

Residents of the Future

Finding solutions to influence the urban shrinkage



Residents of the Future, Baseline Study

This document was produced in the context of the URBACT network, Residents of the Future.

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Residents of the Future Lead Partner

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Kalamata, Greece

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEAD PARTNER

Cities face numerous challenges in their development. Demography is one of them, while in the past cities grew uncontrollably, which is still a problem of the third world and large cities everywhere in the world, a new trend has been recorded in Europe.

The city of Šibenik is one of them.

Although the city has an exceptionally well-preserved natural and cultural heritage, rich history and exceptional potential, according to the latest population census, it recorded a decline of 8%. In their plans and budgets, local authorities mostly have standard measures that try to influence the mentioned problem, but the Lead partner wondered what else can be done about it, how to react?

If we are talking about promoting integrated sustainable urban development through cooperation, there is no better program than URBACT to tackle this kind of issue. By including different stakeholders, individual and institutional, in their projects, through this network partner cities will try to influence the demographic changes that result in population reduction and aging. The EU's demographic situation requires a holistic approach that embraces social and economic policies, active labor market and cohesion policies, policies supporting families, measures for aging workers, etc. The ability of local government to retain and attract population depends on quality of life and liveability while liveability depends on economic, social, cultural, geographic and environmental issues.

How can local governments react in this regard; how to improve the quality of life, retain existing residents and attract new ones, what actions can be taken locally; these are important questions that this network will address on its biennial journey.

Nikolina & Petar
Šibenik - Lead Partner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

STATE OF THE ART

EUROPEAN SMALL CITIES LOSING POPULATION: WHY & WHAT
COULD BE THE MAGNETS FOR THEIR ATTRACTIVENESS?

URBAN SHRINKAGE: AN EUROPEAN DECISIVE CHALLENGE 07

HOW ARE SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES LOSING POPULATION? 10

WHY ARE THESE TRENDS OCCURRING? 11

THE IMPACT ON OUR SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY 12

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TACKLED BY THIS
NETWORK** 13

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPEAN CITIES 14

RESIDENTS OF THE FUTURE MAIN THEMES 15

GOOD PRACTICES IN THE FIELD ACROSS EUROPE 16

02

CITIES PROFILES

10 SMALL CITIES FINDING SOLUTIONS TO THE URBAN SHRINKAGE

ROMANIA

ALBA IULIA 22

FINLAND

IISALMI 26

GREECE

KALAMATA 30

PORTUGAL

MANGUALDE 34

ITALY

MANTOVA 38

SPAIN

PLASENCIA 42

FRANCE

SAINT-QUENTIN 46

LATVIA

SALDUS 50

CROATIA

SIBENIK 54

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

TREBINJE 58



03

SYNTHESIS & METHODOLOGY RESIDENTS OF THE FUTURE ON THE ROAD

COMMON OBJECTIVES AND CHALLENGES	62
PARTNERS POSITION	63
THE ACTION PLANNING NETWORK	66
ROADMAP	68
KEY ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS	70
TNM CORE TRANSNATIONAL NETWORK MEETINGS	72

04

CONCLUSION THOUGHTS	77
REFERENCES	79

EUROPEAN SMALL CITIES LOSING POPULATION: **WHY & WHAT COULD BE THE MAGNETS FOR THEIR ATTRACTIVENESS?**

THE BASELINE STUDY

During Phase 1, the ten partners have explored their individual and shared challenges through the partners' visits and meetings.

Now it's time to sit back, **reflect on the network challenge (as it relates to the European and local context), each partner's starting point, as well as learning expectations, and focus on the action planning.**

This Baseline study makes a synthesis of Activation Stage, setting the objectives to Phase 2, within the following structure:

State of art

The network **challenge will be analyzed** within the context of the EU's urban policy priorities, presenting existing knowledge and good practices across Europe, and identifying the network's added value.

Cities Profiles

All the **network partners will be presented**, in particular in relation to local policy and ongoing initiatives, key challenges, SWOT analysis, and the focus of the URBACT Integrated Action Plan and ULG constitution, as well as the learning opportunities and potential contributions.

Synthesis and Methodology

This part will draw out the sub-themes that the network will address, making a synthesis of all partners' positions and **describing the methodology for management and coordination, transnational and local exchange and learning**, as well as communication during Phase 2.

01 STATE OF ART



Analysis

▪ **Shrinking cities** or urban depopulation are cities that have experienced a population loss.

Some curiosities...

▪ In 2001, the crude rate of natural population change was **+0.4** per 1 000 persons and remained positive until 2011. The rate turned negative in 2012 and has continuously decreased since 2016 to reach **-1.1** in 2019, **-2.5** in 2020 and **-2.7** in 2021.

▪ The European share of the world population will diminish from approx. 12% in 1960 to 6% in 2023, to 4% in 2070.

▪ In 2021, 2.3 million people immigrated to the EU zone from non-EU countries and 1.4 million people previously residing in one EU Member State migrated to another Member State, a total of 3.7 million international immigrants.

URBAN SHRINKAGE: AN EUROPEAN DECISIVE CHALLENGE

Over the course of history, cities around the globe have gone through cycles of growth and decline. Although the world's population is increasing, **Europe has been experiencing unfavorable demographic trends for the last decade.** Shrinking cities have become a European and global challenge.

The main cause of this trend is the negative natural population change (difference between live births and deaths). This means that **births are decreasing and the number of deaths is increasing**, and without positive net migration, Europe's population would have already started to shrink. Other continents go through a process of aging, but Europe is the oldest.

Demographics have a strong impact on the economy: GDP growth is lower in countries where population growth is negative. **The EU-27 has lost the working-age population**, which will impact our productivity, health systems, and public budget. **The truth is that aging will reduce Europe's economic growth potential.** Having a larger and more inclusive labor market, boosting the employment rate of women, and reconciling work and family life will have critical importance since there are almost 5% more women than men in the EU and a higher share of people of working age are in urban regions. Investing in people's skills, looking for a highly-skilled, well-trained and adaptable workforce is the key. **The problem, however, is far from being just economic, with the risk of a true cultural upheaval.** Immigration and emigration play an important role in demographic changes too. The population of Africa will likely increase by a total of 1 billion and 300 million—130 million in North Africa alone. **In other words, the migratory pressure on Europe will be greater than ever!** This will be a demographic shock—implosion (inside Europe) plus explosion (outside the EU).

Source: Press Release listed in Chapter 4: References, page 77 and 78



Asking

What is meant by Shrinking Cities?

Shrinking cities refer to urban areas experiencing a substantial and sustained population decline, often accompanied by economic and infrastructural challenges. The phenomenon can occur for various reasons, such as deindustrialization, changing economic structures, suburbanization, or demographic shifts.

Here are some considerations when thinking about shrinking cities:

Economic Challenges: Shrinking cities often face economic difficulties due to the loss of industries and businesses. This can result in higher unemployment rates and reduced tax revenue.(...)

Social Impact: Population decline can have social repercussions, including a reduced sense of community, increased poverty rates, and challenges in maintaining social services. (...)

Environmental Impact: Shrinking cities can have positive environmental impacts, as reduced urban sprawl may contribute to lower energy consumption and a smaller ecological footprint.

Urban Planning: (...) Cities may need to repurpose or demolish vacant structures, consolidate services, and plan for adaptive reuse of spaces to match the reduced population.

Quality of Life: (...) Reduced congestion, lower crime rates, and a more relaxed pace of life can be appealing to some residents.

Revitalization Efforts: (...) This can involve attracting new industries, investing in cultural and recreational amenities, and fostering a welcoming environment for residents and businesses.

In conclusion, the challenges of shrinking cities are multifaceted, but with careful planning and innovative strategies, **these urban areas can adapt and find new paths for sustainable development.** (...)



World Population by Continent

Europe



9% of World Population 2020



Africa



17% of World Population 2020



Asia



59% of World Population 2020



north America



5% of World Population 2020



south America



9% of World Population 2020



Australia



1% of World Population 2020

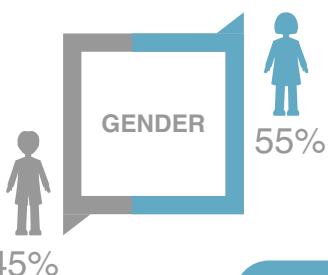


Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019)

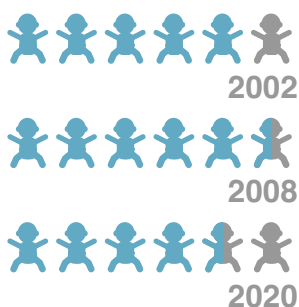
Demographic Changes in Europe

1. Birth Rates Low

First Child at **29.7**

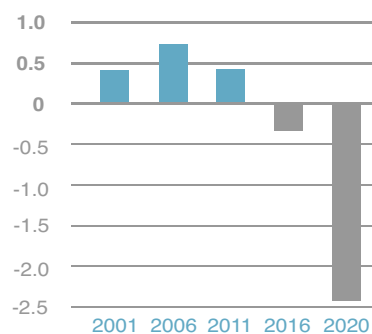


Crude Birth Rate



Number of live birth per 500 persons

Crude Rate of Natural Population Change

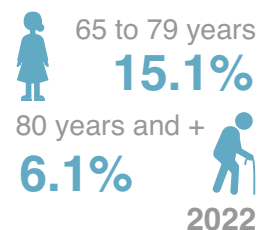
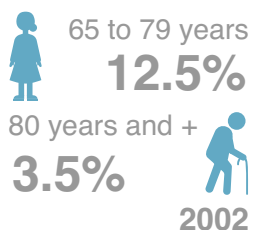


Natural population change per 1000 persons

2. More Women than Men

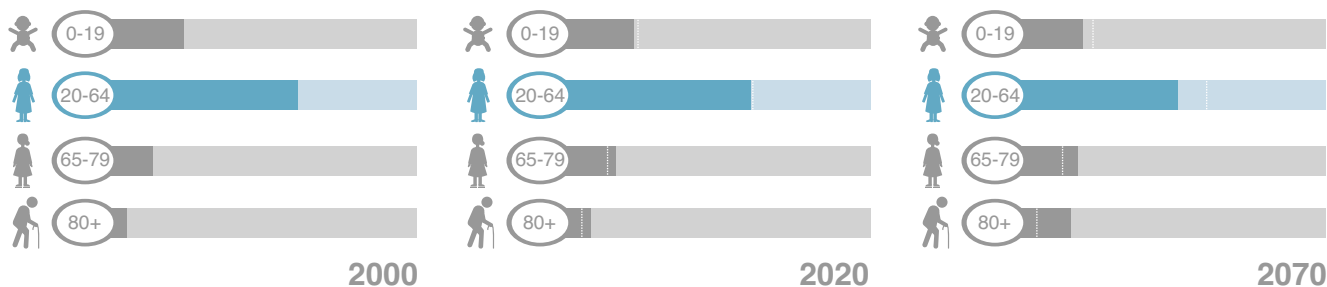
2. An Ageing Population

Population aged (% of the total population)



3. Labor Force Shrinking

Population by age groups, EU-27



Source: Eurostat

HOW ARE SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES LOSING POPULATION?

Birth Rates Low

Low birth rates in Europe have been a prominent demographic trend for several decades. **The average number of childbirths in the European Union (EU) was 1.53 in 2021, well below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman needed to maintain a stable population.** Almost any country has a rate at this level. Women are also, on average, giving birth to their children later in life. Between 2013 and 2021, the mean age of women at childbirth in the EU went from 28.8 to 29.7. There are many factors contributing to this tendency, such as: the cost of living is increasing, there is economic uncertainty, people are investing more time in education and professional lives, the work culture in most European countries is not family-friendly, and migrations have let many people lose their family support.

People move from small to bigger cities

Urban centers alone hosted more than half the global population in 2015. In the same year, urban areas hosted over 6.1 billion people, nearly double that in 1975. In 2018, a study by Eurostat found that the urban population grew by 1.2% in 2017, reaching 451 million people, an increase of 5.4 million people in just one year. **Recently, in 2020, a report by the European Parliament found that this trend will continue to rise, reaching 524 million people living in urban areas by 2050.** Some of the reasons are: looking for better educational institutions or job opportunities; having easy access to cultural attractions as well as leisure activities; and better transportation networks.

People emigrate to richer countries

The EU's migration policies have led to substantial migration flows between member states. **According to Eurostat, in 2023, there were 16 million EU citizens living in other EU member states.** European countries, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Ireland and France, have been attractive destinations for immigrants, and citizens of Eastern and South European countries, such as Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria, and Portugal, Spain, Italy or Greece have moved to Western European countries. The main reasons are that in richer countries: there are plenty of jobs available, and immigrants are more likely to be able to find work that pays a good wage; they have higher living standards, which means that they offer a good quality of life, including access to good healthcare, education, and housing; and they have relatively open immigration policies.

Fertility rate (number of live births per woman)

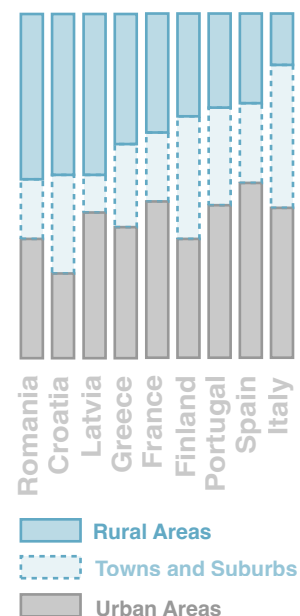
France	1.84
Romania	1.81
Croatia	1.58
Latvia	1.57
European Union	1.53
Finland	1.46
Greece	1.43
Portugal	1.35
Italy	1.25
Spain	1.19



2.1 children per woman
Replacement Rate Needed
to maintain a stable population

Source: Eurostat Interactive Publications, Demography 2023 Edition
Data not available to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Share of Population in...



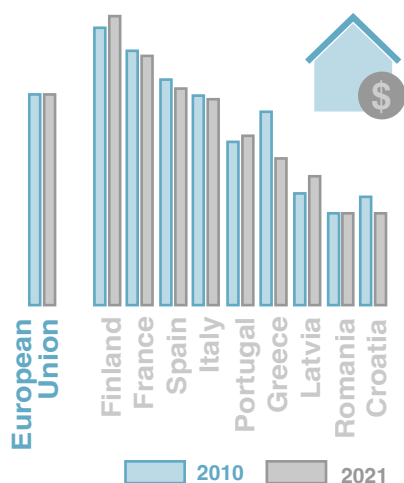
Source: Eurostat and World Urbanization Prospects, 2014
Data not available to Bosnia and Herzegovina

EU citizens living in another EU country, 2022 (number of persons)



Source: Eurostat and World Urbanization Prospects, 2014
Data not available to Bosnia and Herzegovina

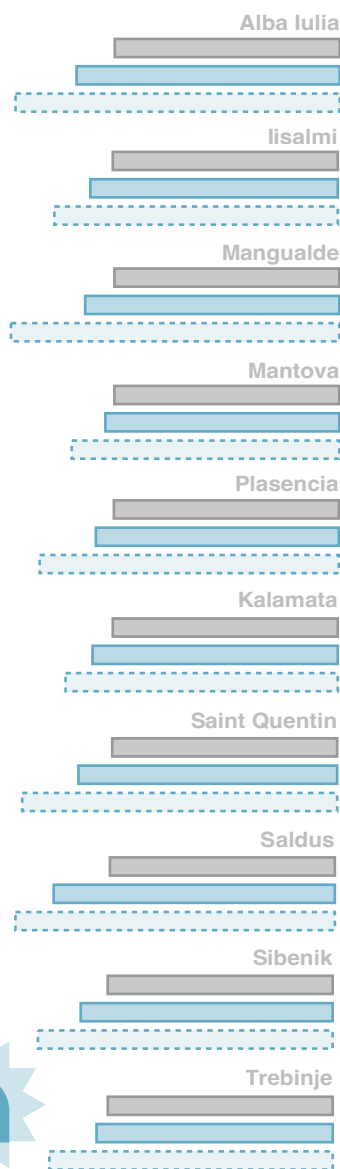
Price Levels for Housing (includes water, electricity, gas)



Source: Eurostat, Housing in Europe, 2022 Interactive Edition
Data not available to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Average Salaries

(% between country, capital and city level)



City Level
National Level
Capital Level

WHY ARE THESE TRENDS OCCURRING?

Housing cost are becoming too expensive

In the last decade, there have been many changes in the housing market in Europe. Although the share of the population owning their home has been rather stable at around 70% over the whole period 2010/20, leaving the share of tenants at around 30%, house prices grew in total by 37% in the EU and by 33% in the euro area. **On average, in the EU in 2021, 18.9% of disposable income was dedicated to housing costs.** One of the many factors contributing to rising housing costs is smaller households. The overall trend consists of couples without children, people living alone, and single parents. In the EU in 2021, a third of the population (33.6%) lives in an under-occupied home. Other reasons for the higher costs of houses are the decrease in construction after the last decade's crisis. **In some countries the number of new houses or rehabilitated houses this last decade is one fifth of the previous decade number.** However, housing costs differ significantly between countries and cities. It's important to analyze case by case to define housing policies that will help cities become more attractive.

Lack of Career Oportunities

According to a recent study by the European Commission, the lack of career opportunities in small European cities is a major challenge for young people. **In 2023, around 20% of young Europeans aged between 20 and 29 live in large cities. Of these, around 40% moved to these cities to study and work.** The study found, too, that young people in small cities are more likely to be unemployed and underemployed than their counterparts in large cities. These averages change from country to country. In southern European countries, such as Portugal, Spain, and Italy, the percentage is higher, reaching 50% or more. In northern European countries, such as Germany, Finland, and Denmark, the percentage is lower, reaching 30% or less.

Average Salaries

According to a 2023 study by the Eurofound, the average salary in many European cities is lower than the average salary in the country as a whole. **The study found that 22% of European cities had an average salary below the national average, and 7% of cities had an average salary that was less than 75% of the national average.** In shrinking cities, there was a tendency to lower average salaries. Some of the reasons are: the decline of manufacturing and other traditional industries that led to a loss of jobs and a decrease in the average salary; the outmigration of young and educated workers; and the lack of investment in infrastructure and development that is needed to attract businesses and create new jobs.

THE IMPACT ON OUR SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY

Shrinking is a complex process that affects multiple dimensions of a city and can have mutually reinforcing effects, leading to further shrinking. From economic, social, infrastructural, and political changes, there are many dimensions that change.

Economic

Less population of working age: The loss of young people highlights the demographic aging of the labor market.

Loss of tax revenue: A declining population and economic activity result in reduced tax revenues for local governments, limiting their capacity to fund essential services and projects.

Loss of job offer: A small population means less demand for goods and services, which leads to the closure of some businesses, decreasing the economic diversity.

Loss of talent and expertise: Many young and educated people leave shrinking cities in search of better opportunities

Social and Infrastructural

Aging Population: Population decline often correlates with an aging population as younger individuals migrate.

Decreased Community Services: Less population may lead to the closure of essential community services as schools and healthcare facilities.

Social Isolation: Shrinking cities may experience social challenges, such as decreased community engagement and a sense of isolation among residents.

Vacant Properties: Population declines can lead to more vacant or abandoned properties, contributing to reduced property values.

Political

Maintenance Issues: The cost of maintaining existing infrastructure can become a burden for local governments, especially when facing population decline and reduced tax revenue, leading to a decrease in the quality of public spaces, service levels of facilities and public transport.

Less attractiveness of the city: Shrinking can affect how a city is perceived on a local and global scale. A negative image of the city can create stigmatization that can have a reinforcing effect, leading to even more people and businesses moving out.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TACKLED BY THIS NETWORK

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, defined the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a call for action by all countries in a global partnership. As a good practice, we could not fail to align the purpose of this network with the current objectives, with main focus in goal 8 - decent work and economic growth and goal 11- sustainable cities and communities.

Goal 8- Decent work and economic growth

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Economic growth is one of the themes with the greatest impact on the network. Through this objective, cities can increase the job offer and retain inhabitants with better salaries.

Several targets of this goal are aligned with the network's objectives, such as: achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation; promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation; reduce the proportion of youth not in employment; implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

Goal 11- Sustainable cities and communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

There is nothing more important than a resilient and sustainable city to attract and retain people. In an increasingly competitive world where the pressure from big cities to attract talent is so great, it is extremely important to reflect on ways to make medium and small cities more attractive.

For this reason, specific targets of this goal will be addressed, such as: ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services; provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems; enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization; provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces.



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPEAN CITIES

2023 Highlights

The results of the 2023 exercise show that overall satisfaction across European cities has declined compared to the satisfaction levels recorded in 2019, but remains high, with almost nine out of ten people reporting to be satisfied with living in their city. Amid the overall decline, results confirm what was already observed in 2019, that is significant improvements in perceived quality of life in cities in eastern Member States.

Smaller cities are perceived as being a better place to live for older people and for families with young children. People feel safer walking alone at night in smaller cities, and they perceive their city as being cleaner and less noisy than people living in larger cities.

Quality of life includes all factors that influence what people value in living, beyond the purely material aspects (Eurostat, 2015). It depends not only on objective, verifiable aspects such as income and education, but also on feelings and perceptions about one's standard of living, the quality of society and the environment around us.

Many issues linked to quality of life – housing costs, clean air, cultural amenities (e.g. access to museums), transport, job opportunities, risks (e.g. crime) – depend on where a person lives, which is why where people live affects their quality of life (Marans, 2015; Mouratidis, 2021). There are certain amenities that may be especially relevant for the quality of life of specific groups of people, such as families and older adults. Moreover, the quality of life of minority groups may depend on perceptions of inclusiveness of the city and of its inhabitants.

Studies show that in more developed countries, happiness or subjective well-being are often higher in smaller cities than in larger ones (Burger et al., 2020). This is also true in the study. Around 89% of people living in a city with less than 250.000 inhabitants are satisfied with living in that city. This drops to 86% for cities with a population between 1 and 5 million. The average of the five cities with over 5 million inhabitants (Ankara, Istanbul, London, Madrid and Paris) is even lower (79%), mainly because Istanbul's (one of the cities being studied) score is low, at 65%.

RESIDENTS OF THE FUTURE MAIN THEMES

City Branding and Marketing involve strategically showcasing the unique cultural, economic, and lifestyle attributes of the cities to create a distinct identity, effectively communicating the city's strengths to attract and retain residents and investors.

Digital Nomadism involves catering to the needs of individuals who work remotely and travel, offering coworking spaces, networking opportunities, and a supportive community, positioning the cities for this emerging lifestyle.

Digital Transformation entails integrating advanced technologies and smart solutions into various aspects of city life, enhancing efficiency, connectivity, and services, creating an innovative and modern urban environment.

Economic diversification involves broadening the range of industries in the cities, promoting job creation and skill development to ensure a resilient and dynamic local economy, providing diverse employment opportunities.

Entrepreneurship Development focuses on cultivating a supportive ecosystem for local businesses, startups, and innovators, fostering economic growth, job creation, and a culture of innovation that enhances the city's appeal to residents.

Housing policies aim to ensure a diverse and affordable range of housing options that cater to the needs of residents, contributing to a sustainable and inclusive community.

Investment Attraction focuses on creating a favorable business environment, and promoting the economic potential of the cities to attract domestic and international investments, fostering economic growth and job opportunities.

Quality of Life refers to the overall well-being of residents, including factors such as access to cultural opportunities, healthcare, education, and a sense of community, creating an environment that fosters satisfaction and attracts individuals seeking a fulfilling lifestyle.

Remote Work refers to the services and infrastructure provided to residents, allowing them to work from the hometown, contributing to a desirable work-life balance and attracting individuals seeking location-independent employment.

Sustainability means conscious urban planning, energy efficiency, and conservation efforts, creating a green and eco-friendly environment that satisfies residents, protecting the competitive advantage of the small cities that is the connection with nature.



Asking

What are the features the residents of the future will demand from cities?

Future residents may demand cities that prioritize sustainability, efficient public transportation, smart infrastructure, green spaces, and digital connectivity. They might seek inclusivity, affordable housing, and amenities promoting a high quality of life. Advanced technologies for security, healthcare, and education could also be essential features.



GOOD PRACTICES IN THE FIELD ACROSS EUROPE

City Branding and Entrepreneurs attraction | Finland

Helsinki Partners

A city marketing, investment and talent attraction company owned by the City of Helsinki. This project has a mission to promote the city's sustainable growth and build Helsinki's global brand. They developed a personalised service, free of charge to attract international investments, businesses, talents and visitors, with: a Business advisor to introduce key players in the market and provide practical advice on how to establish in the city; free support throughout the business expansion process; a tailor made service to help investors to find the right invest-in opportunities; a free talent attraction service to help Helsinki-based companies. To complement, they created programs aimed at specific audiences: a program to executives, business developers and innovation leaders that gives the opportunity to live and work like a Finn; a program that helps new business to establish in Helsinki with relocation support, tailored soft landing and networking opportunities and a 9-Day program in Helsinki for international fund managers and LPs interested in exploring opportunities in the New Nordics.

Urban rehabilitation and housing | Italy

Presicce-Acquarica

In the last years, Presicce-Acquarica has been struggling with a declining population and an increasing number of abandoned homes. In 2022, the town council implemented a new project where individuals or families that moved their official residency to the southern Italian town, and invest in an old house, will be eligible to apply for a €30,000 support. The municipality intends to capture and retain population as well as enhance the rehabilitation of its built heritage.

Digital Nomads | Spain

Sende: An international 'coworking' in a Gallega village

In 2013, Edo Sadikovic and María Rodriguez founded a rural coworking space in a village of 20 people in the Xures Natural Park. Currently, close to 3,500 people of 55 nationalities, have passed through, allowing themselves to work while traveling around the world. The project is gaining such dynamism that the founders are developing the Download Sende program that will allow its implementation in other rural spaces, saving them from abandonment and contributing significantly to their economic and cultural dynamism.



Helsinki Partners



Presicce-Acquarica



Sende

Country life vs City life | Spain

Proyecto Arraigo

In 2017, Proyecto Arraigo was born in the face of the depopulation of rural environments. This project developed a successful methodology to help individuals and families that want to move to the rural areas searching for a healthier quality of life, economic savings, direct human relations, contact with nature, space and disconnection. The project identifies the resources of each territory, to create a collaborative strategy to attract talent and settle the population (rehabilitation of ruins, co-living projects and the activation of key development opportunities). During the last 5 years the program helped 250 families move to one of the 150 villages of the program and it was 6000 families interested in making the leap to the rural world. The secret for the success is to work with locals, giving them the confidence to rent houses and to welcome and integrate newcomers.



Cluster development: target Tech | Portugal

Fundão: The fusion of technology and tradition

In 2012, Fundão passed a critical phase. With an unemployment rate of 20%, without a university centre to attract talent, with no economic diversity and a scarce creation of value in all the sectors, the municipality was forced to design an innovation program to completely change the local reality. The value of the city, a good quality of life with a low cost, passed to the top of its public agenda. In the municipality, a department was created dedicated to economic promotion and innovation, and in 2015, Fundão made its first acquisition of a large technology company, managing to win over cities such as Porto, Lisbon and Braga. The combination of a housing program for highly qualified people and the rehabilitation of public buildings to attract companies, plus an advanced training program (bilingual education in public schools and program classes since primary school), allowed the city to enter the race to capture large ITech companies. The factor that distinguished Fundão was its competitiveness in attracting and retaining talent. In 2018, it was one of five projects from five European regions distinguished for creating jobs and improving people's lives, with the RegioStars Prizes. Currently, Fundão has a group of 18 I&T companies; it already has more than 1,000 engineers and programmers in a city with 13,000 inhabitants. The current focus combines I&T with the more traditional sector of agriculture through Agrotech projects.

There are many networks that the URBACT project has promoted. They all have rich insights into the main urban challenges facing European cities. It is extremely important to focus on their learnings, apply it, and improve it. Let's have a look at some of them:

Previous action planning networks

Promoting cities like a brand

Find your Greatness: Europe's first strategic brand building program for smart cities

To be attractive, cities have to find what makes them unique! In this network, partners work together to identify local potential, combining strategic marketing approaches with innovative smart city tools. With this network, we can learn how to make a good diagnosis of the city and promote the best it has.

An economy that fits the city

iPlace: Finding our niches for sustainable local economic development

During this network, partners were invited to find the nuances that make their cities special, with the goal of achieving more sustainable local economic development. In order to make the city more attractive, economic development becomes essential. In such a competitive world, finding the uniqueness of each city is key. The creation and capture of new economies and companies encourages the supply of quality jobs to retain talent.

A new life for the city

Re-growCity: Tackling long-term decline in smaller cities

This transfer network had the goal of developing interventions to arrest and reverse long-term social, economic, and environmental decline. Taking into account that one of the impacts of shrinking cities is the loss of city dynamics, it is extremely important to study ways to reverse this decline, promoting vibrant and regenerated cities.





URBACT projects from of the same generation of Residents of the Future

A business and startup friendly environment

C4Talent: Where talent meets opportunity, building thriving business ecosystems

The goal of this network is to transform cities into business and startup friendly environments. In the present world, cities are suffering from the effects of brain drain, and it's increasingly difficult to attract and retain talented young professionals. Some solutions, such as physical infrastructure like co-working spaces and incubators and funding for these startups, can help cities change this trend and become more competitive and attractive.



A green economy to transform the city

Ecocore: Green transition in small cities along transport corridors

This network has as its main focus accelerating the green transition in industrial areas. Promoting a green economy agenda, city partners will assist local stakeholders, helping them transition to low-carbon energy sources for transportation, heating, and electricity.



A new way to work

Remote-IT: Remote and hybrid work for thriving cities

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we live and work. Hybrid and remote work have become a reality that can transform cities, impact the lives of citizens, and change the organisational culture of major employers (public and private). This network will reflect on this topic in order to implement proactive policymaking.

10 EUROPEAN SMALL CITIES FINDING SOLUTION TO THE URBAN SHRINKAGE

RESIDENTS OF THE FUTURE AN URBACT NETWORK

In view of all the aforementioned challenges addressed by the problem of shrinking cities, the City of Sibenik, with nine other European cities, joined the network called “Residents of the Future”, which aims to support the process of finding new answers to the urban shrinking of small and medium-sized cities.

Small and medium-sized cities are struggling to redefine digital goals to become more citizen-centric with holistic, sustainable solutions that enable green growth and livability for residents. With the post-Covid digital era ushering in new ways of working, living and communicating, small towns should redefine their advantages over large urban centers and develop plans to attract new, and influence the return of displaced young populations. This network brings together ten different cities to develop integrated action plans to face the main challenges that they are going through, especially depopulation.

The question: “How can shrinking cities attract future residents” will be answered by researching the following key elements:

- **Rethinking digital transformation**, through sustainable solutions;
- **Economic diversification**, focusing on supporting the development of new economic sectors, such as technology and creative industries;
- **City branding**, improving the city’s image as a city that supports a healthy lifestyle and innovation; attracting talent, new residents and business investments.

02 CITIES PROFILE

WHY IS IMPORTANT TO WORK TOGETHER?

Many cities face similar challenges, and they can learn from each other's successes and failures. Collaborating allows cities to share their experiences and solutions, leading to more effective policies that have been tested in different contexts and allowing policymakers to identify and adopt the best practices for each city, saving time and resources that would otherwise be spent on trial and error.

Another important aspect is that **working together encourages the development of innovative solutions** that may not have been possible within the confines of a single city and allows for the sharing of data and analytics, providing a more comprehensive understanding of issues.

And more, cities that collaborate can collectively advocate for their common interests at regional, national, and international levels. This **increases their political influence and the likelihood of receiving support or resources from higher levels of government.**

All of these is possible through URBACT transnational cooperation—the exchange of knowledge beyond national borders. Cities tackle an urban policy challenge by exploring pertinent solutions, ensuring sustainable transformation through concrete actions, and improving or changing local policies by sharing experiences and exchanging knowledge with other European cities going through similar challenges. There is a network that involves relevant key stakeholders and promotes the practice of participatory culture by learning new tools and methods for effective policy-making.

ROMANIA

ALBA IULIA



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

1996 - 73.656

2008 - 72.150

2021 - 74.688

2023 - 74.447

83.7% Romanians

0.8% Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Alba Iulia is the administrative centre of Alba County in the west-central part of Romania, located on the Mures River in the historical region of Transylvania. Alba Iulia is the city of union where the document by which Transylvania united with Romania in 1918 was signed. The economic context in Alba Iulia is typical of the post-communist transition from a planned economy to market capitalism, with 97% of all private companies. Alba Iulia has two universities gathering over 6000 students.

STRENGTHS

- The location of Alba Iulia benefits from the proximity of international airports, especially Cluj-Napoca and Sibiu, and also from the investments on highways;
- The unemployment rate, about 3,6%, represents a situation of full employment;
- The historical significance of Alba Iulia, with a rich historical heritage, namely the Alba Carolina fortress, creates a unique cultural identity that attracts residents and visitors. Tourism is significant at Alba Iulia;
- The cost of living is very competitive in the EU context;
- Local strategies are aligned with national and European regulations and targets, existing local investments (in urban mobility, public lighting, energy efficiency, education, etc) through EU funding.

WEAKNESSES

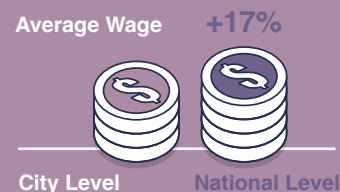
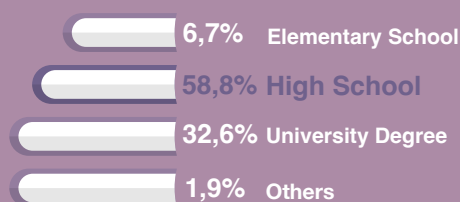
- The lack of business facilities, namely industrial and technological parks, and also business support, in the context of an intense competition with other Romanian cities for the attraction of investments, evidence a weak competitiveness on investment attraction;
- Alba Iulia Smart City Strategy does not include specific measures to become a friendly city for remote workers and digital nomads. Both target groups could boost the local ability to increase skill levels and average salaries, in addition to the existing measures proposed through the strategy;
- Besides there is no lack of employment, there are limited job opportunities in emerging and attractive economic areas, where the salaries are bigger. The local average salary is only 82,7% of the Romanian's;
- A limited public budget (a medium-sized city with a scarce public budget).



Distance to Airport
80km



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OR PRESS HERE TO KNOW THE CITY BETTER



KEY CHALLENGES

- Decreasing tourism and foreign investment during a post-pandemic time;
- Relocation of citizens in larger cities, that leads to the decrease of skilled workforce at local level;
- Proximity of very competitive cities (such as Cluj-Napoca or Sibiu).

OPPORTUNITIES

- Competitiveness of Romania to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Around Alba Iulia there are also important investments, such is Mercedes-Benz factory;
- Alba Iulia positioning and experience as a smart city, that is recognized at national and european level, is an opportunity for the development of a local tech cluster, rooted on the smart city living lab that the city has become;
- The existence of a construction cluster could be an important asset to the development of an attractive housing park and public facilities;
- Alba Iulia Municipality has the opportunity to access EU funding, including the Cohesion Funds. An added value is the Municipality's experience in attracting non-reimbursable funding. More than 300 million euros were invested in the local community since 2007.

THREATS

- Alba Iulia is facing a brain drain, as many young people are leaving the city to pursue higher education or career opportunities. It happens both to bigger cities in Romania but also to other cities in different EU countries as a weakness;
- The population decline is an important threat, both to the development and sustaining public services and facilities, but also to the attractiveness for new economic activities;
- Increasing prices due to national inflation, national economic recession, public sector bureaucracy, lack of predictability and attractiveness/advantages for the private sector given public-private partnership legislation.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

The vision of the municipality is to transform Alba Iulia into a green and innovative city open to residents, young people, tourists, and investors by 2030. Since 2007, Alba Iulia Municipality has been investing in modernising the public infrastructure and services, implementing EU-funded projects for the rehabilitation of Alba Carolina citadel, improving the quality of life and the quality of public spaces. Alba Iulia was involved in many European exchange projects funded through URBACT such as Find Your Greatness, while being a member of the Covenant of Mayors, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and also a signatory of the Green City Accord. In the Integrated Urban Development Strategy of the Municipality are reflected all the goals of the city, which include general projects focused on attracting youth, such as promoting the development of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and tourist areas and improving inclusiveness in education, training, and lifelong learning. The city has won many awards, such as the European Destination of Excellence, Sustainable Community - European Energy Award, Excellence in Energy Efficiency.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

The main focus of Alba Iulia for the Integrated Action Plan is creating economic areas to attract investment with added value, developing existing educational offers through new partnerships, developing the social dimension by extending public social services, implementing smart city projects, aiming to attract youth, talent and private investment, implementing energy efficiency measures in public infrastructure, and improving the quality of public spaces.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

An added value is its experience in using European funding.

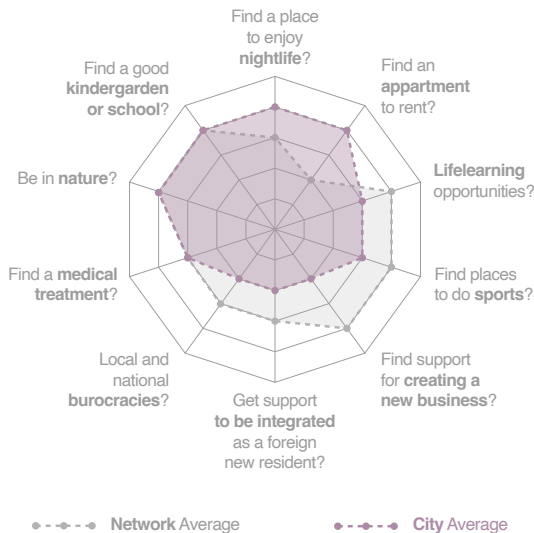
Learning Opportunities:

- Promoting and supporting remote work;
- Attracting digital nomads;
- Attracting new residents;
- Promoting economy through cluster development;
- Quality of life assessment;
- Welcoming and integrating immigrants.

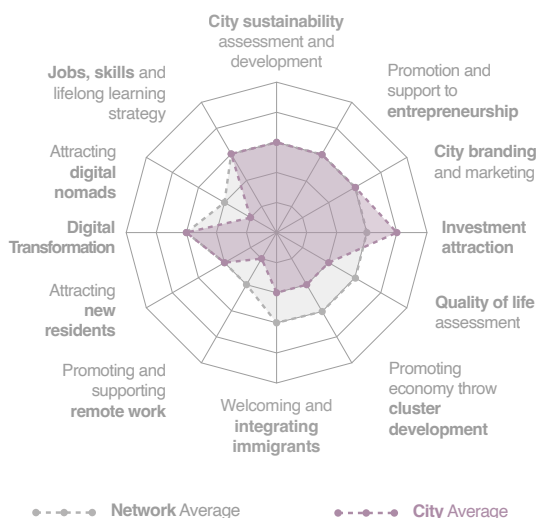
Potential Contribution:

- Investment Attraction.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - SMART CITY STRATEGY

Alba Iulia Smart City Strategy is not only a vision to the future. This strategy came from a large experience of identifying needs and potential solutions, and the support to the implementation of it at city level.

In 2016, the city partnered with the Romanian Ministry of Communication to create what was the first smart city pilot project of the country.

The project aimed to promote a more livable city, with increased economic efficiency and better quality of life.

The project consisted of an open call to potential smart cities solution providers, that were invited to invest in pilot projects by their own at Alba Iulia, receiving back the agile support of the local team to test it in real context.

The project allowed Alba Iulia to have a deep knowledge about the smart solutions and also about how to pilot solutions for the public good.

The Smart City Strategy for Alba Iulia municipality 2021 - 2023 results from this unique experience, and with whom has developed 11 sectoral strategies corresponding to the 11 pillars of local community development. The key concepts connecting the 11 sub-strategies are integration and interoperability, built on the most advanced standards of the field of smart, sustainable and resilient cities.

Project key data:

More than 100 smart solutions

More than 45 companies enrolled

50 functional projects

INTRODUCTION TO ULG

Alba Iulia Municipality will start from the pre-existing groups as the basis for ULG in the present project. As a result, during the activation phase, the ULG includes representatives from:

- Alba County Directorate for Youth and Sport;
- “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia;
- Center for Information;
- Counseling and Career Guidance;
- Alba County Center of Excellence;
- Team RO001 Xeo Alba Iulia - a robotics youth association;
- Association Biciclim Alba;
- Association Maria Beatrice;
- Association for Transylvania;

Furthermore, Alba Iulia Municipality would like to extend the ULG and attract more relevant stakeholders.

Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

FINLAND

Iisalmi



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

1973 - 20.839

1990 - 24.117

2013 - 22.171

2023 - 20.801**97.4%** Finnish**11.3%** Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Iisalmi is located in Eastern Finland, basically in the middle of the country. The distance to the capital city Helsinki is about 475 km. Is the functional centre of the Upper Savo region. The 20 801 inhabitants of the town can enjoy living in a safe and inspiring environment close to nature. Is also the heart of the Upper Savo economic zone. This territory is famous as the birthplace of global companies like Olvi, Genelec, Ponsse, among others. Iisalmi people are famous for having a good sense of humour.

STRENGTHS

- Iisalmi is surrounded by stunning natural beauty, including lakes and forests. This provides residents with ample opportunities for outdoor activities;
- Iisalmi and Upper Savo region are the birthplace of global competitive companies. Ponsse, Olvi, Genelec and Normet are examples of the ability of local people to found and scale innovative companies that create good job opportunities;
- The city of Iisalmi has several very qualified public facilities, both for sport and cultural activities, such as indoor swimming pool, many places for children to play, sports activities, hiking routes, urban beach on the lake, art expositions on the street, and cultural centre;
- Projects like “YHESSÄ – Know-how Network” and the “By Iisalmi” are examples of the ability to cooperate between stakeholders from different sectors.

WEAKNESSES

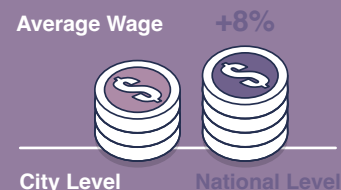
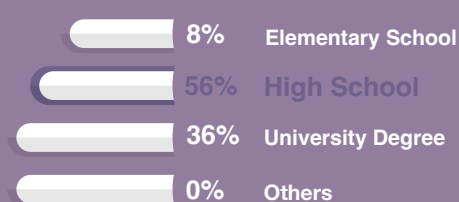
- Women’s wages are about 15 % lower than men’s wages. One reason is that industrial jobs are often for men and better paid, while women work more in the lower-paid healthcare and services sectors. This characteristic evidences the challenge of the local economy to promote similar welfare opportunities for both genders;
- Iisalmi is not a university city. Young people migrate to bigger cities for their university degrees, and many of them don’t return after that period, staying living in the bigger cities that they consider more attractive;
- The nightlife and entertainment options are limited. That is something that is important especially for the attractiveness of the city to young people.



Distance to Airport
75km



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KEY CHALLENGES

- Declining and ageing population and lack of skilled workforce;
- High unemployment rate due to lack of skills or health issues: almost 50% of the unemployment have been unemployed over 12 months or more and the national health index is very low;
- Unattractive city image.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The contact with nature, work life balance and the quiet lifestyle are new magnets that attract people after covid-19. Iisalmi is a place with outstanding conditions to offer this value proposition to residents. The city is surrounded by stunning natural beauty, including lakes, forests. Recently, Iisalmi launched “Kiireutraali Iisalmi” campaign which could be translated as “rush neutral Iisalmi”, promoting the city as a friendly place for people looking for work life balance;
- Finland is understood internationally as a successful country. The country and Iisalmi average salary, and the fame about being the “happiest country” in the world .

THREATS

- There is a shared thought from the inhabitants that the city center is being quiet and “dying” slowly. Some shops and restaurants have ended their business in the city center and there are lots of empty business spaces. This feeling and reality, that Iisalmi is already trying to change, is a risk on the new investments decisions and also on the way how citizens see their city attractiveness;
- Iisalmi population is mainly native Finnish people. The percentage of foreign citizens is around 2,6%, which is a small number. People from other nationalities could find it hard to integrate in Iisalmi because of the language barriers. Besides the average salaries are bigger in the major part of Europe, the region of Iisalmi is not attracting foreign people that could be a contribution to stop the shrinkage.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

The city’s strategy has several goals and targets that, together, help to improve local services and make the living environment even more attractive to future residents. Iisalmi wants to better use digital transformation in city development and create new partnerships between companies and universities to build more international collaboration and become better known for talented international people. The new city plan for the industrial area shows the wish to attract new investments from outside the region. On the other hand, the “Kiireneutraali Iisalmi” campaign has the goal of turning Iisalmi “rush neutral” and encouraging everybody to find a balance between work and free time, promoting quality of life. Since 2019, it has been arranged every summer the “Koe Iisalmi” campaign. In this campaign, the city offers free and very affordable housing for students that come to work in Iisalmi during the summer for traineeships or other duties. It has become a very popular tool to attract young workforce to local companies.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Iisalmi has as its main goals in this project: impact the city’s marketing, attract new residents, and increase its reputation; learn about new international strategies and methodologies for attracting people; attract a financial and international population; and make the city qualified in terms of coworking and remote work. Iisalmi wants to be the most attractive regional city of Finland.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Learning Opportunities:

- Attracting digital nomads;
- Promoting and supporting remote work;
- Welcoming and integrating immigrants.

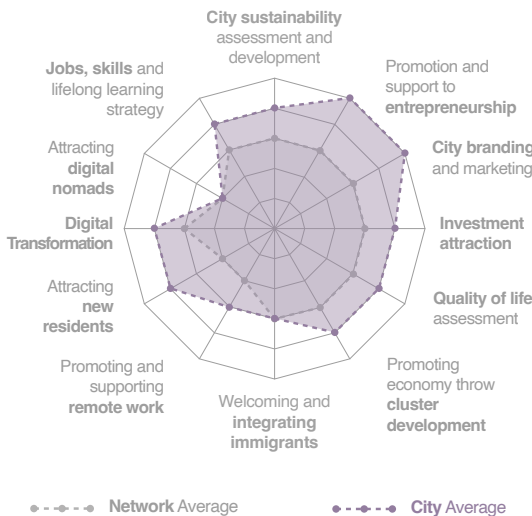
Potential Contribution:

- City branding and marketing;
- Promotion and support to entrepreneurship.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - YHESSÄ - KNOW-HOW NETWORK

The purpose of YHESSÄ, is to meet the current and future needs of the region's business sector for skilled workforce and expertise.

It is based on four-phase operation:

Regional Foresight Team, which produces an up-to-date situational picture of the expertise and other needs of the Upper Savo region where Iisalmi is located.

Partnership Table, that bring together experts from the business sector, municipalities, third sector actors, and educational institutions to discuss the current situation and at the same time create a common vision for the future.

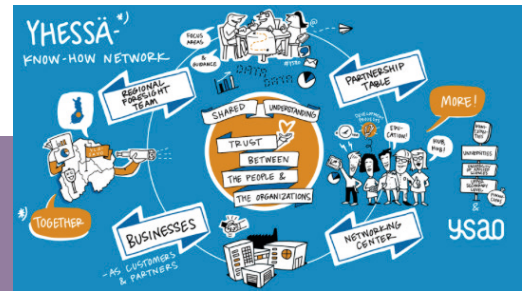
Networking Centre, service providers are all those public entities, whose task is to assist the region's companies in expertise, workforce availability, and development. Service providers systematically process business information collected from business networks, so service providers must confirm through agreements that they are part of the network.

Without an agreement, one cannot join the network because the collected information is confidential, and company-specific information cannot be disclosed outside of contract partners. Agreements are made between the service provider and YSAO (Upper Savo Vocational College), with the same content for all service providers.

Companies, which act both as customers and partners. Their needs (current and future) guide the entire network's operation.

This practice allows the preparation of people for future jobs needs, and also allows companies to find the talent and skills they need, to reinforce their global competitiveness and to offer attractive job opportunities that would retain and attract inhabitants.

As a reference, nowadays, topics like artificial intelligence, robotics and sensor technology are being targeted for their work.



Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

INTRODUCTION TO ULG

This is the first URBACT project that Iisalmi is participating in, so the creation of an ULG will be something new.

- Savonia University of Applied Sciences;
- Savo Vocational College;
- Ylä-Savo Vocational College;
- Normet Oy;
- Genelec Oy;
- Hanza Toolfac Oy;
- Olvi Oy;
- Ylä-Savon Veturi ry;
- Pohjois-Savon hyvinvointialue;
- Different departments of Iisalmi Municipality: Early childhood education, Immigration services, Marketing and communications, Travelling and tourism, City council

GREECE

Kalamata

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

2011 - 54.567

2023 - 60.696

19.40% Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Kalamata is located at the south of Peloponnese in Greece and has a seaport. Gastronomy is something special. The nice weather, cultural heritage and nature are also important characteristics of this tourist destination. In 1986 there was the “kalamata earthquake”, assigned as “extreme” on the Mercalli scale, which destroyed much of the city centre, that have been recovered since then, but still with some urban areas and buildings with the necessity to be regenerated.

STRENGTHS

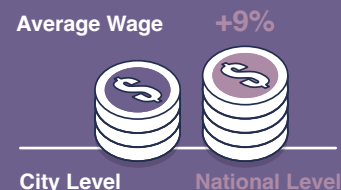
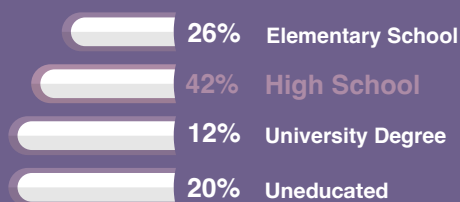
- The city of Kalamata was chosen as one of the 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030, that is very strong contribution to the city branding and self-esteem;
- Kalamata has many arguments to be considered a place that allows a nice quality of life. It is a 15 minutes city center, it has a nice seafront, mountains around, good gastronomy and a community lifestyle that attracts people from Greece and from other countries;
- The agriculture of Kalamata is internationally recognized. The local olives are known as the best in the world. That is an argument on the city branding, touristic experiences and quality of life, because people could buy local food with good quality and low carbon footprint of its distribution.

WEAKNESSES

- Kalamata used to have a train connection. There is still a train station but it is closed. A good train connection would allow a greener lifestyle to the city residents;
- There is a part of the city center of Kalamata that has not been recovered. Other parts of the city benefited from the city’s investment on its recovery, especially after the 1985 earthquake. This neighborhood is today a black hole in the city center, with closed houses, poor public space and lack of economic activities. The city has a especially ambition to act on this are rehabilitation and placemaking;
- The residents’ culture about mobility is to use the car, even living in a flat city that would allow the use of soft mobility. There is the need of a cultural change to achieve the climate neutrality and improve the quality of life.



Distance to Airport
10km



KEY CHALLENGES

- A large number of unrenovated neoclassical buildings, closed shops and workshops, downgraded or unused public space;
- Neighborhoods without substantial interventions, remained stagnant and underwent a gradual shrinkage, year after year;
- Decreasing population and economic activity.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Kalamata is working on improving water management. The anti-flooding system, the water supply infrastructure is being invested in order to answer the increase of the demand;
- The recognition as 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030 is a momentum that could help the city to attract cleantech investments and promote sustainability entrepreneurship;
- Kalama has some university degrees, which is an opportunity to fix local young people and to attract others;
- The city could develop a tech cluster that could allow Kalamata to attract digital nomads and remote workers;
- Tourism is an important economic sector, but it could be improved on the reduction of seasonality. The combination with the agriculture sector, could attract agrotourism hotels that benefits the impact on both sectors.

THREATS

- The main economic activities of Kalamata are related with construction, tourism, agriculture and services like restaurants and shops. These economic areas, and the jobs that are normally elated, aren't attractive to the most talented young people. That is a risk on the potential brain drain the city could face;
- The weather at Kalamata is hot in the European context. It means that it is very comfortable in Autumn, Winter and Spring, but it is too hot in Summer. In the context of climate changes the extreme weather conditions are happening more often. That is a risk to the quality of life, to economic activities like tourism and agriculture and to the capacity of the city to maintain some public services working well. The city aims to plant more trees and to use cold materials in order to reduce the impacts of the hot temperatures.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

The strategic objective for the city of Kalamata is to strengthen the city’s identity based on the following 3 axes: Green Kalamata – Digital Kalamata – Holistic Kalamata. The new Corinth-Tripoli-Kalamata highway (National Road A7) that reduced the travel time for Athens and Thessaloniki, the upgrading of the airport with flights to and from Greece and abroad, and the construction of important infrastructure projects in the city and the communities of the Municipality, road and air connection, in general, transformed the city into an accessible and attractive tourist destination. To enhance the quality of life of the inhabitants, the Municipality operated a platform for public consultation and submission of proposals for the public space, where possible submitting requests and improvement proposals. The challenge for the citizens is to participate actively in the implementation of their own proposals and ideas to enhance their active involvement in shaping an effective model of local democracy.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

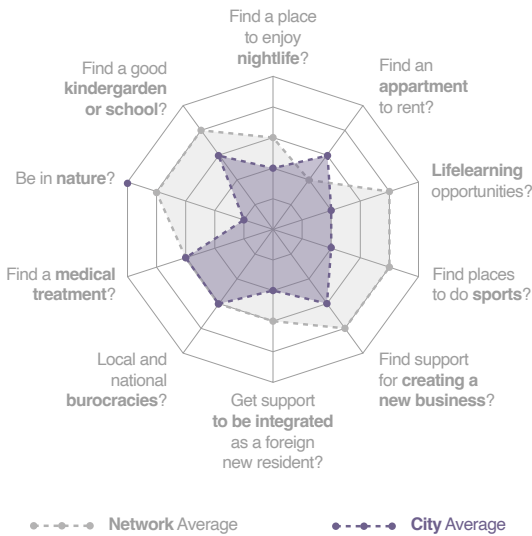
The focus of the Integrated Action Plan will be to develop a plan for integrated urban regeneration, having in mind three elements: economic diversification, digital transformation, and city branding. It will also implement a bottom-up planning process by establishing a broad and continuous public dialogue and consultation with all stakeholders.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

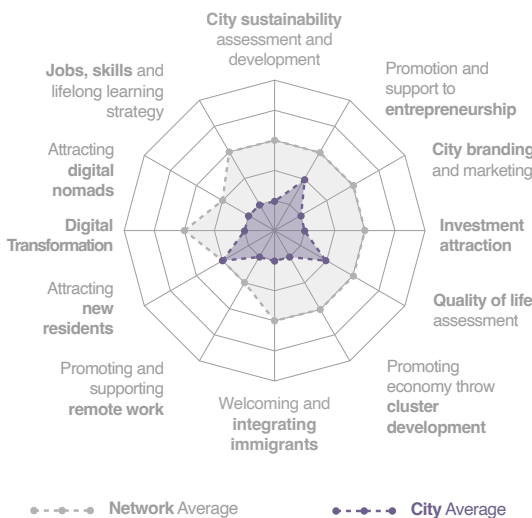
Learning Opportunities:

- Investment attraction;
- Economic diversification and resilience;
- Promoting economy through cluster development;
- City branding and marketing;
- Digital Transformation;
- City sustainability assessment and development;
- Attracting digital nomads;
- Promoting and supporting remote work;
- Jobs, skills and lifelong learning strategy;
- Welcoming and integrating immigrants.

How easy and comfortable is...



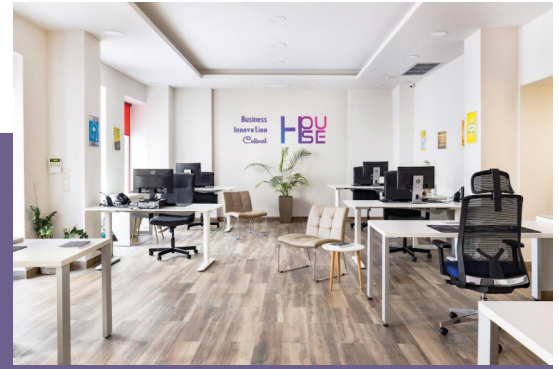
Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - HOUSE BY PHAOS

The “House by Phaos” is the space that hosts businesses and creative professionals. “House by Phaos” connects freelancers, small companies, remote workers and digital nomads to a creative community that promotes self-development.

These spaces, promoted by Phaos cooperative are located at the city center, a convenient place as a place to work and also to organize events. Phaos also promotes the support to the community members, namely through consulting services. Besides that, it also hosts a tax domicile of companies in Kalamata, temporary spaces for meeting and business events and coworking space with all the basic services included.



Phaos, and especially their “House by Phaos”, promotes the ability of Kalamata to support entrepreneurs, and also remote workers and digital nomads, who are both interesting future residents.

Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

PORTUGAL

Mangualde



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

1991 - 21.808

2001 - 20.990

2011 - 19.880

2021 - 18.303

97.8% Portuguese

6% Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Mangualde is located in the centre of Portugal halfway between the sea at west and the Spanish border on the East. The municipality is part of the Dão-Lafões NUTIII, and also part of the famous wine region of Dão and the cheese DOP area of Queijo da Serra da Estrela. Mangualde has several nature attractions, but also exceptional connections through highway and train. The Stellantis factory that produces Citroen, Opel and Fiat is the most famous company, but the city also has other industries, in sectors like energy, textile and agriculture.

STRENGTHS

- Mangualde is located in the center of Portugal, well connected by train and highway, making it an ideal location for businesses and residents. Many logistic companies also chose Mangualde as the location for their facilities;
- Stellantis Group, a major international player on car production, has a factory at Mangualde. This company has an important relevance on the creation of trust between potential new investors and also on the positioning of Mangualde as a automobile production city, a cluster considered strategic and skillset to the country and to the EU;
- The recently announced carbon capture project, promoted by Mota-Engil Ativ, will plant more than 72000 trees on an area of 82 hectares. This project will allow the capture of more than 68000 tons of CO2 equivalent, and it will promote biodiversity while improving the landscape.

WEAKNESSES

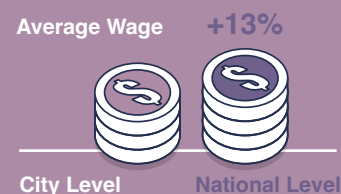
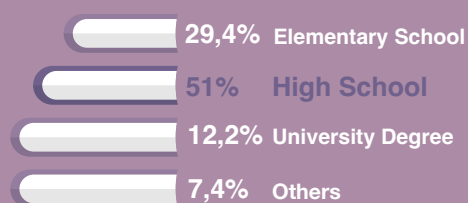
- Housing availability is scarce. Buying or renting accommodation at Mangualde is still not expensive in regional and national context, but there are not many houses or apartments available. In order to attract new residents Mangualde would need to have more real estate investments, but the traditional low prices are not an incentive to investors;
- The residents of Mangualde expressed on a recent study that the health services access is not satisfying;
- Mangualde has many nice features as a place, but needs to improve its visibility and perception. There is a need to explore deeper the dimensions of branding and territorial marketing.



Distance to Airport
153km



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OR PRESS HERE TO KNOW THE CITY BETTER



KEY CHALLENGES

- Decrease in residents due to internal migration to larger cities along the Atlantic coast;
- Lack of private and public housing investment.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Mangualde location, natural characteristics and also the availability of blue collar qualified people, is attracting investors to potentially implement here projects to the decarbonization. Solar and wind energy production parks, and also hydrogen production could become a new economic clusters, with international relevance;
- The city allows a lower cost of life, in the Portuguese context. Living at Mangualde, families are close to education and recreation facilities. The culture, natural landscape and heritage, with an amazing gastronomy where Dão wines are the flag products, are also important asset;
- Mangualde municipality includes some rural villages, with nice properties available, that could be the new location for residents looking to find that kind of lifestyle. This is a opportunity related with the trend pos-covid of moving from cities to rural areas.

THREATS

- Mangualde lost population in the last decades, with special importance to young people. Brain drain is an important threat to the future prosperity of the city, and its stop is a major goal to the city;
- There is not a large offer of nightlife and entertainment opportunities at Mangualde, that is something important for attractiveness perception of young people. On the other hand, the location very close to Viseu, that is a larger city decreases this risk.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Interior territorial authorities, such as Mangualde municipality, have been heavily committed to attracting investments in sectors like state-of-the-art industries based on strong digital, highly qualified, and low-carbon sustainable business models. This growing offer of young and high-tech jobs is expected to attract new residents and young families to the region. The municipality has been making considerable investments in urban regeneration, education, and sports facilities and has been working closely with the central government on improving local decentralized administration facilities, namely in the justice, health, and finance sectors. Also, has recently concluded the elaboration of a Territorial Marketing Plan specially intended to establish a strategy for territorial planning that contributes to an expected pulling effect on investors, visitors, and potential future residents while also growing the self-confidence of local economic and social urban society.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

The ambitions of Mangualde with this project are: develop a strategy to combat population loss, especially among younger people; promote the sustainable development of city, solving the lack of housing problem and rehabilitation/attractiveness of urban landscape; achieve a deep understanding of the municipality's competitive advantages; and improve the work on municipal regulations, municipal taxes, and incentives over local economy key sectors.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Learning Opportunities:

- Attracting digital nomads.

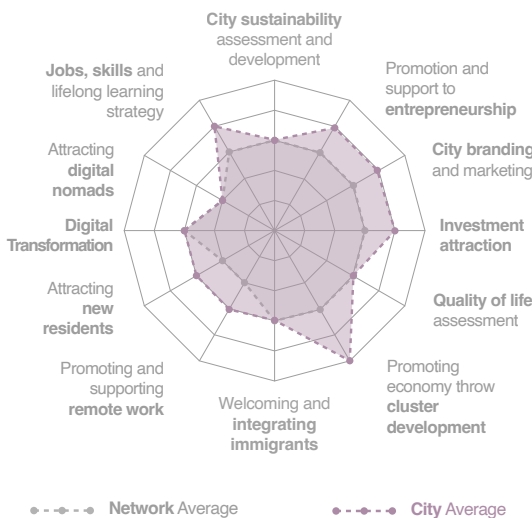
Potential Contribution:

- Promoting economy through cluster development.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - CIRCULAR WATER RESOURCE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We are the generation dealing with climate change. In this context, water scarcity is especially relevant. The need for water is both for human consumption, fresh water, and for some other activity where there is no need to use potable water.

Mangualde identified the wastewater as a potential source of future water for some economic activities that need water in their production process. This circular vision led Mangualde to the identification of the best international practices and technologies of wastewater treatment. The result of this process was an investment on a new facility, with cutting-edge technology that allows the extraction of very good quality water from the wastewater.

The water isn't used for human consumption, but it has become a circular economy abundant resource that matches perfectly the needs of a



new investor in the biofuel production sector. This investor was searching for a place with availability of biomass and solar energy, and the existence of circular water was extra points on the decision to invest in Mangualde.

At Cubos ETAR, Mangualde has a state-of-the-art sanitation treatment, based on the MBR technology that has membranes filtering all the microbiological parts.

At Europe level, the adoption of circularity practices and ESG added value practices become a competitive advantage. Mangualde, with this good quality circular water, that came from waste, got a decisive advantage for the location of this important investment.

Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

INTRODUCTION TO ULG

Some of the representative group of local stakeholders:

- Elected politicians and technical staff /municipal divisions of: public and infrastructural construction, economic development, planning technical consultants.
- Representatives of the public educational sector;
- Several managers and representatives of private industrial enterprises, related to construction, automotive and tourism;
- NGOs, namely related to environment protection, youth, cultural and social care;
- Representative of the local commercial and entrepreneurial association;
- Representative of the inter-municipal urban services provider on urban waste and recycling;
- Representative of an university institute, Politécnico de Viseu;
- Representative of the Regional Government, CCDRC.

ITALY

Mantova



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

1972 - 65703

2023 - 48653

84.5% Italian

4.5% Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Mantova is located in Lombardy, northern Italy, and has been a UNESCO site since 2008. The historic city centre is surrounded by three artificial lakes, while the suburbs and the industrial complexes have risen on the other shores. The city has been losing population since last century, and the phenomenon is continuing nowadays. The city has 48653 residents.

The city of Mantova, and its landscapes was the inspiration of Vivaldi to compose the Four Seasons according to Antonio Vivaldi Italian Institute of Venice.

STRENGTHS

- Mantova is recognized as a place of culture, heritage and gastronomy. The city was the Italian Capital of Culture in 2016, and the city centre, including the lake area, is designated as Unesco World Heritage, as an example of Renaissance town planning. At 2017, Mantova was European Capital of Gastronomy;
- There are more than 15% of the residents with provenience from other countries, with special representation from Morocco and Tunisia. During the last decades Mantova also developed its ability to promote the integration of foreign inhabitants, through the use of arts, culture and urban renewal.

WEAKNESSES

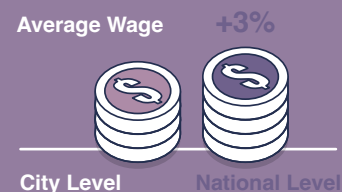
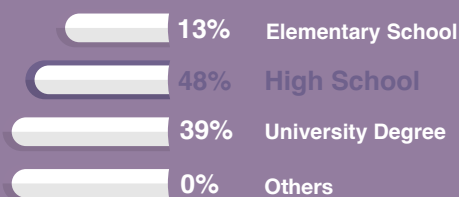
- The chemical sector is strong at Mantova, but it created some negative spillovers. There are some points of pollution, namely on the lake, and there are also some brownfield areas that could be hard to renew;
- Mantova wants to promote innovation in its economy, namely to the development of new businesses and investments with added value. The nonexistence of an incubator is a limitation to the entrepreneurship development;
- The gap of salaries between genders is about 22%, which is a high number, illustrating that there is an extra challenge to women to find a proper job opportunity.



Distance to Airport
55km



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KEY CHALLENGES

- Be more attractive than neighbouring smaller towns for young citizens, young families, new businesses and startups.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Mantova already has several universities operating in its territory, with open delegations. Around 2000 university students attend their courses at Mantova, what could be a great opportunity to attract new residents and to nurture local ecosystem with young talent;
- The Mantova city centre, with interesting gastronomy opportunities, different services available, great new gardens and renaissance architecture creates an “Italian lifestyle” that could be interesting to digital nomads and remote workers. These two target groups could be important to renewing non-used spaces at the city centre.

THREATS

- The ancient city centre of Mantova, with the protection rules related to urban renewal created a situation of higher housing prices, and worse housing conditions when compared with neighbouring cities. This reality is boost the migration of residents from Mantova to other places, with people adopting commuting practices.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

The Lombardy Region identifies sustainable and integrated development as one of its key priorities, starting with the reduction of inequalities as an attractive factor. Lombardy Region wants to build with local communities, especially those located in inland areas, an “Agenda of the counter-exodus”, which intervenes at 360° and in a coordinated way, both on the front of traditional investments and on that of social capital, to increase the attractiveness of the territories. One of the projects implemented is “MAGNETE DUC” which focuses on urban regeneration, accessibility, and territorial marketing. Its main objective is to foster local businesses, especially those in the city centre.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Mantova wants to improve the way they try to attract residents, side by side with the agenda of increasing the qualified jobs that the local economy has. Young people that move to study at universities in other cities, normally don't come back. This reality affect the ability of the city to retain young and talented people that could become in the future the centre of a more innovative local economy. There are some ideas about creating new and stronger agreements with different universities, and also ideas about developing the offer of student dorms, but there is a space to work on these challenges at the ULG, in order to at the same time fix young people and also promote a more fertile ecosystem, side by side with the existing and new companies that the city wants to attract.

INTRODUCTION TO ULG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

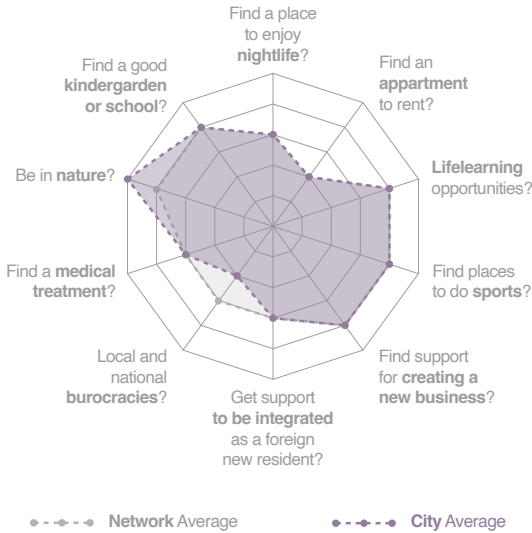
Learning Opportunities:

- Attracting digital nomads;
- Promoting and supporting remote work;
- Promoting economy through cluster development;
- Attracting new residents.

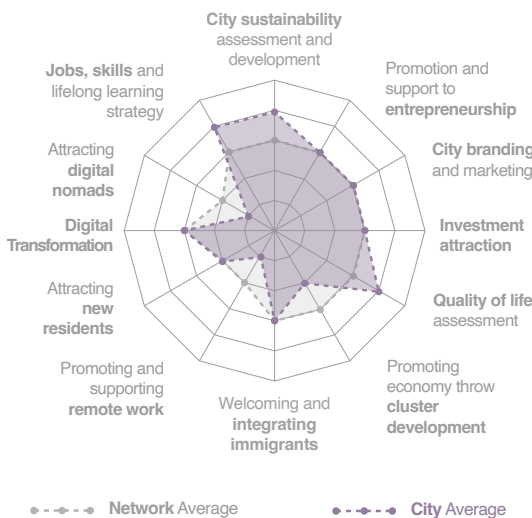
Potential Contribution:

- Quality of life assessment;
- City sustainability assessment and development;
- Jobs, skills and lifelong learning strategy.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



How to get paid €150 a month to live in this culture-rich Italian city



GOOD PRACTICE - 150 EUROS A MONTH TO NEW RESIDENTS

Attracting new residents that are also the future talent of the local economy sometimes demands creativity. Mantova created a campaign of offering 150 euros monthly to people that applied to become new residents.

This project focused on accepting 100 applications per year, but another dimension of the project impact was the city marketing, where Mantova got a nice media return on investment.

The call for residents was published in several websites, newspapers, magazines, between other channels, in many different languages, promoting not only the wish of the city to receive new inhabitants but also their distinguished elements, namely the heritage and gastronomy.

This project was also connected with the economic development promotion, because one of the project goals is to attract people connected with the job vacancies that Mantova companies have.

Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

INTRODUCTION TO ULG

Some of the stakeholders that will be involved in the ULG are:

- Municipal Department of Welfare and Social Services, Educational Services and Public Education, Urban Planning Office, Registry Office;
- Family Center;
- Mantova Province;
- Mantova Chamber of Commerce;
- Association of Small and Medium Enterprises active in Mantova city and province;
- Confederation of Italian industry;
- Young Industrialists Group; TedX Mantova;
- TEA; Hike Coop Sociale; Coprosol;
- SOL.CO Mantova; For.Ma Mantova;
- Fondazione Università Mantova; Politecnico di Milano;
- Laboratorio Territoriale per l'Occupabilità – LTO Mantova.

SPAIN

Plasencia



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

1991 - 36.060

2001 - 36.690

2011 - 41.162

2021 - 39.862**95%** Spanish**16.13%** Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Plasencia is located in the north of the Extremadura region, about 70 km from the Portuguese border. It is an ancient city, surrounded by natural landscapes, like the Jerte river that allows the existence of natural swimming pools in the summer. The city of Plasencia has a large pedestrian area that contributes to the local lifestyle of having a tapa and a drink in the centre balconies. The ancient Roman road known as “Ruta de la Plata” (the “Silver Route”) runs through the city.

STRENGTHS

- Plasencia has several characteristics that promote the quality of life. The city, located on the ancient Roman road known as “Ruta de la Plata” (the “Silver Route”), has an ancient city center with large heritage elements, and a good offer of coffee shops and restaurants. Also have many nature attractions: the Jerte river a natural swimming pool of the city, the Monte Valcorchero with several pathways for hiking, cycling and other sports;
- The mobility in the city centre of Plasencia is comfortable. The city centre is pedestrian, but there is an offer of parking spaces around it, connected by escalators, lifts and other facilities to promote the comfort to the users. Bus stops are also digitised for the users convenience;
- Plasencia offers to its citizens nice education services, including lifelong learning opportunities, and also nice facilities to do sports activities.

WEAKNESSES

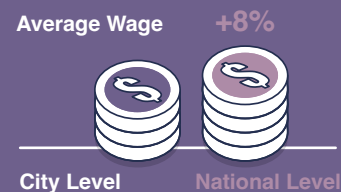
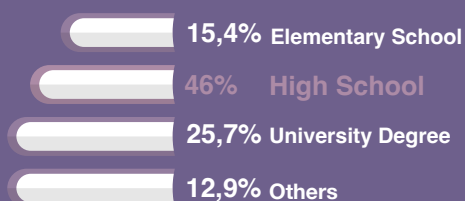
- The Plasencia economy is based on the service sector, including small commerce, restaurants and coffee shops, hotels and public services. There are no big companies operating in Plasencia, namely in the industry sector. Data shows data industry companies are normally decisive for the local economic resilience, and that bigger companies gave a good contribution to the increase of the average salaries. Plasencia misses both kinds of activities;
- Some public services are scarce, namely medical treatments, because of the lack of medical doctors. Other public services could be too bureaucratic what is a disadvantage on the attraction and integration of new residents.



Distance to Airport
260km



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KEY CHALLENGES

- Attract new residents;
- Attract investments;
- Improve the quality of life.

OPPORTUNITIES

- In the Spanish context the cost of life of Plasencia is still lower. That is a competitive advantage that could be used to attract residents, but there is not much housing available what could be the bottleneck of this potential;
- At Plasencia there are already some university courses that allow young people to study at Plasencia;
- Plasencia could be a winner from the recent trend of people wanting to move from bigger cities to smaller places (there are already some cases of people that moved). The promotion of Plasencia as a remote work friendly city could become a nice opportunity to attract people;
- Creativity is strong at Plasencia. Besides the large cultural offer, there are many people, especially youth, engaged in creative businesses and art production. Schools also promote these creative and artistic skills.

THREATS

- Lack of clear differentiation compared to other Spanish cities in the region
- The unemployment rate, around 16%, is a threat to retaining and attracting residents. It shows a lack of jobs to create opportunities to all the people. This situation promotes that people, especially young one, consider to move to other places in order to find professional opportunities;
- The city of Plasencia had bad experiences trying to attract big investments. The strategy was based on offering facilities for their settlement, but unfortunately the investment that was near to become reality, the company bankrupted.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Plasencia has strategies aligned with the policy of the EU, whose goal is to promote the balanced development of the territory and equal opportunities for all citizens. The Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategy, currently underway, exposes the challenges of the city and its priorities in terms of sustainable urban development, with the aim of improving the quality of life of citizens and making the city much more attractive. The Regional Strategy for Smart Specialisation is a collaborative platform that takes advantage of the emerging economic diversification focused on technology and creative industries and turns this specialisation into opportunities for population growth. The Business Accompaniment Points are strategic enclaves that offer a comprehensive response to entrepreneurs in our region and subsidise start-ups of new companies with the aim of improving economic activity.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

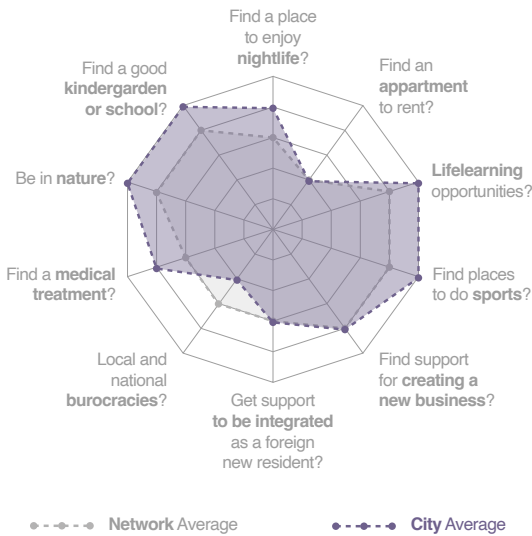
The Municipality of Plasencia is identified as the main focus for the IAP two themes. Attractiveness of the city: improve the image of the city, the quality of life, attract new residents, and create new lines of support for entrepreneurs in the creative and technological industries. Participatory policies: involve more citizens, increase social inclusion and take advantage of all the knowledge citizens have.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

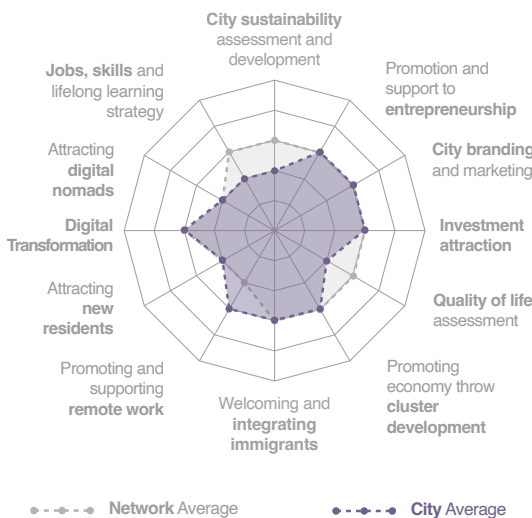
Learning Opportunities:

- Attracting new residents;
- Economic diversification and resilience;
- Quality of life assessment;
- City sustainability assessment and development;
- Attracting digital nomads;
- Jobs, skills and lifelong learning strategy.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - URBAN MOBILITY SYSTEMS

The ancient city centre of Plasencia is a pedestrian area, where it is pleasant to walk, to shop, to have children playing and to enjoy the Spanish gastronomy outdoors.

In order to allow citizens to reach the city centre, Plasencia created a mobility strategy with the implementation of several projects that promoted the increase of comfort on the mobility. The bus stops are now digitised allowing people to know exactly when the bus will come, creating trust on the use of public transport. The city created a large offer of parking spaces around the city centre, using an app with digital road signals to allow drivers to know which parks have empty spaces. The connection between the parks and the city centre was also improved, opening new routes, and creating escalators and lifts to comfortably access the city centre.

Both residents and tourists could find these solutions using the mobile app “Destino Plasencia” that includes these smart solutions and also the presentation of the traditional tourist contents, like the offer of restaurants, hotels and attractions.



INTRODUCTION TO ULG

Local stakeholders that will be included in ULG are:

- Councillor for Town Planning and European Funds, Municipality of Plasencia;
- Councillor for Gender Equality, Municipality of Plasencia;
- Europa+i Consultancy Firm;
- Peces Gordos Co;
- Ocupando el Espacio;
- Chamaleon Productions;
- 24 fotogramas association;
- Acuadros creative studio;
- Extremadura University;
- Official school of Languages;
- PlanVE;
- AM Euexia;
- Architects;
- Shin Gummy Events;
- Voluntary members from civil society.

Do you have...

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| An economic development strategic plan | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| An incubator | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| An investment attraction incentives system | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Marketing plan for attracting residents and investment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A quality of life assessment that is replicated each year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A plan about the digital transformation of the city | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| University degrees happening within the city | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

FRANCE

Saint-Quentin



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

2009 - 55.971

2014 - 55.878

2020 - 53.100

11.3% Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Saint-Quentin is located at Hauts-de-France, northern France. The city has a beautiful city centre, famous for being an open museum to the Art Deco, due to the big concentration of buildings and elements of this style. The basilica of Saint-Quentin is a main touristic and historical building that already resisted many wars, especially World War I that had destroyed much of the city centre. One particularity of the city is the Réserve Naturelle Nationale des Marais d'Isle, that is located in the centre of the city.

STRENGTHS

- The potential quality of life for families at Saint-Quentin is very high. The city has a beautiful city centre that is considered a must visit place for the Art Deco, there are many pedestrian areas where people could walk quietly. The city provides outstanding sports facilities and great green parks.
- The Isle Park is a must visit place, combining the reserve nature spot, something almost unique to an european city center, with the offer of many activities to children and families;
- The housing prices, especially to buy, are really affordable. This is a good competitive advantage to attract new residents that could benefit from a lower cost of life in the french context;
- Saint-Quentin is an experienced city on integrating immigrants and different communities. The existence of those immigrants is significant of the population numbers, and it is an opportunity to attract others to come a live there.

WEAKNESSES

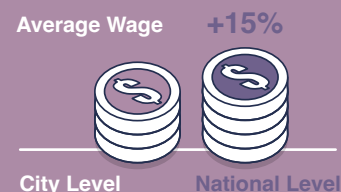
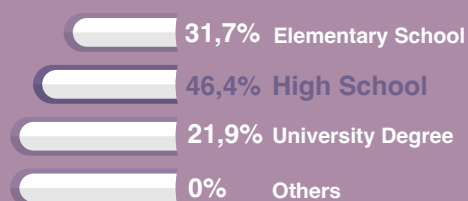
- The residents of Saint-Quentin mention that the access to medical treatments is hard, due to the lack of health professionals;
- The poverty rate in Saint-Quentin is high, around 28.0%, compared with the national French rate, around 13.9%. This reflects the existence of challenges on the social inclusion and local economy opportunities.



Distance to Airport
102km



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KEY CHALLENGES

- The unemployment rate is higher than the national (11,3 % to 7,1% of France);
- The poverty rate is the double of the national (28% to 13,9% of France);
- It's important to create strategies to attract investments and new business.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Saint-Quentin is working on the development of a robotic and digital cluster, named Robonumérique. The aim is to support local companies specialising in robo-digital technology, and attract other investments in this field. This strategy is rooted on the already presence of players like L'Oreal, Nestlé or Yamaha-MBK, and includes the engagement of other companies, public sector and universities;
- In order to provide state-of-the-art services to these kinds of startups, the city made a deal with Euratechnologies, a major player in the delivery of incubation and acceleration services. With this partnership the city is already attracting foreign entrepreneurs that chose Saint-Quentin by the specialisation of their vertical entrepreneurship programs. An example of the kind of startups that could be founded here is Sylphéo that employed around 40 people and that was acquired by Renault-Nissan Alliance.

THREATS

- The lost of population creates pressure on some public services managed at regional or national level, that could consider reorganising themselves, taking out of Saint-Quentin some functions on services like police, hospital, schools, between others;
- The unemployment rate, around 12%, represents a situation where there are few job offer. This situation is a threat on the ability of the city to retain and attract inhabitants;
- There are several abandoned factories in the area of Saint-Quentin. Industry used to be strong here, but with the global commerce changes, some industries lost their competitiveness and closed the production. The result is the existence of brownfield areas that create negative visual impact and a feeling of poor economics that could impact on the city attractiveness to investors and entrepreneurs.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Saint Quentin is part of two important programs: the Action Coeur de Ville program and the national program “Territoires d’industrie”. The Action Coeur de Ville program has five structuring axes: housing, economic and commercial development, accessibility, better public spaces, and better public services. Examples of that are the Maréchal Juin eco-neighbourhood, a project that aspires to revitalise the Faubourg d’Isle district, and the initiative studies to transform the marina and the surrounding neighbourhood, both creating a living space that attracts residents. The “Territoires d’industrie” program is based on four major challenges: attract, recruit, innovate, and simplify the fixation of industries in the territory.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

The City of Saint-Quentin has as its main focus the Integrated Action Plan: digital transformation, economic diversification, city branding, and urban social development. For all these topics, there has already been a search for funds and financial support that will be solicited during the IAP process.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

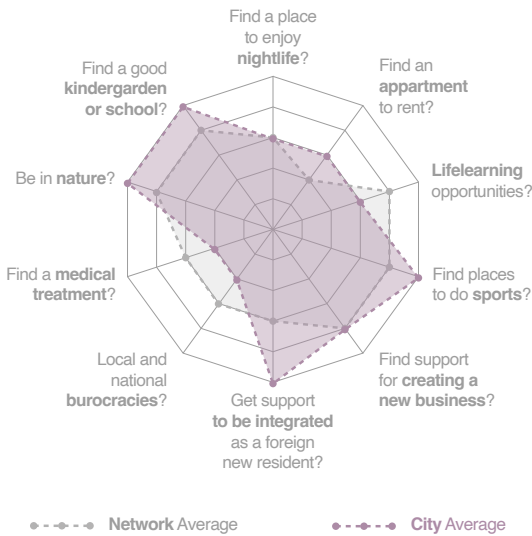
Learning Opportunities:

- Attracting new residents;
- Digital Transformation;
- City sustainability assessment and development;
- Attracting digital nomads;
- Promoting and supporting remote work.

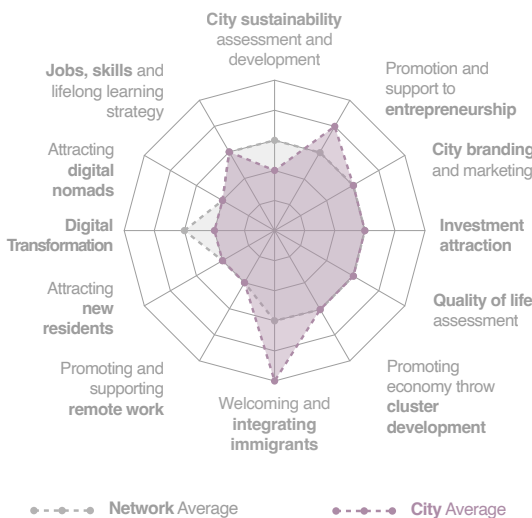
Potential Contribution:

- Welcoming and integrating immigrants;
- Promotion and support to entrepreneurship.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - SPECIALIZED VERTICAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT

Cities strategies to promote economic development normally include the promotion and support of entrepreneurship. To provide good support to high potential founders and startups demands experienced staff and a good business network. Both capacities are not easy to sustain in the public sector. For that reason, many cities don't succeed in the aim of impacting the economy through entrepreneurship.

Saint-Quentin made two smart decisions about the entrepreneurship promotion. First, the city connected their strategy for entrepreneurship with the global economic specialisation strategy, focused on the robotic and digital cluster. Second, the city made a deal with Euratechnologies, an experienced and recognized incubator that came to Saint-Quentin to deliver specialised incubation and acceleration programs.



This partnership allowed Saint-Quentin to be very fast considered as a location to international entrepreneurs that were looking to specialised ecosystems.

This public-private partnership is a smart way to deliver a serious and potentially impactful investment on entrepreneurship and innovation promotion.

Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

INTRODUCTION TO ULG

Some of the stakeholders that will be involved in the ULG are:

- Direction du Développement Economique;
- Saint-Quentinois Tourist Office and Congress Center;
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Banque des Territoires;
- Digital Innovation and Information Management Department;
- Voluntary members from civil society;
- Town centre council.

The neighbourhood councils aim to encourage expression and participation of residents, as well as to enable them to participate in discussions on local decisions and the definition of projects that affect their daily lives.

LATVIA

Saldus



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

1989 - 39.721

2022 - 26.688

*numbers after regional reform

87% Larvians

5.7% Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Saldus is located in the South-Western part of Latvia, 120 km from the capital Riga. The first reference about the city was in 1253. Nowadays the municipality includes two towns and 19 parishes, with a total of 27110.

The city is surrounded by forests, rivers and lakes, with several opportunities to have adventure and contact with nature. The city centre offers many opportunities to the children to play in the public gardens or to the practice of sports.

STRENGTHS

- The contact with the nature, with beautiful forests, lakes, river, and the availability of public infrastructures to sports activities are two competitive features of living in Saldus;
- Saldus has developed important investments in the creation of a qualified city for children. New kindergartens, nice school facilities and many public parks and gardens with entertainment opportunities for children are available. The city is friendly and very well prepared to have children enjoying the life there;
- Saldus has a strong community with many NGO`s active in their field of interests (mostly in rural development).

WEAKNESSES

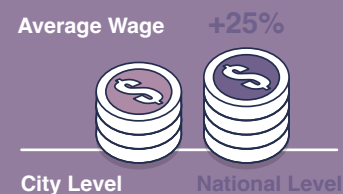
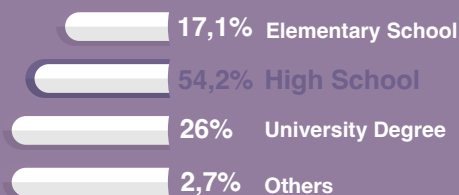
- Scarce offer of housing to rent or to buy. Places available most of the time are in bad maintenance conditions. There are many empty houses or land, but still not available in the market, because they are owned by people that dont want to sell;
- Saldus is still not much known in Latvia. People in the country don't know the life opportunities the city and its surrounding could offer, especially to families that are raising children. There a territorial marketing to be done in order to change the reality of Saldus being unknown;
- There isn't a group of emerging companies recruiting people for qualified jobs. The average salary is low, and there isn't a new have of startups and new investment that could change this reality soon.



Distance to Airport
114km



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KEY CHALLENGES

- Lost inhabitants to bigger cities, looking for educational and professional opportunities;
- There are no job opportunities for women outside of the public sector.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Saldus has a large diaspora that moved to different countries to live, but that are still connected with the hometown. Saldus organised an online hackathon that had dozens of participants, many of them from different countries. These people could be a target group when marketing the idea to come to live in Saldus, because they already have connections and the integration would be easier. These diaspora is living at countries like Norway, Sweden, Germany of Uk, and if they decide to come back, they will bring new skills and life experiences that could enrich the Saldus community;
- Last years, Saldus implemented several projects based on participatory approaches. Nowadays there is a culture of participation on a group of citizens that could become the foundation of success stories at the project Residents of the Future.

THREATS

- The local culture and language skills could be an extra challenge on integrating new residents, especially if they come from different countries;
- Saldus doesn't have a vast offer of nightlife and entertainment opportunities dedicated to young people. This reality push the idea of young people consider to move to bigger cities.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Saldus Development programme for 2022-2028 has three action plans to tackle general challenges and improvement areas, thus improving the quality of life, availability of services, and living space, as well as promoting a diverse and innovative entrepreneurial environment. In addition, it has a Strategy for Sustainable Development 2022-2038 with a strategic goal focused on the development of a high-value entrepreneurial environment and the competitiveness of industrial territories. In the previous URBACT network that Saldus integrated, IPlace, the IAP focused on two priorities: introducing a dynamic entrepreneurship environment, looking at Saldus potential as a “Green Town” and creating sustainable community development based on the engagement of citizens.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

In this project, Saldus would love to explore the potential branding opportunities and map all the landmarks that the town should be known for. Saldus is a sports town, but historically it was recognised for arts and trade, and it would be interesting, through the steps of the project, to analyse and experiment with this potential also nowadays. Saldus is located between the biggest cities but is not near proximity to them; therefore, it must be ensured that Saldus is a town that provides everything its residents are looking for and is also known for that on a national level.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

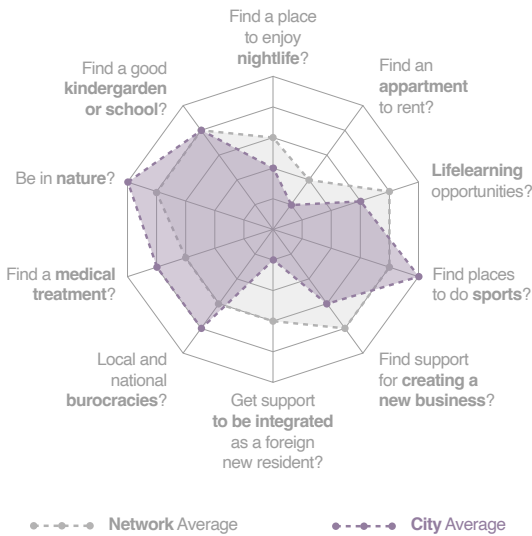
Learning Opportunities:

- Attracting new residents;
- Investment attraction;
- Promoting economy through cluster development;
- Attracting digital nomads;
- Promoting and supporting remote work;
- Welcoming and integrating immigrants.

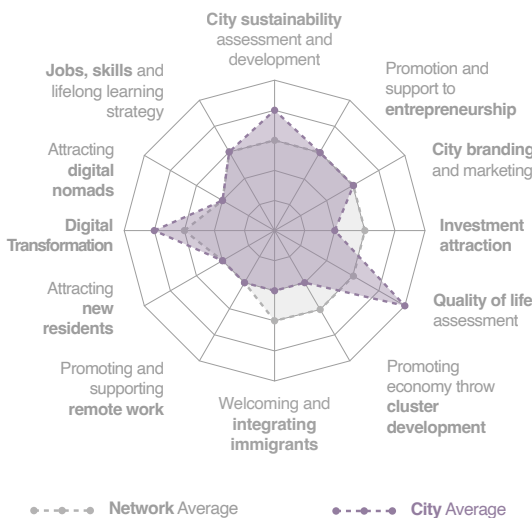
Potential Contribution:

- Quality of life assessment;
- Economic diversification and resilience;
- Digital Transformation;
- City sustainability assessment and development.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - CITIZENS INVOLVEMENT AND INITIATIVES

Saldus is mastering engaging citizens both in discussing new ideas but also in implementing them. There are a vast number of initiatives with that approach, including tools to city governance, and places to host those moments. Each month, there is the “Mayor’s Meeting with the Community” to discuss people and city needs. Saldus created the “Public Participation Budget” where citizens have a direct role in deciding investments.

Online is also a channel to reach the residents. Saldus promotes “Idea Map”, a tool for proposing and discussing ideas between citizens and the city. “Residents Surveys” are also used to list the opinion of people about the city work and to include it in planning. An digital hackathon was also organised, with the participation of around 100 people, including people from the diaspora;

Physical spaces to participate are also promoted. The city created the “Pop-up Recreational Space” and the “Experimental Recreational Area” that were both used for community events and public uses. KOPTelpa is the new coworking space, dedicated to active people and NGO’s to meet and work together.

There are a large number of other examples of this mindset of getting people together, to analyse, ideate and implement projects for the public good. Participation promotes ownership that creates sustainability. Saldus is doing it well.

Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

INTRODUCTION TO ULG

The local stakeholders that will be included in the ULG group of the city of Saldus are:

- Saldus region development association;
- Kurzeme Planning Region Entrepreneurship centre;
- State Employment Agency;
- Municipality specialists from different departments;
- Active citizen;
- Tourism, sports, and culture centre;
- Latvian investment and development agency Business Incubator Branch;
- Saldus Entrepreneurs’ Association or Saldus Consultative Entrepreneurs Committee.

CROATIA

Sibenik



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

2001- 51.553

2011 - 46.332

2021 - 42.599

94.19% Croats

3% Unemployment

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Sibenik is a charming coastal city in Croatia, that combines elements of history, culture and nature. At the city centre, the Cathedral of Saint James is the masterpiece of Renaissance architecture, recognized as Unesco World Heritage. The four recovered fortresses are also key monuments on the city's history, but also on the present strong cultural and touristic agenda. Around the city centre, there are several islands, national parks and other amazing natural sites. It is a tourist city, but with a high level of seasonality.

STRENGTHS

- The city has a preserved city centre, there are two Unesco sites at Sibenik, a beautiful seafront with an archipelago and also two national parks very close. The city is very safe, the weather is great, and the environment is unpolluted;
- Trokut entrepreneurship centre is a facility and organisation that is creating a new dynamic on entrepreneurship, remote work and digital nomadism promotion. It is also working on the creation of new skills between NEET people;
- There is a large cultural dynamic. The Fortress of Culture, a public company, owned by the city, created a case study on recovering old fortresses that are now attractions and places for events. The business model created by the city, allows the existence of a professional management of the cultural scene.

WEAKNESSES

- Sibenik's economy has a low market of qualified jobs. The main sectors are tourism and other services, construction and industry. These sectors are all important, but there is a lack of opportunities especially to the most qualified young people that want to be in nice and challenging companies and projects. There is a need to diversification the local economy;
- Sibenik has a large tourism demand, but is very concentrated on the summer season. The pressure of tourism during this period is an example of overtourism that affects the quality of life of local residents. The price and availability of houses, the inflation on the prices of different services, traffic among other phenomena are examples of negative spillovers of the sector. Living in places with overtourism is not easy and it could be a reason to leave the city.

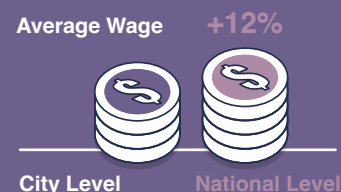
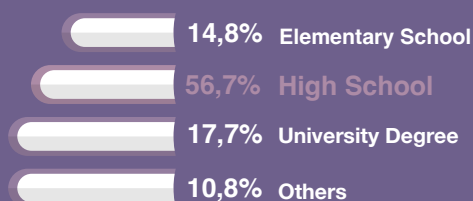


Distance to Airport
60km



SCAN HERE

OR PRESS HERE TO KNOW THE CITY BETTER



KEY CHALLENGES

- Demographic renewal;
- Development of sustainable tourism and other economic branches while preserving natural and cultural heritage;
- Development of the education system with special emphasis on higher education.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Sibenik just finished the construction of Palacin, a large new student dorm that will host students from different areas to come to Sibenik to study. This facility will also host other groups of people during the period when there are no classes. Palacin could become a soft landing place to attract an integrate young people living at Sibenik;
- The city is promoting its industrial area to news investors. There are some opportunities on attracting foreign direct investment, especially to area like climate tech or blue economy;
- The city of Sibenik is recognized nationally and internationally by its capacity to create and fund new projects. The city benefits from having an experienced team with demonstrated results, that give it the capacity to fund and implement future projects that could come from Residents of the Future project.

THREATS

- The recent changes in public transport have changed the reality of public mobility, but there are still many inefficient areas;
- Sibenik is very easy to reach from countries with better economies, like Germany. That proximity and the full integration of Croatia on the EU become a temptation to many people to immigrate in their search for better job opportunities;
- Nowadays, families in Sibenik are having much fewer children than in the past. This is a signal that policies of work-life balance could be important to implement;
- The houses prices to rent or to buy become too expensive to the average salaries of Sibenik's economy. Furthermore, construction prices also suffer from inflation which makes the solution for the lack of housing even harder.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

The National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 identifies demographic revitalization and the creation of support programmes for families as development directions and strategic objectives. The City of Sibenik subscribes to the plan and is working on a strategy for its urban development that focuses on minimising unfavourable demographic trends, which include financial assistance to families for each new-born child, funds allocated for the improvement of preschool institutions, schools, and higher education, entrepreneurship, culture and sport, and housing. In order to provide residents with a high quality of life, it is necessary to implement a new demographic policy. It includes the development of the labour market with quality jobs and the development of public services that would serve the needs of the population, especially young people.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Demographic revitalization is a strategic issue for Sibenik's future, and an important prerequisite for this challenge is the improvement of citizens' quality of life. Themes such as digital transformation, economic diversification, and city branding will be key features to develop in an integrative way.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

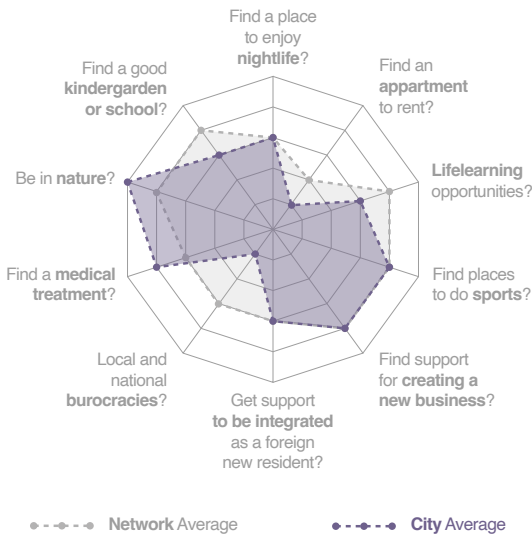
Learning Opportunities:

- Attracting new residents;
- Economic diversification and resilience;
- Quality of life assessment.

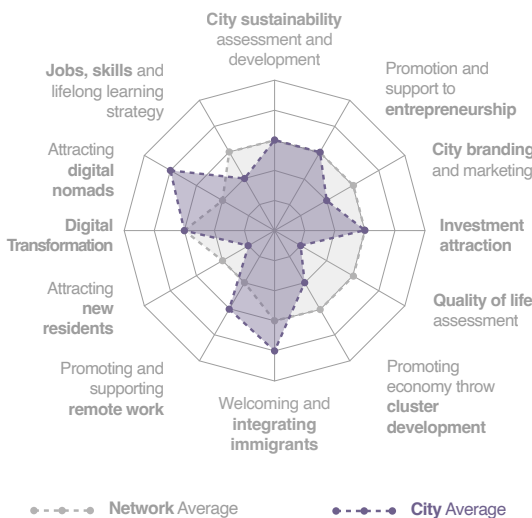
Potential Contribution:

- Attracting digital nomads;
- Welcoming and integrating immigrants.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - TROKUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

An incubator for entrepreneurship and new technologies, Trokut is a new intersection, destination and heart of the city of Šibenik. The super-modern coworking and entrepreneurial space is intended primarily for startups, freelancers and digital nomads in the IT industry, as well as education of all age groups in the field of IT. Besides a new facility opened in 2020, Trokut also managed other spaces to enterprises from more traditional sectors.

Trokut is a recent project but already with an important impact. There are around 160 people enrolled with Trokut, including entrepreneurs, digital nomads and remote workers.

The new structure created a very attractive and comfortable place that is being desired by digital nomads from countries like USA, Germany, Switzerland, among others, and also by people from Šibenik that are working from their hometown to international companies, the remote workers.



The demand from digital nomads started with the publication of the existence of the new facility on all social media, websites and digital communities of digital nomads. After that, nomads started to come, and there was a worth-of-mouth effect.

Trokut also works on the creation of new skills and opportunities to people that are not studying, neither working (NEET). The NEET academy, delivery with the partnership with the Polytechnical School and companies is reskilling people especially to the tech sector.

Trokut is a great example of entrepreneurship promotion, but especially in preparing a city to be friendly to remote workers and digital nomads.

Do you have...

An **economic development** strategic plan



An **incubator**



An **investment attraction incentives** system



Marketing plan for attracting residents and investment



A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year



A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city



University degrees happening within the city



INTRODUCTION TO ULG

The local stakeholders that will be included in the ULG group of the city of Šibenik are:

- Administrative Department for Economy, Entrepreneurship, and Development;
- Administrative Department for Social Activities;
- Public institution in culture, “Fortress of Culture”;
- Šibenik Tourist Board;
- Polytechnic of Šibenik;
- IT incubator “Trokut”;
- The Association of “Youth in the EU”;
- The Croatian Chamber of Commerce;
- The Croatian Chamber of Craftsmen;
- Kindergartens and schools.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Trebinje



DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Evolution of residents

1991 - 30.996

2013 - 29.198

98.6% National people

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Trebinje is located in the southeastern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is situated in the region of Herzegovina, near to the border of Montenegro and Croatia. The city's location offers a diverse landscape, with mountains, rivers, lakes and fairytale valleys. By those attributes, the city is a touristic city, where the beautiful old town is the connection element. Electricity production is a main economic activity due to the water abundance and the connection with the mountains. Trebinje is famous as “the city of sun and platan trees”.

STRENGTHS

- The city's location offers a diverse landscape, with mountains, rivers, lakes and valleys, making it a popular destination for nature-lovers and outdoor activities;
- The electricity sector is very strong at Trebinje, employing 29% of the local workforce and allows the supply of other sectors with decarbonized energy;
- Trebinje has a rich cultural agenda during all year. The “Festival of Festivals”, the “European Film Festival” and the “Music and More Summer Fest“ are examples of the Tebinje cultural scene;
- Trebinje is attracting interesting investments. The City of Sun, a 80ha complex, with many hotels, restaurants, spa, aqua park, nightlife offer and also a congress centre, allows the attraction not only of summer tourists, but also business events, that will last the positive impacts of tourism during all the year.

WEAKNESSES

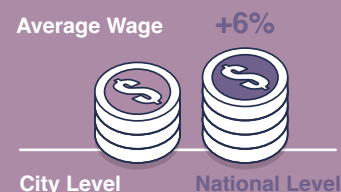
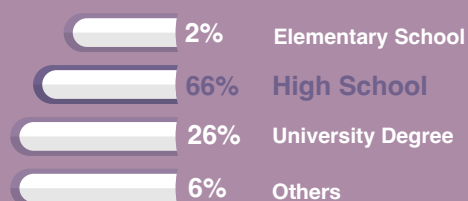
- There is a need to have improvements at the educational level, namely in preparing people to the company's needs;
- Trebinje businesses have different access to regional and international markets when compared with EU similar businesses. The IPA designation (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) allows the country to boost development, but the local market would benefit from a potential future integration on the EU market. That could be an important step to be able to grow the wages;
- Trebinje quality of life has many nice features, but it still has some issues to deal with. Access to medical treatments is a challenge nowadays, and there are some focus of pollution, that are not appreciated by residents, nether by tourists.



Distance to Airport
40km



SCAN HERE
OR PRESS HERE TO KNOW THE CITY BETTER



KEY CHALLENGES

- Continued decline in the birth rate and demographic changes;
- Need to improve the quality of health services and social services;
- Need to develop sustainable tourism and environmental protection.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Trebinje is located near Dubrovnik, a popular tourist destination in Croatia with an international airport. This proximity could be used to attract tourists, export agriculture products, attract visitors to the cultural agenda, among other potential benefits;
- Trebinj created a modern irrigation system, finished at 2019, that allow several developments on the agriculture production and on the grow of the agribusinesses;
- Trebinje was designated by BFC as a place with a favourable business environment in Southeastern Europe. This kind of designations create trust between investors, bringing more opportunities;
- The university courses happening could be the foundation of the skills to the future, and the nice natural and urban attributes could be an important feature to promote remote work and digital nomadism.

THREATS

- At Trebinje there are limited job opportunities, especially for qualified people. The wages are in average low, event in the context of the country;
- The housing costs are expensive in the context of the salaries. There is lack of houses available on the market, that affects the ability of retaining and attracting new residents;
- Besides there are already some university courses happening in Trebinje, a significant number of young people attend university courses in different cities. After that many of them don't return to Trebinje;
- Trebinje must avoid the negative spillover of the overtourism of Dubrovnik, the inflation that it creates and also the scarcity of people to work on local companies.

LOCAL POLICY AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

The city of Trebinje has some strategic plans to promote the development of the local community in the three most important aspects: economic, social, and environmental. The Tourism Development Strategy, the Sustainable Energy Action Plan, the Local Environmental Action Plan, and the Medium-Term Capital Investment Plan. About the environment, there are two relevant projects: Watsan, a country-wide investment programme for the water and sanitation sector that aims at protecting public health and the environment from water pollution while maintaining a balanced development of water supply and sanitation; and the construction of an irrigation system that made possible the application of the most modern irrigation methods on 860 hectares of agricultural land and created better conditions for more intensive development of agricultural production in the wide suburban and rural area.

FOCUS ON THE INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

Depopulation is one of the key problems faced by the city of Trebinje, and will be the main focus of the Integrated Action Plan. Digital transformation, economic diversification, and city branding are the key elements on which the IAP will be based.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

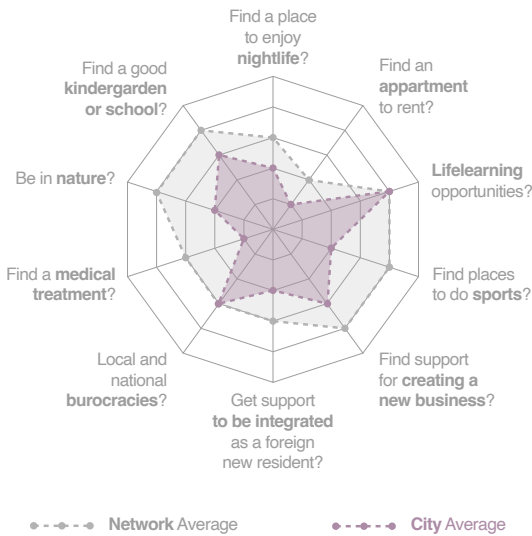
Learning Opportunities:

- Promoting and supporting remote work;
- Jobs, skills and lifelong learning strategy.

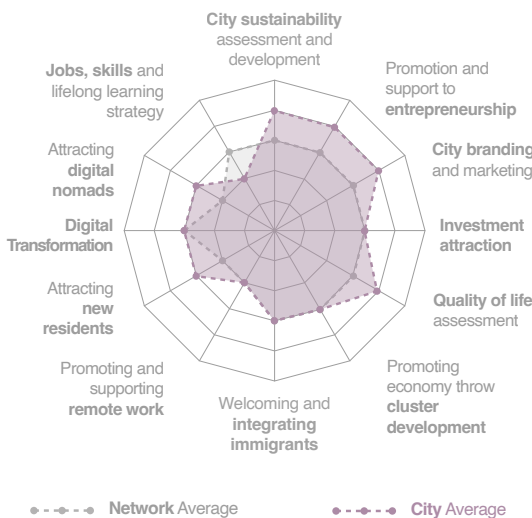
Potential Contribution:

- Promotion and support to entrepreneurship;
- Quality of life assessment;
- City branding and marketing;
- City sustainability assessment and development.

How easy and comfortable is...



Maturity assessment before the network...



GOOD PRACTICE - HERZEG HOUSE

Tourism and agriculture are two important economic activities at Trebinje. The city is recognized by its gastronomic offer, and local products like honey, cheese, wine, cured meat products, liqueurs, among others.

However, in the past most of these products were not adequately represented on the market, as part of the City's experience. Most producers sold their products only at home and they were packaged in a very modest way. Such a situation did not provide a perspective for enriching the tourist offer, nor the growth and development of the business of agricultural producers.

In order to overcome these problems the City of Trebinje and the Agrarian Fund of the City created the Herzeg House, focused on the branding of local products and the establishment of new sales and distribution channels.



Nowaday, the Herzeg House has more than 1000 products being sold in more than 130 stores, and the number of registered agriculture farms increased from 350 to 700 from 2017 to 2020. The project stimulated the retention of young people in rural areas and increased the income from the agriculture activity.

The development of new skills, new jobs and the impact on the city branding were other impacts that came from this project that won first place in the international competition "Green Destinations Story Awards – Top 100 Destination Sustainability Stories" at the ITB Berlin, one of the largest tourism fairs in the world.

Do you have...

- An **economic development** strategic plan
- An **incubator**
- An **investment attraction incentives** system
- Marketing plan** for attracting residents and investment
- A **quality of life assessment** that is replicated each year
- A plan about the **digital transformation** of the city
- University degrees** happening within the city

INTRODUCTION TO ULG

Some of the stakeholders that will be involved in the ULG are:

- City Administration departments;
- Public institutions;
- The Labour Bureau;
- The Chamber of Commerce;
- TREDEA - Development Agency;
- PI Center for Social Work;
- PI Cultural Center.

RESIDENTS OF THE FUTURE ON THE ROAD

SYNTHESIS COMMON OBJECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

The ten partners of the “Residents for the Future” project have common objectives and challenges. These are cities with between 20 and 80 thousand inhabitants, not the capitals of their countries, although safe, attractive, and enjoyable cities with a pleasant climate, a developed economy, and good social and educational services, have recorded a loss of population in recent years.

All partners are local self-government units that want to detect and learn some measures they can work on, given their jurisdiction, to be able to attract and retain inhabitants, improving their quality of life.

As part of the “Residents of the Future” project, cities will try to cope with shrinkage as one of the challenges that will become more significant in the future through an integrated and participatory approach, exchanging knowledge and experience, and strengthening personal capacities as well as the capacities of their institutions. Given that the characteristics of demographic changes are reflected in population decline, population aging, household composition, trends on the labor market, poverty, and social exclusion risks, a joint and holistic approach is needed when mitigating the consequences of changes and taking steps that will affect the future of cities.

03 SYNTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

SYNTHESIS

PARTNERS POSITION

The Residents of the Future network is made up of a group of cities with similar key challenges.

During Phase 1, cities were challenged to identify their challenges and define their main objectives for the IAP. When we look for the outcomes, it's possible to identify the main problems to work on during Phase 2. Obviously, **the big challenge is the decreasing population**, most of which is caused by the proximity of competitive cities. **This loss leads to a decrease in the skilled workforce at the local level, which leads to a crash in the economy and in the capacity to attract and retain investments and businesses.** Which in turn increases unemployment and poverty rates. To change these trends, most cities identify it as a priority to work on the attractiveness of the city to new residents and investments, improve the quality of life and private and public housing investments, develop remote work policies, and promote sustainable tourism.

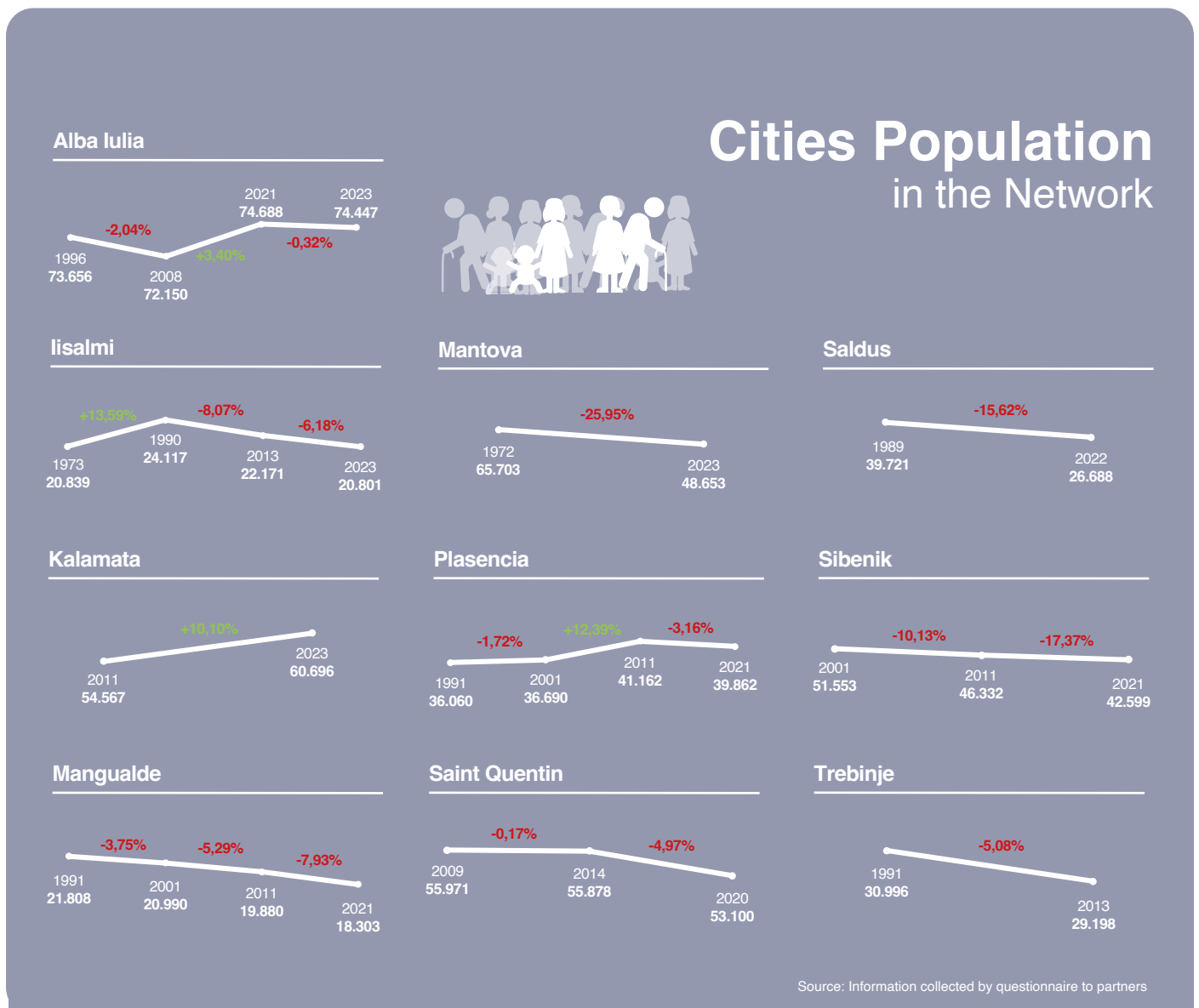
Most of the cities are enjoyable, safe, surrounded by nature, and have good facilities for families (kindergartens and school facilities, places to do sports, university degrees happening in the city), whoever all of them, except Kalamata, have less or pretty much the same population as in the 1970s and 1990s. This is exactly the opposite of what's happening in most of the cities in the world that are increasing their population. It shows us that **even if these cities go through periods of demographic recovery, it is difficult for them to maintain continuous growth and quickly lose population again.**

One of the reasons pointed out by every partner city was the difference between the local and national average salaries. **Every city has lower salaries than the average of their country**, between 10% and 20% less, and when compared with the average salary of the capitals, the difference goes off, between 20% and 40%. Besides that, in most of the city

partners, it is not easy to find an apartment to rent at a nice price; they have complicated bureaucracy at the local and national levels; and don't have a convenient support system to integrate foreign residents.

When asked about their ongoing projects, less than 50% of the partners had projects related to: digital transformation, quality-of-life assessment, marketing plans to attract new residents and investments, or investment attraction incentives systems, and all of these subjects are essential and strategic to fight the main problems of shrinking cities.

As far as the city's maturity level, we could confirm that most of the partners don't have knowledge about remote work and digital nomads, which is a really important target audience and probably aligns with the conditions that these cities have to offer.



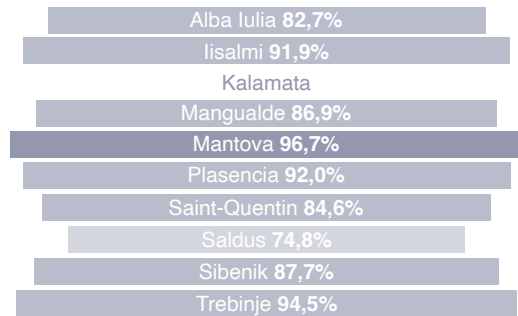
Results of the Questionnaire

Residents of the Future - Baseline Study

1. Average Wage

University degrees happening within the city?	80%
An economic development strategic plan?	80%
An incubator?	60%
A plan about the digital transformation of the city?	40%
A quality-of-life assessment that is replicated each year?	40%
An investment attraction incentives system?	30%
Marketing plan for attracting residents and investment?	30%

% of Local Average VS County Average



2. Do you have...?

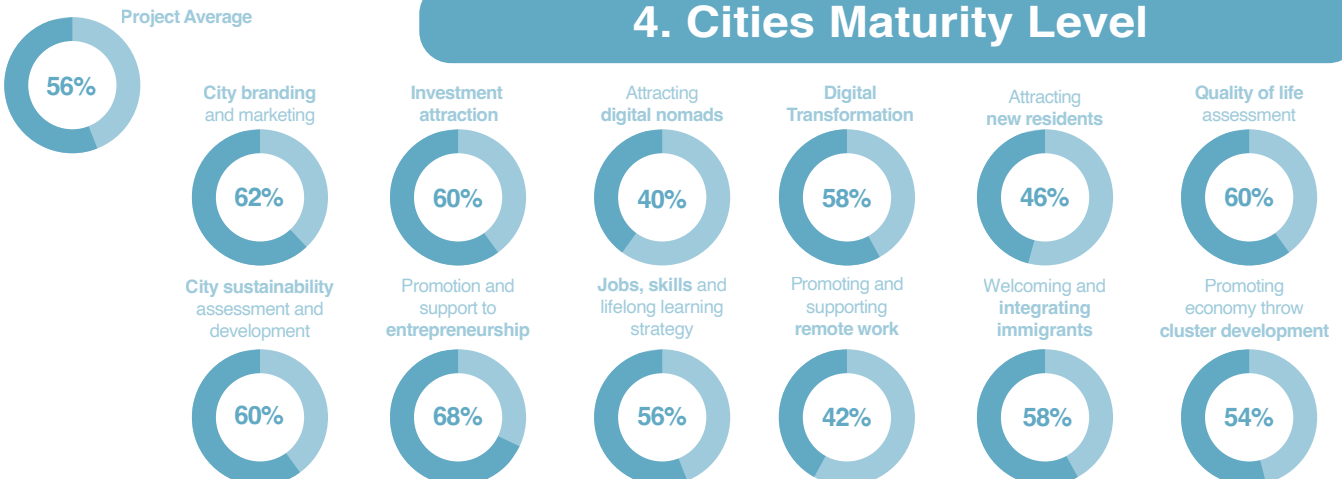
3. How easy and comfortable is to...?

Project Average	3.3 /5
Be in the nature	4.2 /5
Find places to do sports	3.9 /5
Find a good kindergarden or school for kids	3.9 /5
Find support for creating a new business	3.6 /5
Lifelong learning opportunities	3.5 /5
Find an medical treatment	3.3 /5
Get support to be integrated as a foreign new resident	2.8 /5
Find a place to enjoy nightlife	2.8 /5
Local and national burocracies	2.5 /5
Find an apartment to rent with a nice price	2.4 /5

Cities Average

Alba Iulia	3.1 /5
Iisalmi	4.4 /5
Kalamata	2.4 /5
Mangualde	3.4 /5
Mantova	3.4 /5
Plasencia	3.9 /5
Saint-Quentin	3.7 /5
Saldus	3.2 /5
Sibenik	3.1 /5
Trebinje	2.3 /5

4. Cities Maturity Level



Source: Information collected by questionnaire to partners

METHODOLOGY

THE ACTION PLANNING NETWORK

The Action planning networks will have a duration of 31 months which will be organised around 10 quarters. The journey will be composed of 4 distinct stages with related milestones:

Stage 1 | **Activation** (quarter 1 and 2 - from June to December 2023)

During the activation stage networks will **consolidate their partnership and develop a customised methodology** for the work plan of networking activities at transnational and local level for the following stages.

Key outputs:

- Network Roadmap (based on the Baseline Study process);
- 1st Core network meeting (in-person);
- URBACT Local Groups set up (1 for partner);
- Network's communication plan;
- First Network article presenting network challenges and ambition.

Stage 2 | **Planning Actions** (quarter 3 to 6 - from January to December 2024)

This stage is mainly structured around **core network meetings, the set up and meetings of URBACT Local Groups** in each partner city. It concludes with the network Mid-Term Reflection process (MTR) and draft Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) produced by all partners.

Key outputs:

- 2nd Core TNM focusing on Integrated approach (in-person);
- 3rd Core TNM focus on Digital Transformation and Economic Diversification (in-person);
- Customised set of exchange and learning activities (in-person or online);
- 3 quarterly network reports;
- Network article summarising key network activities taking place in the planning actions stage including the insights from testing activities and key learning insights.

Stage 3 | Preparing Implementation (quarter 7 to 9 – from January to September 2025)

During this stage all partners are expected to **make further progress on their respective IAPs** by focusing on operationalisation aspects.

Key outputs:

- 4th Core TNM focusing on City Marketing and Branding (in-person);
- 5th Core TNM focus on Quality of Life (in-person);
- 6th Core TNM focusing on peer-review of draft IAPs (in-person);
- Customised set of exchange and learning activities (in-person or online);
- 3 quarterly network reports.

Stage 4 – Network Finale (quarter 10 – from October to December 2025)

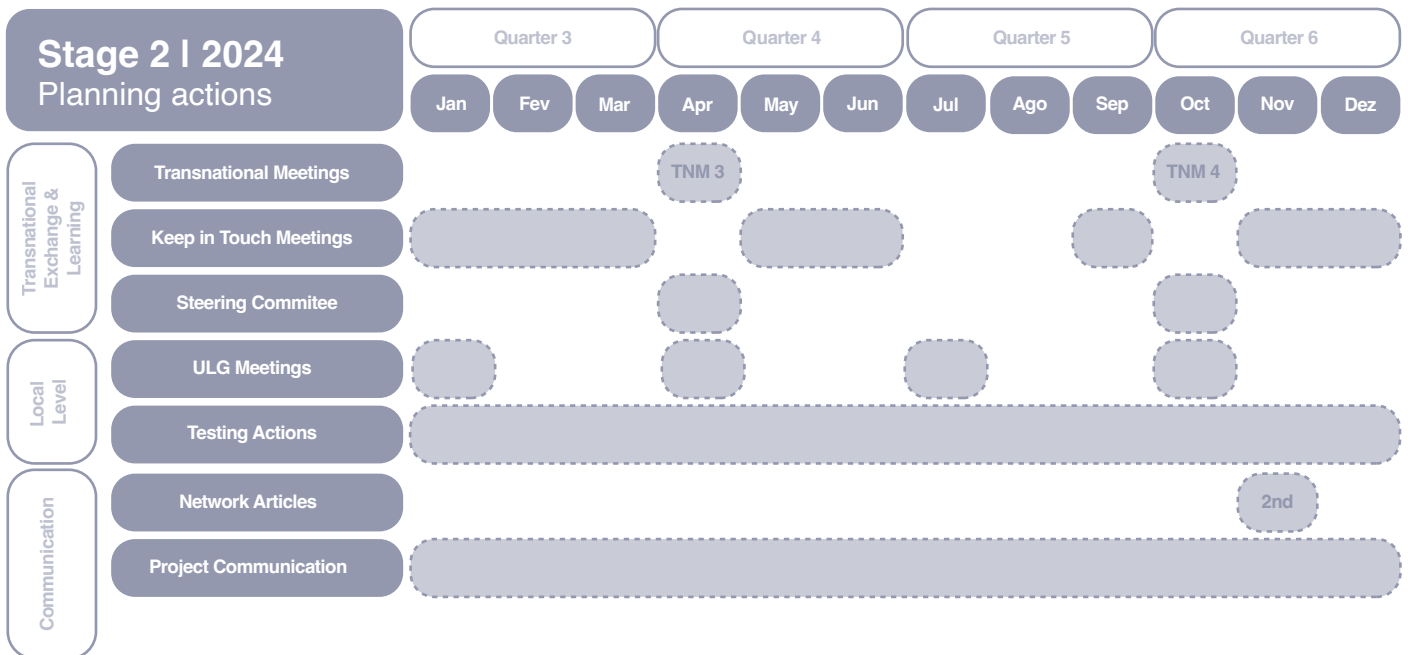
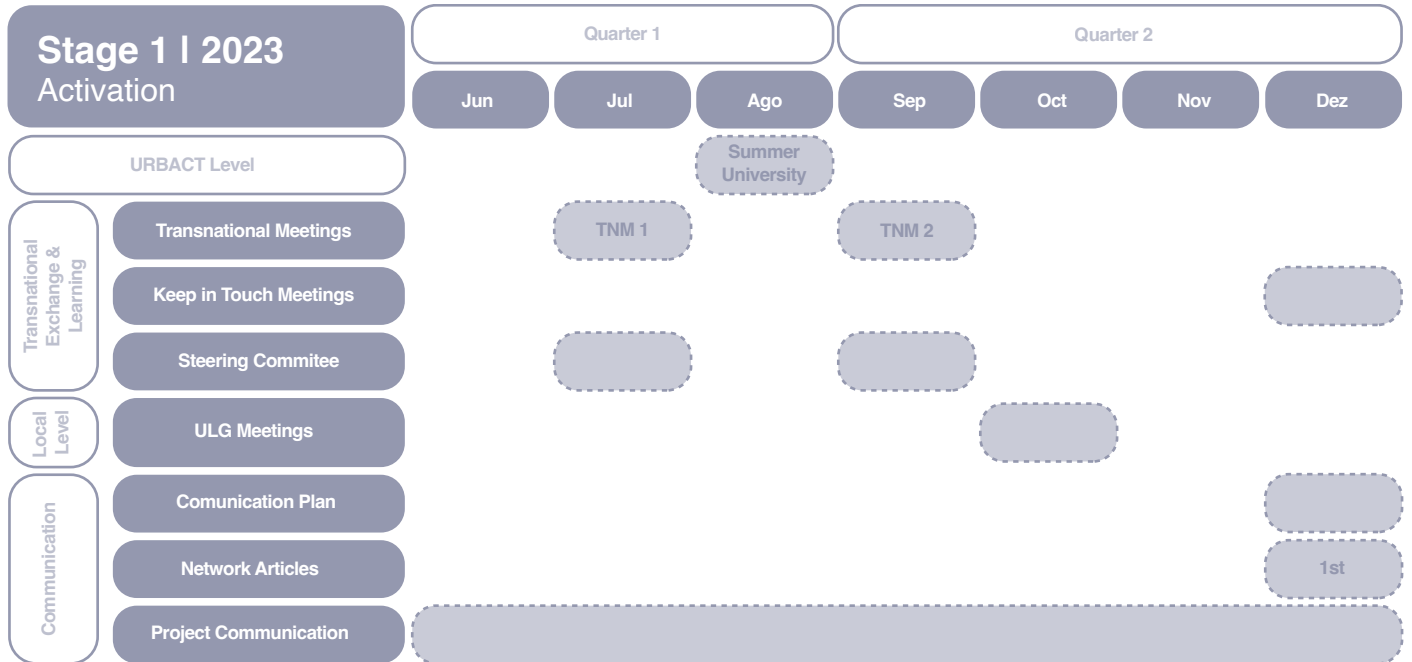
The last quarter of the URBACT IV Action planning journey could be described as “Back to the future”. This is where the **network journey and results will be captured in Network Results Product/s**.

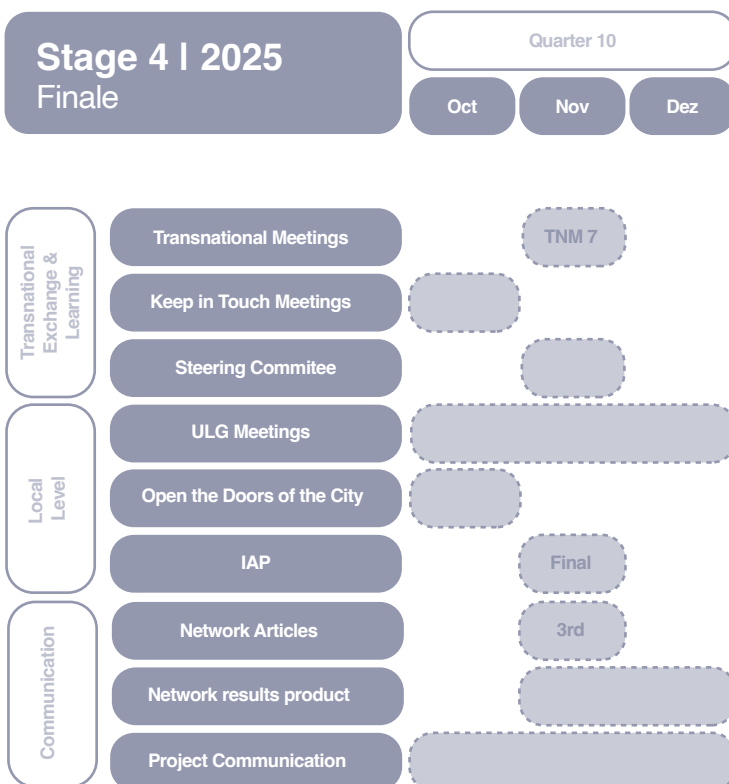
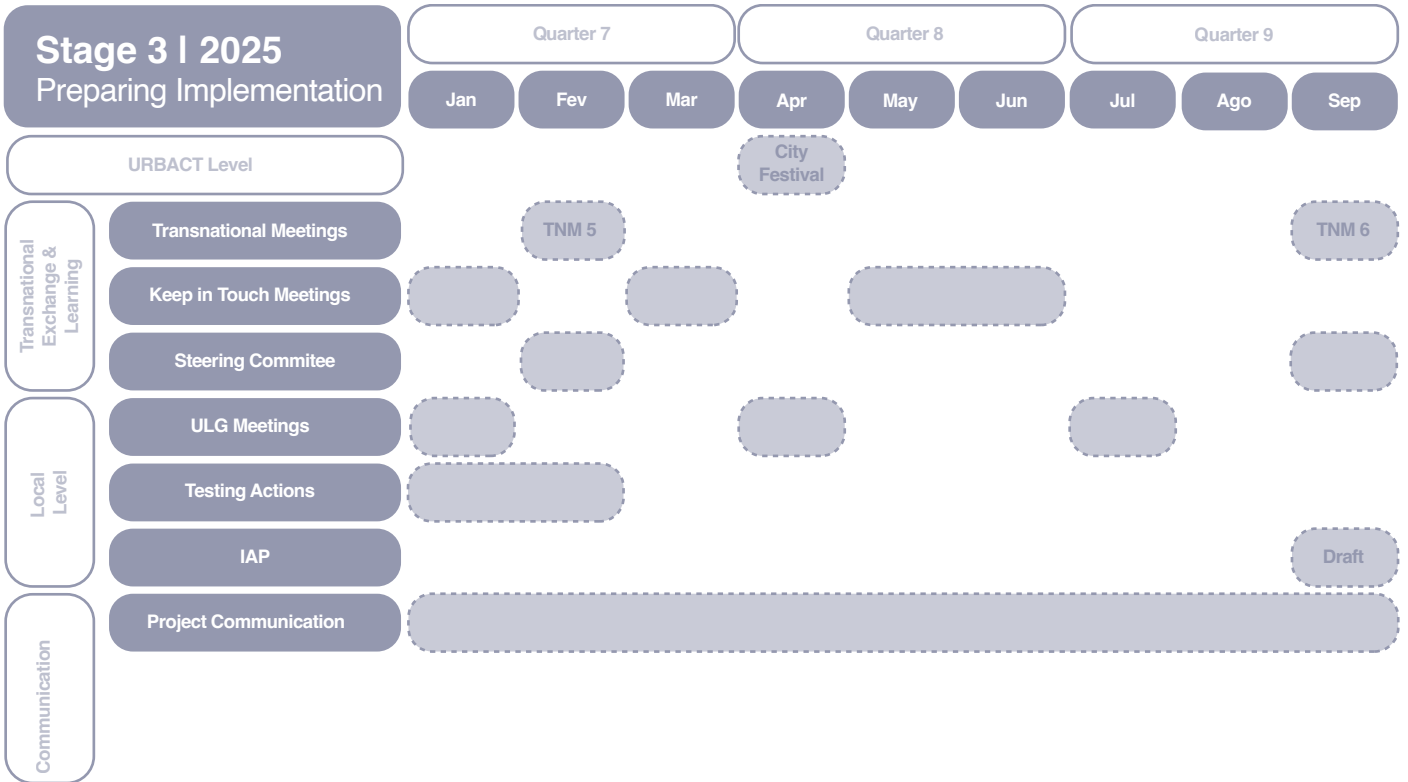
Key outputs:

- Network Results Product/s;
- Final Core TNM (in-person) back to back with optional final event (hybrid);
- Final network article;
- An Integrated Action Plan (1 per partner);
- Network article reflecting network results, impact at local level, as well as future prospects.

METHODOLOGY

THE ROADMAP





METHODOLOGY

KEY ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

TNM | Core transnational network meetings

This network plans to organise 7 **core transnational network meetings** - 1 online and 6 core in-person meetings. TNM will approximately last 2 to 2.5 days and will include site visits where these can add learning to the network. They will be attended by 2-4 representatives from each city.

ULG | URBACT Local Group

All partner cities will establish their own group and appoint a local ULG coordinator. Each partner will have a ULG that will meet at least once every 3 months to ensure that ULG is fully engaged in project activities. ULG members will be the creators of the IAPs and Testing Actions and they will define key challenges and possible solutions.

Network Communication Plan

The plan shall include specific content and milestones to be shared widely, as showcasing results from network activities (particularly the Final Network Product), optional events open to attendants beyond project partners, news and articles.

Network articles

During the project will be written 3 Network articles. These will reflect the current situation (state of play) at a certain point in the project lifetime:

- Presenting network challenges and ambition;
- Summarising key network activities taking place in the planning actions stage including the insights from testing activities and key learning insights;
- Reflecting network results, impact at local level, as well as future prospects.

Customised set of exchange and learning activities

Keep in Touch (KIT) calls

Keep in Touch (KIT) calls will be an opportunity to organise the work between the partners by building strong collaborative relationships, this will include regular network, at least one per month. If necessary, Lead Partner will also hold separate online meetings with each individual partner.

Quarterly network reports

These 6 reports will reflect network activities and help partners in their learning process in a way that will enable communication with the public and sharing with other cities, especially with policy makers and others who can influence the topics of city reduction and depopulation (learning & exchange highlights, thematic policy inputs, local activities, participatory approach etc.).

Network results products

The shape of this product will be defined during the development of the Communication Plan. **Will be an important tool that will describe and inform about the project**, disseminate the challenges and objectives of the Integrated Action Plans, partner cities and their journey in this URBACT network, project opportunities and obstacles.

Integrated Plan

The integrated action plan (IAP) is a document where is defined the strategy and actions to be implemented, covering timings, responsibilities, costs, funding sources, monitoring indicators and risk assessments, that will be used to respond to the concrete policy challenge of the network.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will ensure an efficient general coordination. It will be responsible for the general coordination, compliance with the objectives and the calendar, financial coordination of the entire project, **to ensure the achievement of the objectives and the development of the tasks** in a collaborative manner between the Lead Partner and the partners.

Recommendation to a successfully ULG

- Consider to choose an ULG coordinator outside of their institutions with capacity of contribute to ensuring the motivation and active commitment of group members;
- Consider to divided the ULG into smaller, thematic groups works;
- Identify the relevant stakeholders and involve them in the project;
- The group can be changed and enriched with new participants during all the project development;
- It is important to motivate people to be active. Dynamics with some activities as “one-on-one” meetings, Fishbowl, Worldcafe, could be important;
- Creating positive atmosphere, regular communication, regular organisation of meetings;;
- Choose different places to the meetings, looking for informality and inspiration;
- ULG members should have the opportunity to participate on TNMs;
- After the TNM, participants will transfer lessons learnt locally in a creative way!
- Inviting experts to come to ULG meetings to share their knowledge and discuss ideas together is something that could be promoted.
- The ULG is where the change at local level could be created. Take care of it as the most important element of the URBACT methodology.

METHODOLOGY

TNM | CORE TRANSNATIONAL NETWORK MEETINGS

The transnational exchange and learning activities in this network will take place mostly in person, with the first one taking place digitally.

In addition to the TNM related to network management, deliveries (as the IAP), and the project final event (TNM 1, 6, and 7), **we will have four thematic TNM working on and reflecting on the main themes of Residents of the Future** listed in Chapter 1:

TNM2: Sustainability;

TNM3: Digital Nomadism, Digital Transformation, Economic Diversification, and Remote Work;

TNM4: City Branding and Marketing, Entrepreneurship Development, Housing, and Investment Attraction;

TNM5: Quality of Life.

The Transnational Meetings will also be used to showcase progress and brainstorm about challenges faced by the partner's ULGs as a concrete way to link the transnational and local levels.

Most of the transnational meetings will have their contents divided into:

Network@work, where are listed and summarised the main goals of these meetings and where partners work together;

Training Sessions, where specific network themes will be presented and discussed; these sessions will be prepared by the Lead Expert, potential Ad Hoc Experts, Lead Partner, or Host Partner.

Good Practice Visits, an opportunity to visit the good practices of each host partner.

To improve the results of each TNM, we will use **dynamic tools** and explore the subjects in study, such as:

The climate pitch has as its main goal presenting climate strategies to another party. A climate pitch needs to give your audience a clear understanding of your plan or goals.

Climate Fresh is a 3-hour interactive workshop that teaches you about our changing climate system and empowers you to take high-impact climate action.

Hackathons are events where different parties gather to develop new approaches to solving problems that require collaboration.

The world café methodology is based on the belief that ‘we are wiser together’ and that the future can be shaped ‘through conversations that matter’.

Start, stop, continue, improve exercise is a four-part retrospective, or process, that gives you a framework for reflection. It determines what you should start doing, what you should stop doing, what you should continue to do, and what you should improve at for future initiatives.

Critical friend is an activity where a supportive partner asks difficult questions using critical thinking to judge a situation.

TNM 1 Let's commence

Location	Online
Date	July 2023
TNM Objective	Presentation of partners, people and project. Training the network on project management. .
TNM Contents	Network@work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentations of partners and people ▪ Project presentation ▪ Coordination & Management ▪ Financial coordination ▪ Project Communication ▪ URBACT method & city visits preparation

TNM 2 Ready for action

Location	Sibenik
Date	September 2023
TNM Objective	Promote the group spirit between partners, and enable the network to start the project at the local level. Strengthen the network's skills in the context of climate transition.
TNM Contents	Network@work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cities presentations ▪ Baseline study insights ▪ URBACT method Training sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carbon Literacy ▪ Holistic approach in activities planning ▪ URBACT Local Group development and engagement" Good practice visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trokut - Entrepreneurship Centre, example of how to promote remote work and host digital nomads Tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Climate Pitch ▪ Renaissance Écologique ▪ Climate Fresk Steering Committee



TNM 3 Time to ideate & test

Location	Saint Quentin
Date	April 2024
TNM Objective	Preparing the partnership with tools to explore and test solutions. Leverage the know-how on economic development promotion.
TNM Contents	<p>Network@work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Baseline Study presentation ▪ Tech-free Hackathon on cities problems and solutions using Saldus previous experience. ▪ Remote work and digital nomadism. <p>Training sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Economic Diversity & Grow ▪ Testing Action: design & implementation (ad-hoc) <p>Good practice visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Euratechnologies – Robonumerique, example of a public-private partnership on developing entrepreneurship. ▪ Parc d’Isle, example of an attractive park to the use of families. <p>Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hackathon Framework <p>Steering Committee</p>



TNM 4 How to communicate, that's the question!

Location	Mangualde
Date	October 2024
TNM Objective	Reflect on how to promote a city as a place to live and to invest. Understand the consequences of the climate change, and how can cities deal with that.
TNM Contents	<p>Network@work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mid-term project review ▪ World Café on Housing development strategies ▪ Culture and Tourism promotion: the case study of Plasencia. <p>Training sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City Branding & Marketing (ad-hoc) ▪ Investment attraction <p>Good practice visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cubos ETAR, example how circular water can be a resource to economic development. ▪ CCOM – Centro de Coordenação Operacional Municipal, the coordination center for civil protection that acts against the consequences of extreme weather conditions. <p>Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ World Café méthodologie <p>Steering Committee</p>



TNM 5 Let's learn with the Testing Action Results

Location	Alba Iulia
Date	February 2025
TNM Objective	Review of Testing Actions results and learn with that. Understand how quality of life could be defined, measured, and managed. Reflect on gender-equal policies.
TNM Contents	<p>Network@work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lessons learned and stories about Testing Actions ▪ World café on "New residents soft landing and integration" ▪ Integrated Action Plan: how to prepare it. <p>Training sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality of life: what is and how to promote it (ad hoc) ▪ Gender-equal policies (ad hoc) <p>Good practice visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smart City Strategy & implemented examples ▪ Find Your Greatness URBACT Network Lesson <p>Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start Stop Continue Improve ▪ World Café méthodologie <p>Steering Committee</p>



TNM 6 Let's review the IAPs

Location	Iisalmi
Date	September 2025
TNM Objective	Promote the peer review of the IAPs and prepare the project final event.
TNM Contents	<p>Network@work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer & Ad-hoc review of the IAPs (ad-hoc) Cluster Development: the case of Trebinje with the Herzeg House and the agriculture sector. <p>Training sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future of work: schools' systems, jobs and skills <p>Good practice visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yhessä - Know-how network <p>Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration Assessment Grid Self-Assessment tool for Integrated Action Plan Critical Friend <p>Steering Committee</p>



TNM 7 Network Finale. Let's share and celebrate!

Location	Mantova
Date	November 2025
TNM Objective	Celebrating and sharing project results. Preparing the further network steps.
TNM Contents	<p>Network@work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IAPs presentation Presentation of project final products Project dissemination and knowledge capitalization Project management to the project closure: final report and final payment claim What 's next? Working session on further collaborations and keep collaboration active. <p>Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance in Policy-Making <p>Steering Committee</p>



Transnational Meetings Roles Resume

Alba Iulia	Hosting and organization of the <i>TNM 5 Let's learn with the Testing Action Results</i>
Iisalmi	Hosting and organization of the <i>TNM 6 Let's review the IAP's</i>
Kalamata	-
Mangualde	Hosting and organization of the <i>TNM 4 How to communicate, that's the question!</i>
Mantova	Hosting and organization of the <i>TNM 7 Network Finale. Let's share and celebrate!</i>
Plasencia	Specialized content preparation about Culture and Tourism promotion
Saint-Quentin	Hosting and organization of the <i>TNM 3 Time to ideate & test</i>
Saldus	Specialized content preparation about tech-free Hackathon on cities problems and solutions
Sibenik	Hosting and organization of the <i>TNM 2 Ready for action</i>
Trebinje	Specialized content preparation about Cluster Development, the Herzeg House and the agriculture sector

Smaller cities are perceived as being a better place to live for older people and for families with young children. People feel safer walking alone at night in smaller cities, and they perceive their city as being cleaner and less noisy than people living in larger cities.

Report on the Quality of life in European Cities, 2023

04 CONCLUSION THOUGHTS

This Baseline study provides an overview of an European decisive challenge: Urban Shrinkage, showing us that this is a real problem that most of the cities in Europe are going through.

This challenge seriously impacts the demographic balance of our societies and the economic growth potential of our economies. **If we do not develop the right tools to face it, it will turn into an economic problem and, probably, into a true cultural upheaval.**

With low birth rates and an ageing society that causes a loss of labour force, cities are suffering the effects of brain drain, which puts their attractiveness and competitiveness at risk. Less investment means a lack of career opportunities and low average salaries, which leads young people to move from small to bigger cities looking for better job opportunities and easy access to cultural attractions as well as leisure activities.

However, the Report on the Quality of Life in European Cities - 2023 Highlights shows us that “smaller cities are perceived as being a better place to live for older people and for families with young children.” With this thought in mind, **the ten cities of this network will work together, believing that their cities have quality of life to offer based on safety, contact with nature, a sense of community, and a slow lifestyle that is family-friendly.**

After Phase 1, where we had the opportunity to know each city profile, identifying their focus areas, learning needs, potential contributions, and ambitions, it was possible to create a roadmap based on common objectives and challenges to allow each partner to create an Integrated Action Plan to transform their city.

Themes such as sustainability, digital nomadism, digital transformation, economic diversification, remote work, city branding and marketing, entrepreneurship development, housing, investment attraction, and quality of life will be placed on the table, taking advantage of learning opportunities based on the complementary knowledge of partners.

The application of the URBACT method will provide all the support needed for sharing knowledge, encourage collaboration and dialogue, and provide opportunities to test actions and make the transformation happen. We look forward to seeing the results and celebrating our achievements with the network and the URBACT family.

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