

\\ Quarterly Report 03 ///

Stories and updates from U.R IMPACT Network



In this report, we dive into the intervention logic of all U.R Impact partners, explore sustainable tourism strategies, and share insights gained during our transnational meeting in Bovec.

October 2024



NETWORK OVERVIEW



U.R. Impact, co-funded by the URBACT IV European program, is spearheaded by the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo. Its primary aim is to craft an Integrated Action Plan assessing the societal impact of urban revitalisation initiatives.

Emphasising the significance of social impact and community engagement, this project seeks to reconceptualise urban renewal endeavours. This entails reorienting these actions to prioritise the welfare of citizens—addressing their social, economic, and environmental well-being at the core of these transformative processes. Additionally, by fostering a greater sense of belonging and encouraging civic involvement, the initiative aims to enhance community participation in these efforts.



Three key components for impact

The network core object is to learn and implement social impact management in their cities. the methodology around this aim is divided into three main elements:

Intentionality puts impact evaluation ex-ante, allowing planning designing for impact and includes constant monitoring and replanning

Additionality Taking into account various areas and stakeholders involved in the process.

Measurability Collecting valuable data and showcasing the impact.

City identity and key themes

Across the ten diverse cities engaged in this transformational journey, several key themes emerge, reflecting common challenges, innovative approaches, and distinctive characteristics intrinsic to each location.

Crafting a unique identity and safeguarding local heritage hold utmost significance for all U.R IMPACT cities. While some aim to establish a distinct identity and allure to draw in new permanent residents, others prioritise enhancing the sense of place for current inhabitants.

Social Inclusion	Sustainable Tourism
Brain drain and youth policy	Heritage and innovation
Governance models	Local commerce and proximity economy

INTENTIONALITY

What is the logic behind the interventions of each city?



During the Bovec meeting, we conducted a session focused on building the **Intervention Logic** for each city's Integrated Action Plan (IAP). The goal of the session was to help cities visualise and articulate the logic behind their projects, mapping out how they plan to achieve the desired social impact from the initial needs to the anticipated outcomes.

Session Activities

1. Introduction to Intervention Logic

The session began with an overview of the Intervention Logic (or Logic Model), emphasising its role in systematically thinking through the project's design. We highlighted the importance of understanding the relationship between the project's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and ultimate impact. Participants were reminded that **the logic model serves as a guiding framework that justifies why their project should be undertaken, what it aims to achieve, and how it will achieve its objectives.**



2. Poster Creation Exercise

Each city was given 20 minutes to create a poster that visualised the intervention logic of their proposed area of focus. **Instead of using a template, participants were encouraged to design their posters freely, showcasing how their interventions connected to the broader challenges and objectives they intended to address.**

The poster was to represent the logic flow from the identified needs for project action to the anticipated impacts, illustrating how change would happen through their specific approach.



3. Presentations and Feedback

Each city then had 2 minutes to present their poster to the group. **During these presentations, they explained their thought process, the challenges they addressed, and how they expected their actions to lead to measurable impact.** After each presentation, the feedback process involved participants writing comments on sticky notes and placing them on a board (like a postal box) designated for the presenting city.

Some participants also provided voice comments to offer more detailed feedback.

The Lead Expert gave personalised feedback to each city, highlighting areas for improvement and potential refinements to strengthen their intervention logic.

Linking to Social Impact: Intentionality, Additionality, and Measurability

The session reinforced the network's core objective to **learn and implement social impact management** within each city's context. We emphasised the three main elements that frame this approach:

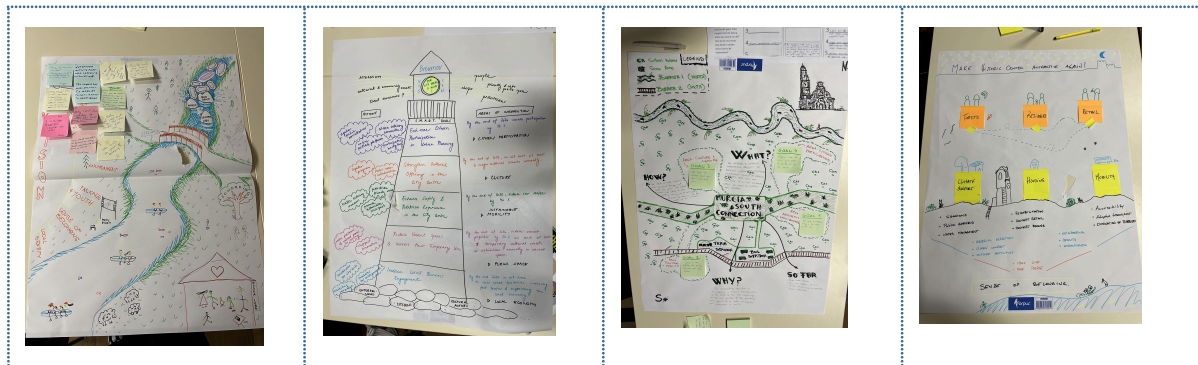
Intentionality: Encouraging cities to think about their impact goals from the very beginning and to continuously refine their strategies to align with those goals. This ex-ante planning lays the foundation for more effective impact measurement and strategic adjustments throughout the project's lifecycle.

Additionality: Highlighting the need to consider various areas and stakeholders in the intervention logic. The collaborative feedback process allowed cities to incorporate different perspectives and understand the added value their interventions could bring to their communities.

Measurability: Ensuring that cities could identify relevant indicators and data points that would allow them to track their progress and demonstrate their impact. The visual and structured nature of the posters makes it easier to translate the logic into measurable outcomes.

The session was highly valuable as it helped cities to visualise their intervention logic clearly and to receive constructive feedback from their peers. This collaborative exercise not only improved each city's understanding of their own project but also facilitated knowledge sharing among the group.

By aligning the intervention logic with the concept of intentionality, cities were encouraged to adopt a mindset that prioritises impact evaluation and continuous improvement, setting a strong foundation for more detailed planning and eventual implementation.



3rd Transnational Meeting in Bovec



The U.R. Impact network held its third transnational meeting in the beautiful town of Bovec, Slovenia, from September 24th to 26th, 2024. This meeting offered cities a chance to enhance their understanding of social impact management in urban regeneration processes. Attendees from ten diverse cities participated in discussions and collaborative activities focused on refining their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) through the lens of sustainable tourism and local needs. Bovec, with its unique challenges and opportunities, provided a fitting context for this exchange, allowing participants to connect their experiences with the local situation.

Understanding Bovec's Context

Bovec is nestled in the picturesque Julian Alps, a region marked by its rich cultural influences and diverse historical events. Despite being the fourth-largest municipality in Slovenia by area, its small population of 3,044 residents faces numerous challenges, including demographic shifts and the impacts of over-tourism. The community has experienced significant natural disasters, including earthquakes and landslides, which have shaped its resilience and adaptation strategies.

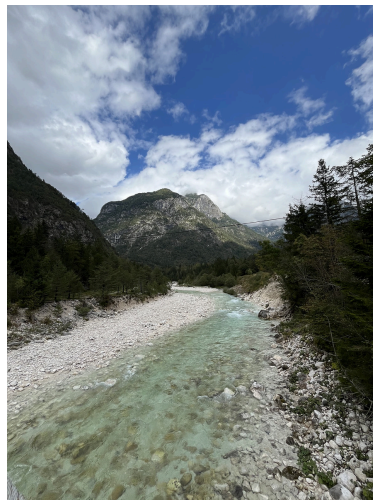
During the meeting, participants gained valuable insights into Bovec's struggles with over-tourism, especially during the summer months, when the population can triple due to an influx of tourists and seasonal workers. However, the winter season presents stark contrasts, turning Bovec into a "ghost town." This cyclical fluctuation emphasises the need for a balanced approach to tourism that accommodates both visitors and local residents.



Learning from Local Experiences

Throughout the meeting, attendees engaged in discussions centred on sustainable tourism, which emerged as a critical focus area. Participants explored **how Bovec is addressing the tension between attracting tourists and catering to local needs**. The community's experience highlighted the importance of implementing sustainable tourism strategies that enhance visitor experiences while ensuring the well-being of residents. This balance is crucial to fostering long-term growth and maintaining social impact.

Local stakeholders shared their efforts in promoting sustainable tourism through good practices, such as the presentation of Slovenia's only national park, the organic tourist farm Pri Plajerju, and the innovative digital tourist guide. These examples underscored how tourism can be leveraged to benefit local communities by preserving heritage, promoting local cuisine, and creating economic opportunities without overwhelming the region's resources.



Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

The meeting illuminated several challenges Bovec faces, including the outmigration of young residents due to limited educational opportunities and career prospects. As young people leave for higher education and job opportunities elsewhere, the community's demographic landscape shifts, leading to an ageing population and a declining workforce. To combat this, Bovec must develop comprehensive strategies aimed at reversing negative demographic trends, engaging young citizens in local politics, and fostering intergenerational collaboration.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM - Lessons from BOVEC



Recognizing the wealth of knowledge Bovec has to offer, we intentionally focused our meeting on sustainable tourism. As we delved into the region's unique challenges and opportunities, it became clear that sustainable tourism is not merely about preserving natural beauty but also a holistic approach to community well-being and economic resilience.

Overcoming Seasonality and Geographical Concentration

One of the primary insights from Bovec is the need to combat the seasonal nature of tourism. The region faces the challenge of attracting visitors year-round, which can alleviate the pressure on local resources during peak seasons while ensuring that businesses remain viable throughout the year. By promoting activities and experiences that appeal to different demographics, Bovec can maintain a steady influx of visitors and create a more balanced economic landscape. Moreover, spreading tourism across less-visited areas reduces congestion at popular sites, enhancing the visitor experience and protecting the region's natural attractions.

Respecting Nature's Limits

Bovec's commitment to respecting its environment was evident in discussions surrounding sustainable tourism policies. The town actively manages the impact of tourism through initiatives aimed at controlling traffic and parking challenges, especially during the busy summer months. This mindful approach ensures that the local ecosystem can withstand visitor pressures, aligning with U.R. Impact's emphasis on social and environmental well-being.

Sustainable Mobility

Addressing the need for sustainable mobility was another key topic. Bovec is exploring solutions to improve accessibility through integrated transport systems, aiming to reduce the environmental footprint associated with travel. This aligns with the network's goal of fostering inclusive urban environments, ensuring that all community members, including those who do not own vehicles, can enjoy and participate in local tourism activities.

Promoting a Sustainable Economy

The presentation of the Soča Finest brand highlighted how local products contribute to

sustainable tourism while enhancing regional identity. By prioritising local commerce, Bovec can create a proximity economy that not only supports local businesses but also reinforces the community's ties to its heritage. This approach dovetails with U.R. Impact's focus on local commerce, emphasising how sustainable tourism can create a thriving local economy that respects cultural and environmental integrity.

Balancing Human and Wildlife Needs

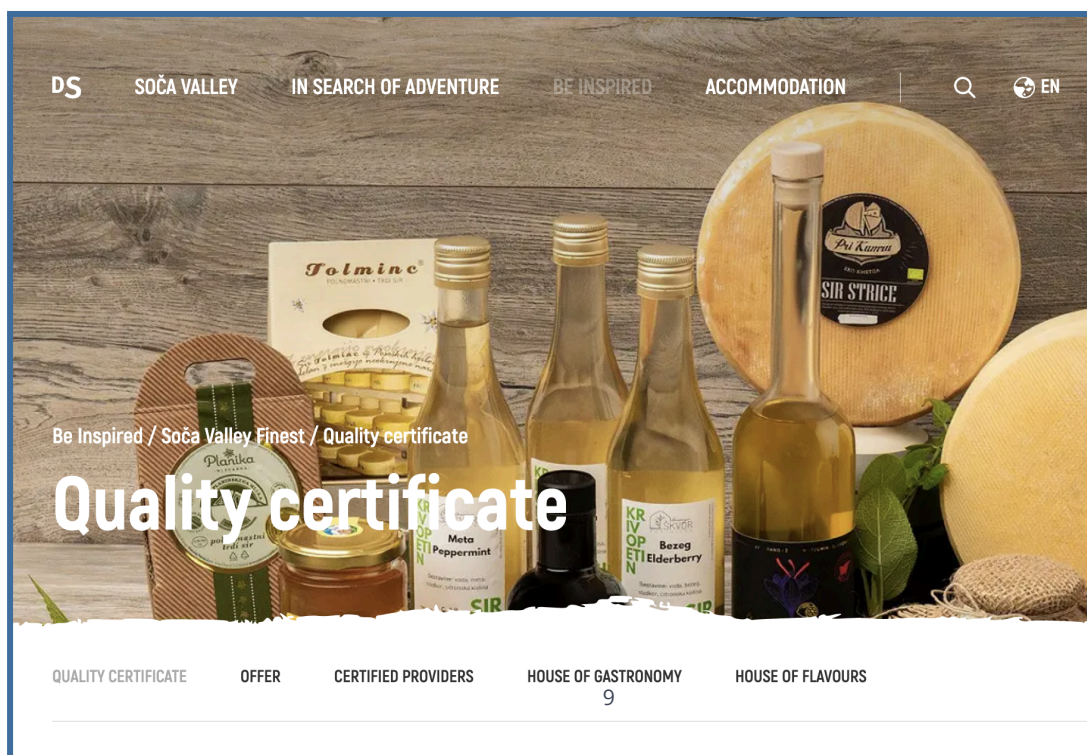
The complex relationship between humans and wildlife emerged during our visit to the natural reserve. Understanding the challenges of coexisting with local wildlife, such as wolves, is vital for sustainable tourism. This balance is crucial not only for preserving biodiversity but also for ensuring that the needs of the local community are met without compromising the environment.

Through our time in Bovec, it became clear that sustainable tourism practices are intertwined with the broader themes of social inclusion, heritage, and governance. By implementing strategies that prioritise sustainability, Bovec sets an example for other cities within the U.R. Impact network. The lessons learned here will inform our ongoing discussions about creating inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban environments.

Case Study: Soča Valley Finest

Overview

"Soča Valley Finest" is a collective brand developed to promote high-quality local products and services in Slovenia's Soča Valley. Based on the "Authentic from Slovenia" model, it emphasises sustainability, authenticity, and local identity, aiming to strengthen the local economy and tourism through a network of regional providers.



Key Components

<p>Affiliated Providers Network</p> <p>Supports sustainable, high-quality offerings from local businesses.</p>	<p>Rural Business Incubator</p> <p>Encourages innovative business ideas with a focus on local value.</p>
<p>Certification System</p> <p>Guarantees product quality and the use of local materials, boosting their reputation.</p>	<p>Marketing and Visibility</p> <p>Engages in joint promotion and logistics to highlight Soča Valley's unique offerings.</p>

Training and Support for Providers

Providers benefit from training, consulting, design support, and promotion through digital channels. This support enhances their visibility and market reach, helping to connect local products with a broader audience.

Results

The initiative has grown to include **52 providers** offering **155 certified products and services**, featured in an online catalogue. It has successfully increased the value and recognition of local products, positioning Soča Valley as a destination for sustainable and authentic tourism experiences.

"Soča Valley Finest" serves as a model for integrating local commerce with sustainable tourism, aligning with U.R. Impact's focus on social inclusion, heritage, and sustainable economic development. It demonstrates the power of a cohesive branding strategy to boost local economies while preserving regional identity.

TOOL FOCUS



Roadmap Co-Design Activity - Empowering Partners Through Shared Intentions

In this activity, we used a powerful tool—a nearly empty roadmap—to engage our partners in the co-design of the project's future direction. Following a discussion on the Mid-Term Reflection survey results, where the partners analysed the strengths and weaknesses of the past year, the focus shifted to setting priorities and planning for the upcoming year.

Tool Description: The Empty Roadmap

The empty roadmap served as a visual and interactive tool that allowed partners to directly shape the project's future. By starting with a blank (or almost blank) template alongside a printout of the original roadmap, the goal was to encourage partners to reflect on the project's current status while envisioning its next steps. **This approach emphasised both awareness of the initial plan and adaptability to evolving needs.**

How It Worked:

1. **Group Work:** Partners were divided into three groups, each tasked with creating their own version of the future roadmap. This collaborative exercise ensured that every voice was heard, and diverse perspectives were incorporated into the planning process.
2. **Filling in the Roadmap:** Each group filled in their roadmap with their proposed priorities, activities, and themes for the next year. This open-ended design approach allowed for flexibility and creativity, enabling partners to highlight the areas they believed needed the most focus.
3. **Sharing and Integration:** Once the groups completed their versions, their roadmaps were displayed for everyone to see. This step created a transparent environment where each group's vision could be discussed and compared, fostering a sense of ownership and collective decision-making.
4. **Consolidation:** The Lead Expert and Lead Partner then summarised the key findings from the group's roadmaps, synthesising them into a unified vision. They proposed a co-designed roadmap that was built from the combined inputs, ensuring alignment with the partners' shared intentions and priorities.

The Power of the Tool

The strength of this tool lies in its ability to engage partners actively in the planning process. **By presenting partners with an empty roadmap, we encouraged a fresh, open-minded approach to the project's future.** This method helps partners to not only see the roadmap as a static plan but as a dynamic framework they can influence and adapt to meet emerging needs.



This approach fosters a deeper sense of commitment and accountability among partners, making them more aware of the project's direction and their role in it. It also models a practice they can apply with their own URBACT Local Groups (ULGs), where engaging stakeholders in co-design processes can lead to more inclusive and effective urban planning.

WHAT NEXT?



Moving forward, U.R Impact partners will continue to refine their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) and strengthen the intervention logic at the core of their urban strategies. A key focus will be on deepening their work with URBACT Local Groups (ULGs), particularly in advancing the implementation of testing actions, which we will analyse and expand upon in the coming quarter.

The upcoming meetings will concentrate on two main themes: local commerce and the proximity economy, followed by youth policy and strategies to address brain drain. These topics are vital for driving sustainable urban regeneration and ensuring that local communities benefit directly from economic and social development initiatives.

In terms of impact methodology, the emphasis will shift towards concrete data collection practices. By gathering and analysing relevant data, we aim to better understand the outcomes of our interventions and continuously adapt our strategies to maximise social impact. This approach will help us create measurable results that guide our future actions, reinforcing the intentionality and additionality that lie at the heart of U.R Impact's mission.

Through this ongoing collaborative effort, we will continue to co-design and refine our roadmap, ensuring that each partner city actively contributes to shaping a more resilient and inclusive urban future.