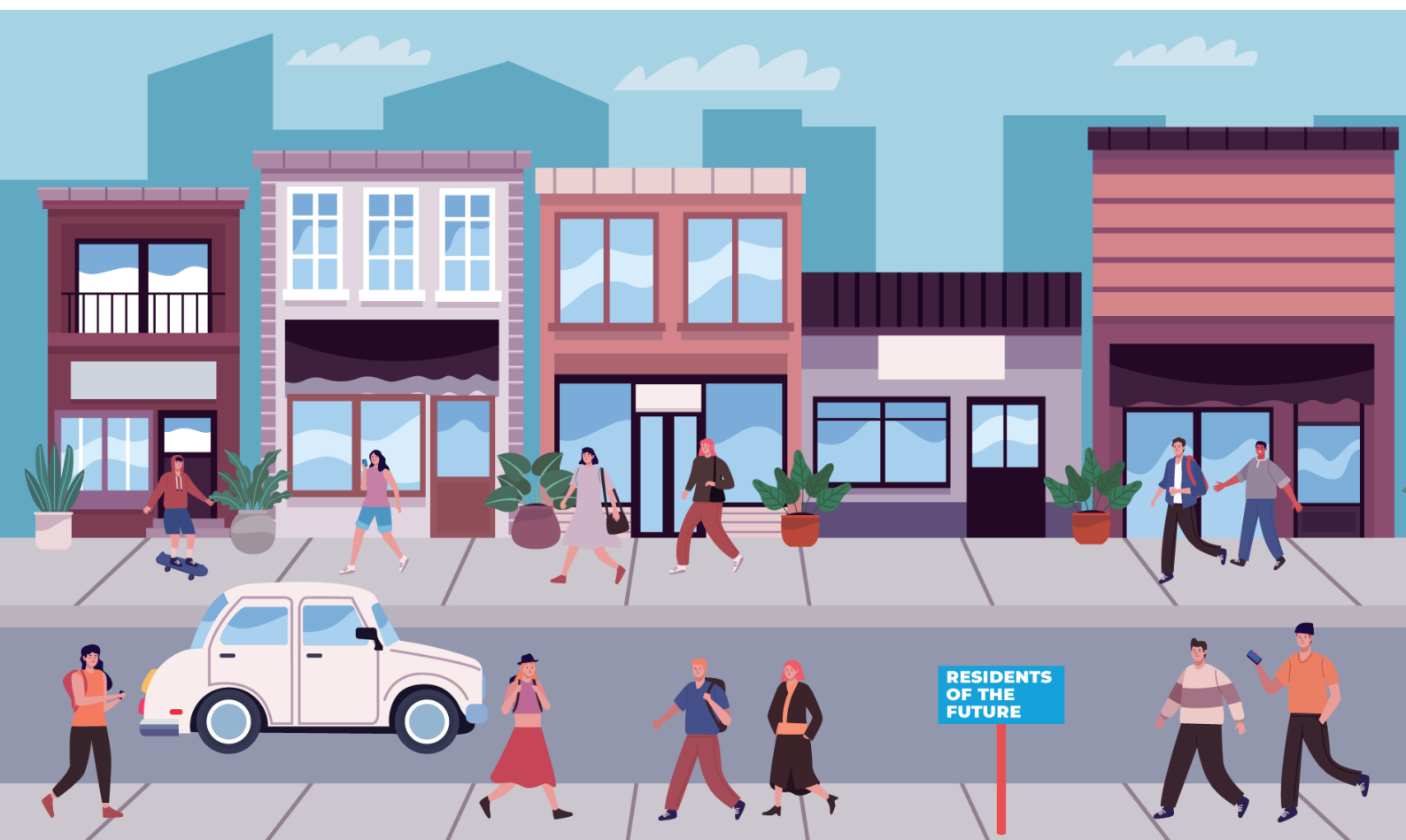


2nd Quarterly Report

Residents of the Future



URBACT



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

2nd Quarterly Report

Residents of the Future

April to June 2024

URBACT



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Interreg

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1. Welcome to Residents of the Future

Residents of the Future is an action plan URBACT network that wants to address the issue of urban depopulation within small and medium-sized cities. By focusing on digital transformation, economic diversification, and city branding, it will explore innovative approaches towards evolving trends in work, lifestyle, and communication, to enhance the cities' attractiveness for prospective investments and inhabitants.

The network enables cities to redefine their advantages in comparison to larger metropolitan areas, and develop holistic, citizen-centric solutions that support demographic revitalisation and sustainable urban growth.

Network members:

Alba Iulia - Romania

Iisalmi - Finland

Mangualde - Portugal

Mantova - Italy

Plasencia - Spain

Saint-Quentin - France

Saldus – Latvia

Sibenik – Croatia | **Lead Partner**

Trebinje - Bosnia-Herzegovina

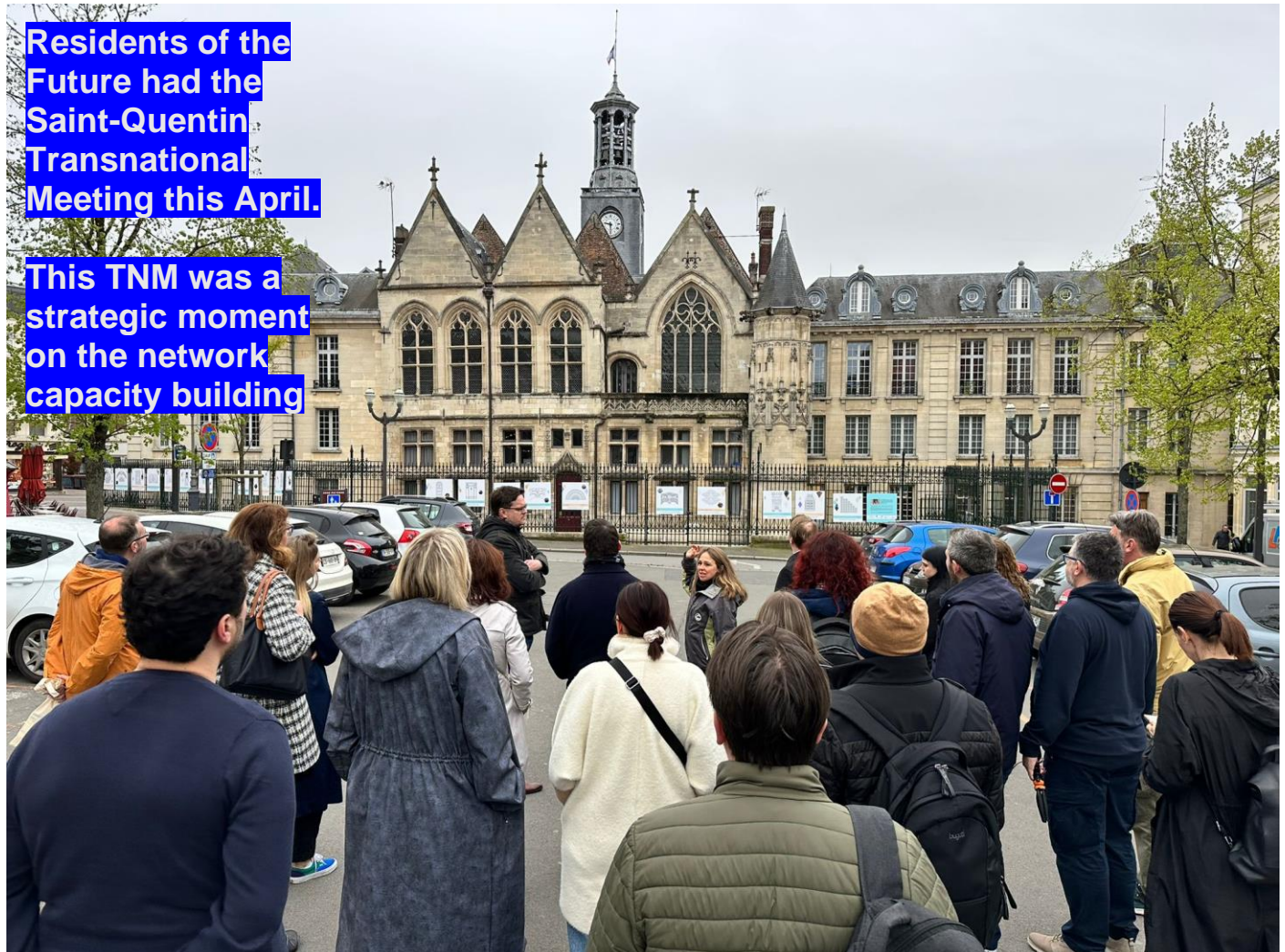


2. What is new on Residents of the Future?

The period of the 2nd Quarterly Report included the transnational meeting (TNM) that happened in Saint-Quentin, France. This TNM was planned to be dense in content, to prepare cities for being more ready to work at local level.

At this period, we also had a significant work at URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) level. Cities started their journey on ideation and testing actions.

The project communication is now very active, with a strong presence on the social media!



2.1 Saint-Quentin Transnational Meeting

The Transnational Meeting that took place in Saint-Quentin was the first of the Implementation Phase.

Being located from the point of view of the cities' journeys at such a strategic moment, this meeting was especially dense on content, also having a strong incorporation of visits to case studies identified as good practices and which the city of Saint-Quentin presented to partner cities.



RESIDENTS OF THE FUTURE

Saint-Quentin
TRANSNATIONAL MEETING

DAY 1
April 2024

The following contents were part of the transnational meeting agenda:

-) Remote Work & Digital Nomads
-) Economic Diversity and Growth
-) Testing Actions
-) How to implement a Hackathon

On the agenda, the cities also had the opportunity to learn about different case studies that the city of Saint-Quentin made possible, namely:

-) Art Deco strategy
-) Parc d'Isle
-) Euratechnologies incubator

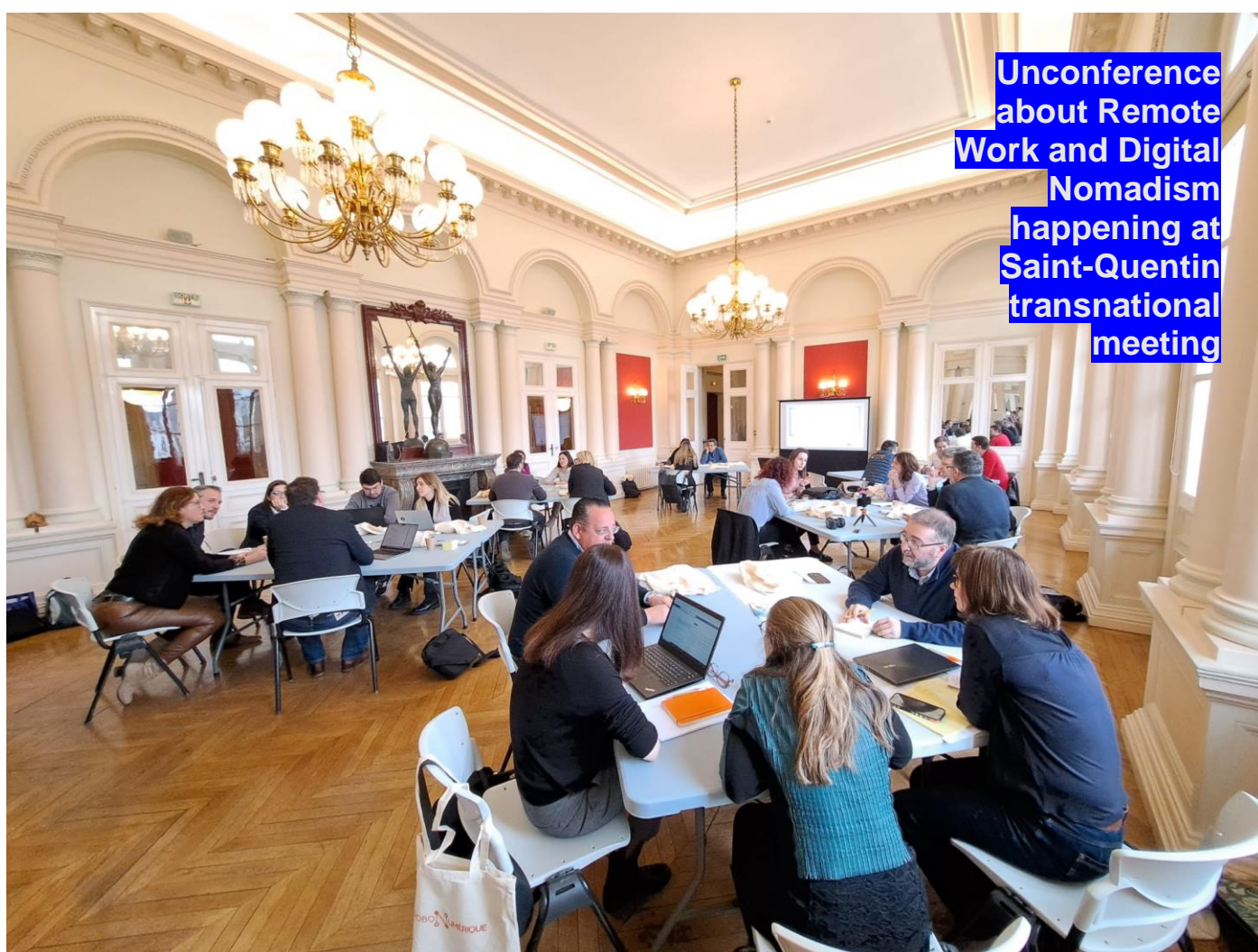
This meeting allowed us to develop new knowledge, discover new case studies, but also strengthen the companionship between partners who shared challenges, achievements and ambitions in their Residents of the Future journey.

REMOTE WORK & DIGITAL NOMADS

The themes of Remote Work and Digital Nomadism were worked through a logic of discussion of partners' ideas and experiences, using the Unconference methodology, through which participants chose from a bank of questions which ones were most important for them to see discussed.

About the Unconference methodology:

An unconference is a participant-driven meeting or event where the agenda and discussions are created collaboratively by the attendees rather than being predetermined by organizers. Unlike traditional conferences, unconferences emphasize open, flexible formats where participants actively contribute to the content and structure of the sessions. This approach fosters spontaneous, dynamic interactions and allows for a more engaging and inclusive exchange of ideas, as attendees can propose topics, lead discussions, and share expertise in real-time.



Key Questions and Conclusions

) How should cities act on marketing to attract digital nomads?

Effective marketing strategies should leverage digital platforms, like [Nomadlist](#), to highlight the city's unique features, including cost of living, cultural experiences, and community events. Success stories and testimonials from current digital nomads should be prominently featured. Collaborations with travel influencers and remote work blogs can further boost visibility.

#1 Nomad Community
★★★★★
SINCE 2014

Go nomad and live anywhere

Join the #1 global community of 34,200 remote workers living and traveling around the world since 2014. Don't go at it alone, meet other nomads and get together!

Attend 374 meetups/year in 100+ cities

Meet new people for dating and friends

Research destinations and find your best place to live and work

Keep track of your travels and record where you've been

Join Nomad List chat and find your community on the road

Type your email...

Go nomad →

If you already have an account, we'll log you in

) How to convert digital nomads into residents?

Cities should focus on providing a seamless integration experience for digital nomads. This includes offering long-term housing options, community-building activities, and simplified bureaucratic processes. Creating networks and support systems that foster a sense of belonging can encourage digital nomads to settle permanently.

) What are the most important features of a city to attract digital nomads?

Key features include reliable high-speed internet, affordable and flexible housing, a variety of coworking spaces, and vibrant cultural and social scenes. Safety, accessibility, and natural beauty also play significant roles in attracting digital nomads.

) Strategies to maximize the social and economic impact of promoting remote work?

To maximize impact, cities should promote local businesses and encourage digital nomads to engage with the community through events and volunteer opportunities. Developing partnerships between remote workers and local entrepreneurs can stimulate economic growth and innovation. Ensuring that remote work initiatives benefit both newcomers and long-term residents is crucial for sustainable development.

) How to start a journey to become a remote work-friendly city?

Begin with a comprehensive assessment of current infrastructure and identify areas for improvement, particularly in internet connectivity and coworking spaces. Establish a task force to oversee the implementation of remote work policies and initiatives. Engage with the remote work community to understand their needs and preferences. Pilot programs (potential testing actions) and gather feedback to refine strategies and ensure effective execution.

The Unconference on Digital Nomadism and Remote Work provided actionable insights for small cities aiming to attract and retain residents. By focusing on strategic marketing, seamless integration, city feature enhancement, community engagement, and remote work-friendly policies, small cities can successfully tap into the growing trend of remote work, fostering economic growth and social enrichment.

ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND GROWTH

Within the agenda of the Saint-Quentin meeting there was a training session dedicated to the theme of Economic Diversity and Growth. Economic development is one of the factors that greatly influences a city's ability to retain and attract residents. This training session was led by lead expert Tiago Ferreira.

The masterclass on "Economic Diversity and Growth" held during the Residents of the Future URBACT network meeting provided in-depth insights into strategies for enhancing economic development in small cities. The session covered key performance indicators (KPIs) for economic development, the importance of economic resilience, and various approaches to economic growth, illustrated through case studies from cities across Europe.

Key topics and insights:

) Defining Economic Development

KPIs: Unemployment rate, average wages (including gender-specific averages), job growth, number of new companies, R&D investment, FDI amount, capital raised by startups, and the economic situation of minorities and vulnerable groups.

The rationale of cities to have an active role on promoting local economy development:

Why Communities Invest in Economic Development



) Economic Development Rationale

A robust economic strategy is essential for long-term growth and stability, focusing on sustainable and inclusive practices.

) Economic Resilience

Definition: The capacity of an economy to withstand and recover from disruptions such as pandemics, trade law changes, wars, and economic crises.

Key Factors: Industry diversification, small business density, income diversity, access to financial resources, social capital, community cohesion, government capacity, policy flexibility, and environmental sustainability.

) Economic Development Approaches

Open for Business: Improve overall business environment.

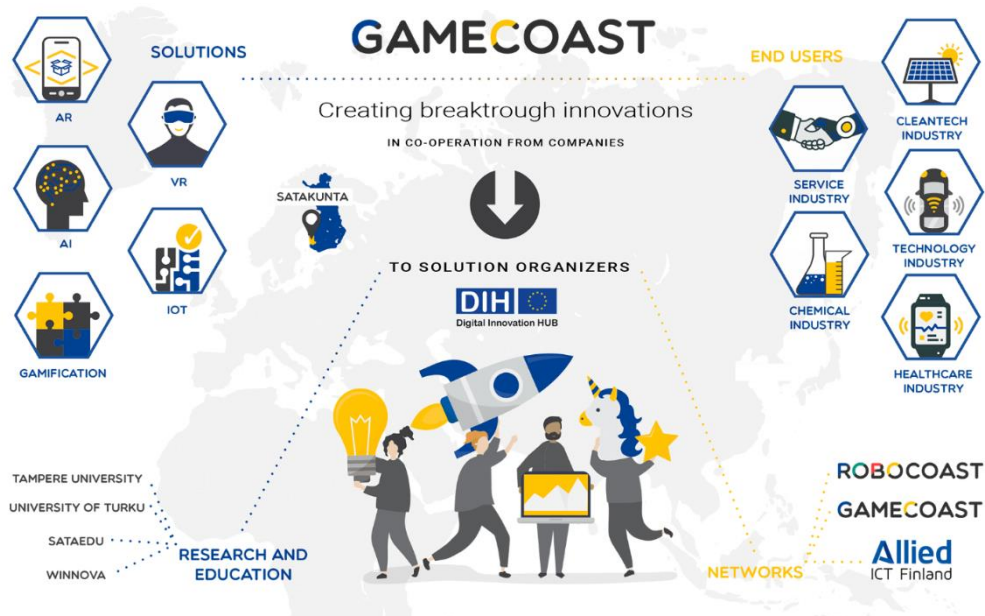
Big Game Hunting: Attract large factories and investments through strong competition.

The Next Big Thing: Focus on high-tech or fast-growing sectors.

Build it and They Will Come: Invest in large-scale infrastructure.

Cluster Development: Develop local economic roots and clusters through connections between R&D, startups, and corporates.

Example of Gamecoast a cluster on Gamification economy where the URBACT city of Pori, Finland, has an active role. This was a case study example of this training session.



) **Case Study: Fundão, Portugal**

Innovation Plan (2012): Focused on digital and technological advancements.

Key Strategies:

- Creation of an innovation team.
- Active investment attraction in both tech and traditional clusters.
- Incentives for high-value talent, including public housing.
- Reskilling programs such as Academia de Código.
- Utilization of public spaces for investments and startups.
- Innovation in public procurement and experimentation.
- Development of coworking spaces, FabLabs, and incubators.
- Tech and bilingual education for children.
- Effective use of European funds.

Results:

- Approximately 1400 people moved to Fundão, including 1000 engineers.
- 67 nationalities now reside in Fundão, a city of 27,000 residents.
- Average salary increased from €838 (2016) to €1055 (2021).
- Winner of the RegioStars 2018 award.

) **Recommendations**

- Implement diverse strategies tailored to the city's unique strengths and weaknesses.
- Focus on sustainable and inclusive economic practices.
- Foster public-private partnerships to enhance economic resilience.

TESTING ACTIONS

The training session on "Testing Actions," delivered by ad hoc expert Sally Kneeshaw, focused on the integration of innovative testing methodologies in urban development, particularly within the Residents of the Future URBACT network. This session provided participants with a comprehensive understanding of testing concepts, practical examples, and the significance of prototyping and agile design in creating resilient urban strategies.



) Key Topics and Insights

i) Introduction to Testing Actions

Purpose: Emphasized the importance of testing small-scale actions in urban development to avoid costly mistakes and ensure effective implementation.

Learning Objectives:

- Overview and examples of incorporating testing in urban development and Integrated Action Plans (IAPs).
- Introduction to key concepts from the URBACT 2022 Study and Catalogue.
- Supporting reflection on embedding testing at the local level.

ii) Definitions and Key Concepts

- **Prototyping:** Implementing ideas into tangible forms to refine and validate designs through user testing.
- **Agile Design:** Iterative and incremental processes, breaking large tasks into manageable chunks, and emphasizing user experience.
- **Tactical Urbanism:** Low-cost, temporary changes to improve local neighborhoods and urban spaces.
- **Placemaking:** Creating functional, beautiful, and meaningful spaces for the community.

iii) Benefits of Testing

- **Proof of Concept:** Validating ideas before full-scale implementation.
- **Political Consent and Public Opinion:** Gaining support through demonstrated success.
- **Co-design with ULG:** Engaging local groups in the design process.
- **Increasing Innovation Capacity:** Fostering a culture of experimentation and creativity.

iv) Types of Actions

Workshops, websites/apps, training sessions, surveys/interviews, space interventions, space activation, communication strategies, competitions, events, meetings, products, and services.

v) Examples of Testing in Action

Participatory Assessment in Druskininkai, Lithuania: Evaluating the city's disability-friendliness.

Imagining Future Spaces in Cesena, Italy: Engaging students and teachers in urban planning near a train station.

vi) Challenges and Considerations

- **Public Procurement:** Navigating strict rules and procedures.
- **Time Management:** Aligning testing with IAP development and considering seasonal factors.
- **Documentation and Communication:** Using journals, videos, surveys, and media to record and share outcomes.
- **Measuring and Evaluating:** Establishing baselines, gathering data, and reflecting on results to iterate and improve.

The training session on Testing Actions provided valuable insights into incorporating innovative testing methodologies in urban development. By focusing on prototyping, agile design, and tactical urbanism, cities can enhance their resilience and create more effective and inclusive urban strategies. The session emphasized the importance of early testing, stakeholder engagement, and effective documentation to foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

Challenge / priority**Name of the city**

	What if we *** ? Enter text here...	Test idea in the sentence Enter text here...
Stakeholders Enter text here...	Communications Enter text here...	Timing Enter text here...
Resources Enter text here...	How to mainstream in the IAP Enter text here...	Measuring / evaluating Enter text here...

This training session generated also a Testing Action canvas that is now being used by cities to work at the ULG context and engage their member on designing and implementing testing actions.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN HACKATHON – SALDUS EXPERIENCE

Saldus shared their case study on organizing a hackathon, as part of the iPlace URBACT project, provided an innovative platform for community engagement and idea generation. This approach not only fostered creativity but also reconnected the city's diaspora, allowing former residents to contribute ideas remotely.

The success of the Saldus hackathon can serve as an exemplary model for other cities in the URBACT network. Key factors that contributed to this success included high participation from key stakeholder groups such as young people and entrepreneurs, as well as strong municipal support for testing selected ideas. Additionally, effective promotion and communication via social media ensured broad engagement. The hackathon methodology, from problem identification to idea generation and testing, was thoroughly prepared with support from other iPlace partners, such as the city of Kočevje in Slovenia, which provided training on using digital tools like Miro boards.



For other cities looking to incorporate hackathon methodologies into their Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) within the URBACT network, the Saldus experience offers valuable lessons. Firstly, successful hackathons require meticulous planning and clear objectives to guide the creative process effectively. Engaging a broad spectrum of participants ensures a diversity of perspectives, which is crucial for developing well-rounded solutions. Additionally, providing adequate resources and support during the hackathon, such as facilitators, materials, and technical assistance, helps maintain momentum and focus. By integrating hackathon-generated ideas into their IAPs, cities can harness the collective intelligence of their communities to create innovative, sustainable, and inclusive urban development strategies.

ART DÉCO STRATEGY – STUDY VISIT

The Art Deco strategy of Saint-Quentin has transformed the city into a living museum of early 20th-century architecture and design, attracting both residents and visitors. After World War I, with over 70% of the city destroyed, Saint-Quentin seized the opportunity to rebuild using the Art Deco style. This architectural movement, characterized by modernism, geometric shapes, and a blend of influences from antiquity, cubism, and exotic cultures, offered a fresh, sophisticated aesthetic that symbolized a break from the past and an embrace of innovation.



Residents of the Future partners visiting an example of Art Deco at Saint-Quentin

For other cities looking to attract and retain residents, Saint-Quentin's Art Deco strategy offers valuable lessons. By leveraging unique architectural heritage, cities can create a distinct cultural identity that not only preserves historical aesthetics but also promotes tourism and community pride. The success of Saint-Quentin demonstrates the importance of integrating architectural restoration with cultural initiatives and urban planning to enhance the quality of life and stimulate local economies. This approach can inspire other cities to capitalize on their unique historical assets, fostering both economic growth and a strong sense of community.

EURATECHNOLOGIES INCUBATOR - STUDY VISIT

The EuraTechnologies Incubator in Saint-Quentin stands out as a significant initiative aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within the city. As part of the broader EuraTechnologies network, which includes five campuses across Northern France, the Saint-Quentin site specializes in industrial, robotics, and SpaceTech domains. This incubator offers entrepreneurs and startups extensive support through training sessions, practical workshops, and access to cutting-edge facilities such as a fablab and collaborative workshops. By connecting participants with research and development experts, EuraTechnologies ensures that startups can leverage the latest technological advancements to accelerate their growth and innovation.



For other cities within the Residents of the Future URBACT network, the EuraTechnologies Incubator in Saint-Quentin provides a compelling case study on how to attract and retain innovative talent. By creating a specialized hub that addresses specific high-tech industries, Saint-Quentin has managed to build a vibrant ecosystem that supports startup development and drives economic growth. The success of this incubator underscores the importance of targeted support and infrastructure in nurturing startups. Other cities can learn from Saint-Quentin's approach by establishing similar incubators that cater to their unique industrial strengths and by fostering partnerships with educational institutions and industry experts to create a sustainable and dynamic entrepreneurial environment.

PARC D'ISLE - STUDY VISIT

The Parc d'Isle in Saint-Quentin is an example of urban green space that enhances the quality of life for residents while promoting environmental sustainability. This park features a variety of natural habitats, including wetlands, meadows, and woodlands, which support a diverse range of flora and fauna. The park's design integrates recreational facilities such as walking and cycling paths, picnic areas, and playgrounds, making it a popular destination for families and nature enthusiasts. Additionally, the Parc d'Isle includes an educational farm and a zoo, which serve as valuable resources for environmental education and community engagement.



For cities within the Residents of the Future URBACT network, the Parc d'Isle offers valuable insights into creating multifunctional green spaces that cater to both ecological preservation and community needs. Saint-Quentin's approach demonstrates the benefits of investing in large-scale urban parks that provide recreational opportunities, enhance biodiversity, and serve as educational platforms. By prioritizing the development of such green spaces, other cities can improve urban livability, foster a sense of community, and promote sustainable urban development. The success of the Parc d'Isle highlights the importance of integrating natural environments into urban planning to create resilient and attractive cities for current and future residents.

The study visit has a pleasant experience that were appreciated by all the participants that become inspired with the project and its impact on quality of life.

2.2 ULGs are starting their testing action journey.

This period was also marked by the entry of Testing Action as a subject in the work of the different ULGs. The meeting in Saint-Quentin made it possible to discuss the topic and train partner cities in its implementation, which reinforced the cities' ability to take on the challenge of testing their ideas, creating an impact on attracting and retaining residents, but also learning and solidifying the strategy that will later go to the Integrated Action Plan.

SALDUS IS TESTING ACTIONS!

The testing action planned and implemented by Saldus under the URBACT network Residents of the Future focuses on transforming the former Sātiņi school building and its surroundings into a small business community center named "Sātiņu DARĪTAVA." This initiative aims to promote local entrepreneurship, stimulate economic growth, and enhance the quality of life for residents. The process began with an online Zoom presentation on June 14, where the initial concept was introduced to attract entrepreneurs and community members. The goal was to gather interest and foster collaboration among local stakeholders.



SĀTIŅU DARĪTAVA

mazo uzņēmēju kopienas centrs

Idejotāna par
Sātiņu skolas un teritorijas
attīstīšanu kā mazo uzņēmēju kopienas centru.



URBACT Co-funded by the European Union EKOPtelpa Saldus piepilda

The Saldus testing action was promoted on the social media to attract potential entrepreneur to participate

Following the announcement, a stakeholder engagement meeting was held on June 18 at the former Sātiņi school. Entrepreneurs, residents, and members of the URBACT Urban Local Group (ULG) explored the space, sharing their visions and suggestions for the center, including potential rental conditions, support needs, and management models. To ensure broader participation, an Open House event was hosted on June 25, with another planned for August 17. These events allowed more community members to explore the building and envision its potential uses. As a result, half of the available spaces have already been reserved by entrepreneurs and associations, with plans to activate these spaces by September.

THE DISCOVERY JOURNEY OF ŠIBENIK

The city of Šibenik is exploring the ways to mitigate the scale of “one-way journey” of young people leaving home for studies and staying in big cities forever.

The migration of young people from small towns to universities in big cities is often a one-way journey. At the beginning, many students plan to return home after studies, and consider the big city episode just as temporary phase. However, the return home often never happens. While big cities benefit from this phenomena, small towns face significant challenges as they strive to adapt to the changing demographics. One significant factor is the job market. Big cities are economic centers with a lot of job opportunities in various industries. Many universities organize “The Career Days” to help their students enter the job market. That’s when many students make their first contact with future employers and reach the “no way back” point in life. That’s why the members of Šibenik’s URBACT Local Group of “Residents of the Future” network decided to pay a visit to the largest student job fair in Croatia.

"JOB FER" is a prominent job fair held in Zagreb, organized by the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing (FER) at the University of Zagreb, in collaboration with the Student Union and the Student Electrical Engineering Club (KSET). The event is designed to connect students and graduates with leading technology companies from Croatia and abroad.



This year’s edition of the fair was held on May 8th and 9th. Over 110 companies presented their exciting working projects and employment possibilities to over 3.000 ambitious students. Besides classic presentations in company booths, fair offered expert talks, workshops, panel discussions, and “Loosen Up Party” aimed at fostering a relaxed networking atmosphere through fun activities and social events.

ULG members concluded that the city of Šibenik needs to communicate with students in big cities to promote local opportunities and attract skilled graduates. Small cities have a lot to offer to graduate students: a close-knit community, reduced commute times, great natural environment, vibrant cultural offer and a higher quality of life. There are also several advantages for career development in small city with the possibilities of remote working, personalized career growth, supportive and familiar environment, a lower cost of living and less competition for jobs.

After the visit to “JOB FER” in Zagreb, Šibenik ULG started to design its testing action that will take place in the fall of 2024.

URBACT LOCAL GROUPS IN PHOTOS

The dynamics of the different ULGs are varied, and in each city the completion of the major challenges of retaining and attracting residents, as well as the discussion of new ideas for growth in this area, have occupied the working groups.

These are some examples of the photos of this work spread across the various cities on the network.

Plasencia



Alba Iulia



Sibenik



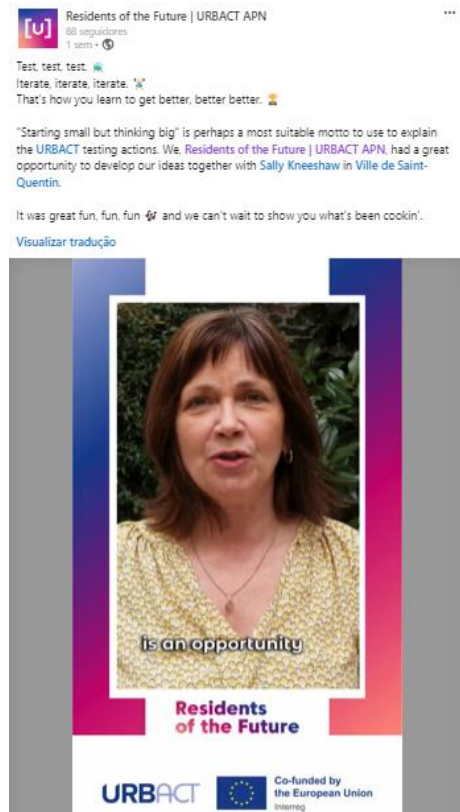
Iisalmi



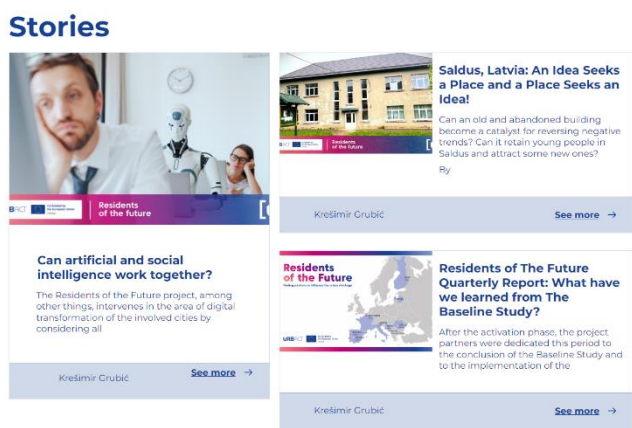
2.3 Residents of the Future communication is on full implementation

The project communication is now full implemented. It allows people to follow the activities and the people that on this mission of stopping the population declining on the European small cities.

The project is very active on the social media platforms, namely at the LinkedIn and Facebook. These were considered the best platforms to the project target groups.



Other channel that is central to the project communication is the Urbact website dedicated page. Here, people can find the project main documents and stories.



The project communication could be followed here:

- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [URBACT website dedicated page](#)

3. What's Next on Residents of the Future?

The period from July to September will be a mixture of summer holidays with the work at the ULGs level, but also on the preparation of the next transnational meeting that will happen in Mangualde, Portugal.

PREPARING THE NEXT TRANSNATIONAL MEETING: LET'S TRAVEL TO MANGUALDE, PORTUGAL!

The transnational meeting of Mangualde will be an important moment of the Residents of the Future journey. The meeting will address several key topics crucial for the progress and success of the project. Here is a brief overview of the main topics that will be at the agenda:

Mangualde will host the next transnational meeting



- Project Mid-term Review

This session will review the project's progress at the halfway mark, identifying successes and areas needing improvement.

- City Branding and Marketing Training

This training will focus on strategies for city branding and marketing to enhance city attractiveness and identity.

- Good Practice Visit

Visits to local facilities such as Cubos ETAR (a water treatment facility) and CCOM (Coordination Centre for Civil Protection) to learn about innovative practices in water management and climate change preparedness.

- Workshop on Heritage, Culture, and Tourism

Facilitated by representatives from Plasencia, this workshop will explore how leveraging heritage, culture, and tourism can improve city quality of life and attractiveness.

- Investment Attraction Training

This session will focus on strategies and best practices for attracting investment to the cities, enhancing economic growth and development.

- Housing Strategies World Café

A collaborative session aimed at discussing and developing strategies to increase the number and availability of houses in cities, crucial for retaining and attracting residents.

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>



SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Residents of the Future cities are now slowing down their activities due to the summer holidays period. This period is important to remember that small cities are an amazing place to visit and to do sustainable tourism!

The Residents of the Future cities aim a sustainable tourism in small European cities that:

- **Embrace sustainable tourism for a thriving future:** In an era of environmental awareness, the Residents of the Future URBACT project calls for a transformative approach to tourism—one that prioritizes sustainability, respects local cultures, and fosters economic growth within small European cities.
- **Celebrate local heritage and culture:** Small European cities are treasures of cultural heritage. Sustainable tourism preserves and celebrates these unique identities, offering authentic experiences while protecting historical landmarks and traditions. We advocate for responsible tourism that honors local cultures.
- **Support resident's quality of life:** Tourism should enhance residents' quality of life. By managing visitor numbers and promoting off-season travel, we prevent overcrowding and reduce infrastructure strain. Resident engagement in planning ensures a balanced approach benefiting both locals and visitors.



We hope you join us on this vision for the future of tourism at small European cities! We wish you great holidays!

4. Final remarks

Dear reader,

It is great to have you with us following the evolution of the Residents of the Future. The project has a noble mission, and a high potential network of cities that could create important learning insights to the Europe's challenge on stopping the small cities urban shrinkage.

As lead expert, it is a pleasure and an honor to work with such stimulant cities and important mission.

We hope to continue having your attention to our work.

Tiago Ferreira
June 2024

WANT TO KNOW MORE? PLEASE FOLLOW US 

We would love to have you following our social media accounts:

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/residents-of-the-future-urbact-apn/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61558026719726>