low-impact materials and QR codes to reduce waste, and combined visual storytelling with "agora labs" and idea boxes (on-site and digital). The city held 10 agora labs and a 6-month mixed online/offline participation process, and is now converting ideas into concrete actions—creating stronger ownership and better-designed public spaces.



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