The Innovation in Politics Institute

Innovation in Politics
Awards 2020

90 Courageous & Creative Political Projects

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Bundeszentrale für
politische Bildung

Mit den Innovation in Politics Awards zeichnet das Innovation in Politics Institute mit Sitz in Österreich und Deutschland sowie Vertretungen in 19 weiteren Ländern jährlich mutige und kreative Politiker/innen aus ganz Europa aus. Dieser Prämierung liegt das Votum von mehr als 1.000 europäischen Staatsbürgerinnen und Staatsbürgern zugrunde. Der Preis wird in den Kategorien Bildung, Demokratie, Digitalisierung, Gemeinschaft, Lebensqualität, Menschenrechte, Ökologie und Wirtschaft sowie, seit 2020, in der Sonderkategorie Bewältigung von COVID-19 vergeben.

Diese Publikation stellt die Projekte der Preisträgerinnen und Preisträger 2020 in Texten und Bildern vor.

The Innovation in Politics Institute with main offices in Austria and Germany and partner organisations in 19 countries hosts The Innovation in Politics Awards to honour the most creative and courageous politicians in Europe. Every year, a jury of more than 1,000 European citizens selects the winning projects in nine categories: Community, Democracy, Digitalisation, Ecology, Economy, Education, Human Rights, Quality of Life, and, since 2020, Coping with COVID-19.

This publication showcases all finalist and winner projects of 2020.

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"People's values may differ – conservative, social democratic, green, liberal and more – but we all want to live in a free and democratic Europe. Therefore, we need to improve and strengthen democratic politics in Europe.

This book presents 90 exemplary political projects. We cast a spotlight on the work of courageous and creative politicians so that it may serve as a source of inspiration to others."

THE FOUNDERS AND PARTNERS OF THE INNOVATION IN POLITICS AWARDS

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OUR EUROPE-WIDE NETWORK

Our Europe-wide Network has grown quickly over the past four years and is continuing to grow. Currently, the Institute has offices and partner organisations in 21 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

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Please accept our heartfelt thanks – and enjoy our joint success.

THE FOUNDERS AND PARTNERS OF THE INNOVATION IN POLITICS INSTITUTE

WELCOME TO THE INNOVATION IN POLITICS AWARDS OF 2020!

EDWARD STRASSER

Founder, The Innovation in Politics Institute

Since our awards finals in December of last year, politics has changed drastically. Politicians on all levels of governance and from the whole political spectrum have been in survival mode now for quite some time – engaged in fighting the pandemic, saving lives, saving businesses and jobs, transforming the education system into homeschooling, or making everyday life possible without further spreading of the virus.

In this book, you will find some of the most successful political initiatives addressing these issues and other topics, such as climate protection and improving citizens' participation in politics. The politicians behind these initiatives are the brightest minds in today's politics in Europe. They are the finalists of the Innovation in Politics Awards, selected by a jury of over one thousand European citizens.

We hope all readers will enjoy learning more about these creative and courageous political initiatives. Again this year, many truly astounding projects are included.

On behalf of our Europe-wide organisation and all our partners, I want to congratulate all finalists and thank you for your great and inspiring work! Your best practice projects are blueprints for how to solve political challenges with an innovative and democratic mindset.

This year's finals of the awards had to be adapted to the ongoing impossibility of social gatherings – with online surprise video sessions to inform the winners, as well as an ambitious online campaign. For all their flexibility and efforts, I want to thank our partners, Country Representatives and the teams in Berlin and Vienna. I know this extraordinary year demanded a great deal of you all. We are very grateful to you for contributing so much!

"Your best practice projects are blueprints on how to solve political challenges with an innovative and democratic mindset."

As medical science promises an end to the pandemic in the near future, we all are looking forward to returning to a normal life. But in spite of all hardship, the results of this year's extraordinary political work will be of great value to us for a long time.

POLITICAL INNOVATION KNOWS NO CRISIS

PATRICIA KAHANE

Founder, The Innovation in Politics Institute

This year has been marked by the coronavirus pandemic, occupying our minds and challenging our societies - healthwise, economically as well as politically. Curfews, contact bans, or contact tracing are an "imposition for democracy" (Angela Merkel) and for us all. Authoritarian politicians and parties in many countries are using the crisis to extend their anti-democratic reach, trying to manipulate the public.

We must not lose sight of the big picture. We must remember the pillars of liberal democracy and of prospering communities. We must continue to develop and secure equal and inclusive education, we must insist on sustainable economic and ecological measures to tackle local, regional and global challenges, we must make digital tools accessible to everybody, we must encourage active participation in politics.

398 submissions of amazing projects to this years' Innovation in Politics Awards show that cities, citizens and politicians all over Europe have not put their efforts towards innovating society for the better on hold. Paging through this handbook with the 90 finalist projects means reading stories of ambition and courage. Some deal with the structural and social challenges of the pandemic, others provide extraordinary solutions to everyday problems and thus contribute to a promising picture of our post-pandemic world. And all of them have been proven to work.

"We must not lose sight of the big picture. We must remember the pillars of liberal democracy and of prospering communities."

Max Frisch said: "Crisis is a productive state, if you only remove the flavour of disaster." The Innovation in Politics Awards 2020 show that politicians are productive despite, within and beyond the corona crisis. They deserve to be celebrated and to serve as an inspiration to us all!

THE AWARDS PROVIDE FERTILE GROUND FOR CREATIVITY IN DEMOCRACY

DUBRAVKA ŠUICA

Vice-President for Democracy and Demography,
European Commission

Democracy has never been static and we must evolve with it. Across the European Union and indeed the world at large, our politics is changing like never before. It is vital that we have the courage, creativity and vision to seize the opportunities this offers to improve our democracy and make it more resilient, more responsive and more engaged with the needs of our citizens. This is where The Innovation in Politics Awards, which I proudly support, make a significant contribution. Inspirational people deserve our recognition. They bring much passion and energy to our lives. These Awards help provide fertile ground for creativity in politics. Secondly, I see how The Innovation in Politics Awards helps innovators to connect with each other. This is key for their creative capacities to flourish. Thirdly and perhaps most importantly is the resulting raising of awareness that accompanies these awards. You are reaching out right across Europe to bring these inspirational stories to every European, young and old, urban and rural. This is quite an achievement.

Democracy does not like vacuums, but they occur from time to time. When they do, it is up to us all to ensure that empty spaces are filled with creative and innovative ideas. The pan-European comprehensive approach of recognising achievements across the board from Community and Democracy to Ecology and many others helps fill that vacuum.

In my role as Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, my aspiration is for innovative tools to allow the European Union to connect and engage with people, so that we can improve our policy-making for and with them. This inspiration can come from anyone, anywhere and my thanks go to the Innovation in Politics Institute for bringing us closer to these inspiring innovations in politics. Congratulations to the Institute and the winners in all the categories for 2020.

"Inspirational people deserve our recognition. They bring much passion and energy to our lives"

A LESSON LEARNED FROM 2020: POLITICAL AND POLICY INNOVATIONS REALLY MATTER

MATTHEW TAYLOR

Chief Executive of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts

While the promise of new vaccines suggests 2021 may be the year we overcome the pandemic, it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions about which governments have coped best and worst and why. Nevertheless, there is a basis for suggesting some broad hypotheses. The governments that seem to have managed best without reverting to authoritarianism have been both agile and pragmatic. Buoyed by comparatively high levels of civic trust and effective coordination across government functions and levels, they have responded rapidly and openly to external events and been able to adapt their policies and practices to deal with the dynamic situation.

In less successful countries, however, deficiencies in governance systems, leadership norms and democratic models have been laid bare. In the UK and even more grimly the US, the pandemic has at times shined a cruel light on the tattered fabric of our public sphere and democratic culture.

Covid-19 has offered a grim but fascinating comparative policy experiment. All in all we have been given a lesson in the importance of civic trust, democratic responsiveness and government transparency. For decades to come people will trace change back to the learning that has had to take place in 2020. Political and policy innovations – of the types showcased and celebrated each year by the Innovation in Politics Institute – really do matter.

That is why, this year more than ever, the RSA is honoured to be a country representative for the Innovation in Politics Awards. In its own way, by championing the most ambitious and inspiring politicians and projects in Europe and sharing best practice across the continent, the Innovation in Politics Institute is helping to make European politics more resilient, participatory and progressive - a project that will only grow in importance as we recover from the health crisis and focus on the economic and environmental ones.

"For decades to come people will trace change back to the learning that has had to take place in 2020."

The finalists this year - in categories spanning ecology, democracy, human rights and Covid-19 response – are inspiring. I would like to express my congratulations to all the finalists and winners of the awards and my praise to all the team at the Innovation in Politics Institute who have delivered another fantastic awards 'ceremony' despite the uniquely challenging circumstances. It has been a huge effort. I hope it gets all the attention that it deserves as we begin our transition into the new year - and into a new and better normal.

CATEGORY
COMMUNITY

The Finalists from Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK strive to enhance mutual respect, cooperation and peaceful coexistence. They perceive social encounters as an essential medicine for life, improve housing and foster social networks in neighbourhoods. They bridge digital, economic and generational divides, broaden possibilities for volunteering, support parents and children, as well as integrate special needs groups in the job market.

WINNER OLDHAM SOCIAL PRESCRIBING INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP

OLDHAM, UNITED KINGDOM

An innovative partnership between public services, healthcare and the voluntary sector, bringing a more holistic, long-term approach to health and wellbeing - social prescribing - to reduce social isolation, strengthen community ties and help people access support.

◄ **SEAN FIELDING**
Councillor/Leader of Oldham Council

KATIE FLYNN
Thriving Communities Project

Social deprivation leads to health inequalities

Oldham's residents have worse health than average in England, with a life expectancy two years below the average. High levels of deprivation and associated health inequalities have a significant impact on the state of health in the area. Oldham Thriving Communities recognises that health and care services alone cannot respond to people's social needs. The Thriving Communities Programme is a pioneering three-year programme which champions closer cooperation between the more comprehensive public system and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sectors. Fairer power-sharing, transparent commissioning decisions and an expansion of jointly owned services characterise the programme.

Identifying non-medical need

The Social Prescribing Innovation Partnership of Oldham Thriving Communities is a first in the public sector in England. Social prescribing is a new social measure, where health professionals refer patients to support in the community to improve their health and wellbeing. At the heart of the approach is asset-based community

development. Community development workers, who work alongside social prescribers, get to know the community groups in their area and create a detailed map of assets and supporting groups. This map becomes the basis of the local social prescribing network. The model draws power from the Social Value Act, although it is different because it focuses on innovating and iterating the service model through co-production with VCFSEs, public sector partners and residents. The aim is to create the best service possible by connecting people in the health and care system, identifying a non-medical need in primary care or other care settings and connecting people to community activities.

Investing in community capacity

The Innovation Partnership is a new delivery and contract model in England. It enables us to build on local assets and provide a person-centred service which connects people directly from primary and social care with community activities. Early indications show that social prescribing in reducing visits to doctors and to emergency medical centres amongst people using the service, which will result in direct fiscal benefits. Alongside this, Thriving Communities made

investments via GBP 1m+ Fast Grants and the Social Action Fund. The Thriving Communities Hub focuses on developing a system-wide approach to supporting sustainability and attracting funding into the borough. The bespoke local insight tool - the Thriving Communities Index - along with a robust approach to evaluation support the long-term sustainability of the measures. Thriving Communities aims to make a lasting impact on people's lives through improved mental and physical health and wellbeing, reduced social isolation and loneliness, as well as to help them access support for other problems, such as with housing and debt.

CHILD-FRIENDLY SHOPKEEPERS
SETTIMO MILANESE, **ITALY**

A network of solidarity, in the form of a network of friendly shopkeepers, allows children to be more autonomous, while restoring social trust and strengthening community ties.

ANNALISA SALOMONE

Councillor for Education, Family and Peace Policies, Municipality of Settimo Milanese

PATRIZIA FRANCESCA STRINGARO

Deputy Mayor and Councillor for Budget, Economic Policies and Legality

Managing their own life is essential for child development

Life experiences, such as discovery and exploration, are fundamental elements on the path of growth and maturation. When the city was smaller, parents had no qualms allowing their children more freedom and permitting them to go out. Today the world has changed and the city has expanded. Surveys show there is substantial concern over letting children manage their way to school, or other activities, on their own. However, this does not mean that a supportive and cooperative environment, which allows children to leave home, run small errands, or go to school without being accompanied, cannot be reconstructed.

Safe havens for children along their routes

The project aims to create a social network that allows primary and secondary school children to live peacefully and safely in their city, without the constant presence of adults. The shopkeepers participating in the initiative, as always present operators in the area, have become real points of reference for children who go to school alone. Parents know that along the way, their children can rely on them in case of need. Printed graphics indicate the "friendly shops" to the children – those neighbourhood shops to which they can turn – to find help and reassurance.

A new trust arises

This proposal is part of the broader discourse of promoting a network of solidarity that favours the active involvement of young people, making the city more and more child-friendly and therefore safer for all. The 51 shopkeepers participating in the initiative are equally distributed throughout the city and the parents have got to know them well. In this way, a powerful bond has developed between the children, their parents and the "friendly" shopkeepers. Rediscovering territorial solidarity helps counter the relationship depersonalisation, social indifference and isolation of today's societies. Moreover, the initiative has contributed to improving work-life balance, as many parents no longer feel compelled to accompany and pick up their children from school. It also results in less traffic congestion in the city near the school, as more and more children and young people have started to walk to school. Therefore, this project has helped to revive a healthy habit and improved quality of life. It has given new life to the neighbourhood and has been recognised and valued for its essential social contribution to the area.

GRANNY RESIDENCE: CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN GENERATIONS

BULGARIA

Young people from the city stay with older people in rural areas, to create lasting connections between generations, preserve cultural heritage and develop young people's sense of belonging.

YANINA TANEVA
Founder of The Granny Residence

VLADIMIR MOSCOV
Mayor of The Municipality of Gotse Delchev

A month in a village

The Granny Residence is a project that connects young people from cities and older people in depopulated villages in Bulgaria. The participants live for one month with the residents of these villages. The Granny Residence project is innovative because it connects both the youth with the elderly, as well as urban with rural culture. The aim is to preserve the cultural heritage and traditions of the country.

New ideas for traditional settings

The project has been active for five years now, as over 50 young people have breathed life into depopulating villages in different regions of Bulgaria. It preserves traditions, develops a sense of belonging among young people and creates lasting connections between two generations. Some of the activities of the groups of volunteer students during the programme include cleaning gardens, renovating buildings and recreating old traditional customs together. New products, services and initiatives – based on local knowledge and the specific needs of the people in the villages – result from the interaction between the young urban visitors and the older rural residents.

Preserving traditional knowledge and skills

Hundreds of locals in depopulated villages receive help and the opportunity to pass on their knowledge and way of life to the visitors, who in turn accept the mission to preserve this treasure and pass it on. In this way, young people become a cohesive force in the village and the locals are delighted that new generations take an interest in their lives, their stories and the preservation of their cultural heritage.

ICCARUS

GHENT, BELGIUM

A city's innovative funding scheme helps low-income captive residents to co-design the renovation of their substandard houses, become more empowered and create a social network of homeowners.

DERKIEN DE BAETS
Project leader

Poor quality housing in ghent

One of the main urban challenges in Ghent is the lack of affordable, quality, energy-efficient housing for people with a low income. People in this segment become stuck in substandard unsafe houses that are not energy-efficient and not adapted to their physical needs. The term 'captive resident' is a useful expression that describes this situation.

Renovation with the tools of the ICCARus project

ICCARus aims to renovate 100 houses owned by captive residents and is developing an innovative financial tool: a recurring fund based on the principle of subsidy retention. Unlike traditional grants or loans, the recipients need no pre-financing. Each renovation has a starting capital of EUR 30,000. The beneficiary agrees to a contractual relationship with the City of Ghent and a renovation plan is developed, tailored to the needs of the properties and homeowners' wishes. At the point where the residents vacate the property, the fund will gain not only the net amount that was loaned but also part of the increased real estate value following renovation. In this way, the city can use public means

repeatedly, triggering future waves of renovation. The project makes it possible for families with limited financial resources to improve their living situation structurally and is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative.

Fresh winds in the neighbourhood

Before, during and after the renovation process, captive residents are supported technically, financially, administratively and socially. The individual guidance, combined with co-designing the renovation plan, has led to positive changes in the community. The process builds and strengthens the self-esteem, empowerment and social network of homeowners. The process thus also reinforces the social life of the participants and the entire neighbourhood. ICCARus challenges the idea that creating affordable housing is a top-down, expensive and time-consuming process.

INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

PROVINCE OF BISCAY, **SPAIN**

The government of the Province of Biscay makes special provisions to recruit civil servants from societal groups with intellectual disabilities.

◀ **IBONE BENGOETXEA**

*Provincial Minister for Public Administration
and Institutional Relations*

AINARA SAEZ

*General Advisor to the Provincial Minister
for Public Administration and Institutional Relations*

Biscay widens the scope of inclusion

The government of the Province of Biscay had been incorporating people with disabilities in its workforce for some time. However, until now, the local government did not expressly include applicants with intellectual disabilities.

Adapting the employment process

In 2017, the Government of the Province of Biscay approved five new vacancies for service staff positions for people with intellectual disabilities. To foster the inclusion of the most disadvantaged social groups and to advance equal opportunities, the local government launched this project to avoid the risk of chronic exclusion. The call offered candidates with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to obtain a civil service post through the same process as other people – only adapted to their specific needs. A third-sector organisation that works directly with people with intellectual disabilities, such as Down's syndrome and autism, as well as their families, helped carry out all the phases of the project to ensure its success. The organisation and city government produced easy-to-read content together,

adapted work processes to suit the needs of the potential new employees, trained existing employees to welcome their new colleagues and also developed an on-the-job induction process.

A supportive workplace

For the very first time, the local government specifically invited people with intellectual disabilities to work there. The new measures are based on the conviction that people are always capable, provided they have a sufficiently supportive environment. The project will continue to achieve long-lasting impacts on (1) the autonomy of people awarded the position, thanks to a public sector job that provides stable, well-paid and quality employment; (2) the capacity building of applicants who receive the message that they are capable of taking part in a selection process in the same way as any other person; (3) the empowerment of candidates providing a reference point for other people with disabilities; (4) and on the visibility of people with intellectual disabilities, which helps to overcome stereotypes affecting public perception.

KONEXIO

FRANCE

Training programmes in different locations in Europe and Africa empower disadvantaged groups through digital literacy to overcome the digital divide and make earning an income locally possible.

◄ JEAN GUO
Executive Director

ALLEGRA HARRISON
Partnerships and Development - Global

The digital divide

Konexio advances socio-economic inclusion for society's most vulnerable groups by empowering refugees, migrants and disadvantaged youth with employable digital skills. A lack of digital skills causes both social isolation and difficulties with securing an income. Rapidly digitalising societies are increasingly excluding vulnerable groups on the losing end of the "digital divide".

Improving integration and incomes

In 2016, Konexio launched programmes in Paris neighbourhoods with a high proportion of immigrant residents and in 2019 it launched a pilot programme in the Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi. By bridging the digital divide, Konexio fights unemployment and integrates vulnerable groups into society. Konexio's flagship programme, Digital Basics, covers skills such as primary computer usage, internet navigation, word processing and using spreadsheets. Digital Basics culminates in a globally-recognised certification (ECDL). Konexio's innovations include its original pedagogy and holistic training, built-in professional exposure, as well as partnerships to create a broad support network for beneficiaries. All courses also contain language training and soft skills components to ensure long-term workplace success. In Malawi, programmes focus on digital freelancing skills, enabling refugees to earn an income through

online and digital jobs. This income dramatically benefits communities, where making money in the local physical economy is difficult or impossible.

Qualified developers emerge

After mastering digital literacy, students can continue with Konexio's computer coding programmes, which train students in full-stack web development. By graduation, students are qualified for entry-level web developer positions. All of Konexio's courses have been adapted to the unique needs of refugees and migrants and work towards their social and professional integration. Since launching in 2016, Konexio has trained more than 800 students from 24 countries. 70% of the former surveyed trainees have since found jobs, started entrepreneurial projects or enrolled in further education. 94% say they have gained valuable digital skills that they use daily, while 94% also feel more integrated into their communities. 70% believe they have improved both numerical and interpersonal skill, furthermore 70% of students have received a digital skills certification (ECDL). Konexio has provided more than 60,000 training hours, engaged volunteers in more than 10,000 hours of activities and worked with over 150 partner organisations and companies. Besides, the UNHCR and the World Economic Forum support the work of the project. By partnering with companies and organisations whose long-term interests align with Konexio's goals, Konexio increases the programme's sustainability. The diversity of its network ensures a breadth of resources that allows programmes to adapt quickly, whenever needs change.

KRAKOW COMMUNITY GARDENS
KRAKÓW, POLAND

Community urban gardening brings residents closer to nature and strengthens social ties in a large city.

PIOTR KEMPF
Director of Krakow Municipal Greenspace Authority

JACEK MAJCHROWSKI
Mayor of Kraków

ANGELIKA MERCHUT
Junior Inspector of Krakow Municipal Greenspace Authority

Bring back life into the city

Citizens no longer only wish for the "metropolitan" functions assigned to modern cities and the typical activities associated with lives in highly urban environments. Inhabitants of large cities increasingly welcome other - societal, communal, ecological - purposes back into urban space. The rapidly growing trend of urban gardening is an answer to this need to bring different functions back into the cities.

Free of charge garden renting

Krakow has launched the Krakow Community Gardens programme, through which it lends its areas to residents free of charge, in order to bring different functions to the city and communal spaces. Everyone can set up a community garden; the only condition is choosing an appropriate urban plot and gathering at least three people for the initiative. The local community gets the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of urban social gardening, which are not just picking up vegetables or flowers. At the same time,

people create places that carry a variety of social functions. They strengthen relations between neighbours, teach cooperation and heighten care for the common good. Residents set up community gardens because they care about contact with nature and because they respect their human and natural environment.

New interpersonal relationships

Krakow has a relatively long history of urban gardening, although this included mainly allotment gardens, which hardly engage residents to cooperate. Community gardens are also an innovation on a national scale, where people were accustomed to having their own fenced gardens only. It is a step towards changing the mentality of the inhabitants. Social gardens, through shared work and duties, tools and crops shape the attitudes of the society involved in a wonderful way – with little financial spending. Modern cities need such communities, especially neighbourly ones, to prevent anonymity and strengthen interpersonal relationships. Work in the garden is a unique opportunity for the intergenerational exchange of knowledge and experience.

LEUVEN HELPS

LEUVEN, BELGIUM

Leuven launches a pioneering platform and call centre for civil participation, to connect volunteers with citizens in need during and after the corona crisis, for meal delivery, language courses and care tasks.

◄ **MOHAMED RIDOUANI**
Mayor, City of Leuven

GEERTRUI VANLOO
General Director, City of Leuven

Combating corona with solidarity

Collaboration and solidarity are crucial for combatting the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. To support and channel the wave of solidarity shown by its citizens, Leuven – right before the Belgian lockdown – launched 'Leuven Helps', an online platform for offering and asking for help.

A team matches requests for help

Leuven was the first city worldwide to implement the platform. In the weeks after its launch on 15 March, it was adopted by more than 300 communities, from France to New Zealand. A dedicated call centre and a team of "matchers" support the platform seven days a week. The matchers connect requests for help from citizens with volunteers, while the government provides insurance for volunteers undertaking tasks. Citizens can submit proposals for a wide range of functions: shopping, meal delivery, telephone and video calls, practising Dutch, care tasks, child care for health professionals, etc. Where possible, matches are made between residents in the same neighbourhood, to forge long-lasting bonds between people. Call centre workers and volunteers refer more sensitive or complex needs on to professional organisations and community workers.

Meeting a wide variety of needs

Leuven has long practised participation and collaboration. In this tradition, Leuven Helps is a collaboration between the city government, civil society and citizens. While the government provides connecting tools, structure, personnel and insurance for the volunteers, the citizens provide help for each other. Organisations and the city itself also use the platform to issue calls for service and volunteers: for cooking in a social restaurant, for personnel in intermediate care centres, stewarding university students to off-site corona-proof written exams, for IT experts to prepare laptops for vulnerable families, making cotton masks, gifting materials and many more. More than 2,500 volunteers registered for the project and all individual requests for help – nearly 1,000 in total – were successfully met.

RETIRED VOLUNTEERS CARE FOR NEWBORNS

POZNAŃ, POLAND

Well-trained senior citizens volunteer to provide newborn babies with critically needed physical closeness when the parents cannot be there - to reduce infant stress and keep newborns' immune systems strong.

◄ JACEK JAŚKOWIAK
Mayor of Poznan

IWONA MATUSZCZAK-SZULC
Director

MAGDALENA PIETRUSIK-ADAMSKA
Director

Supporting parents' care for newborns

A baby staying alone for an extended period in the Neonatal Unit is exposed to increasing stress, which weakens their immune system. Overworked staff cannot fulfil this need or spend extended periods of time at a baby's cot or incubator, as they have other important tasks to fulfil. Parents may, for a variety of reasons, not be able to take care of the child's needs for closeness at the hospital themselves. This project helps parents and hospital personnel in caring for newborns during their stay, as they can count on the support of a 60+ volunteer. The innovative approach combines immediate needs with intergenerational activities: seniors get to cuddle and spend time with infants, thus meeting one of the children's most critical developmental needs.

Senior volunteers are trained thoroughly

The project involves a thorough review of interested seniors, carried out in cooperation with a psychologist and a hospital coordinator. All willing participants have to undergo a comprehensive medical examination. Professionals train seniors with regard to

proper behaviour on and around the ward, adequate clothing, adherence to sanitary standards, personal data protection, epidemiological rules, as well as the psychological aspects of their work. Midwives also consult with the volunteers on how to care for, feed and cuddle the babies safely. During their first apprenticeships, the seniors get to know the equipment and accessories available at the hospital. Naturally, the care of infants is always subject to the parents' approval. So far, 18 volunteers have started work on day shifts, also on public holidays, to care for infants on the ward.

Providing closeness, love and security

Civil servants, in cooperation with the Neonatal Unit of Franciszek Raszeja Memorial Hospital in Poznań, came up with the innovative concept for the volunteer project. The commitment of the staff and the massive interest of the 60+ volunteer community resulted in the creation of an initiative that meets the needs of all of its participants: parents, seniors, hospital staff, as well as the newborns. Satisfying the need for closeness and security is one of the essential primary requirements of every human being!

WARSAW VOLUNTEERS

CITY OF WARSAW, **POLAND**

A municipal volunteering portal provides infrastructure and system solutions to increase volunteering among citizens and help institutions looking for volunteers to reach members of civil society.

EWA KOLANKIEWICZ
Director of Centre for Public Communication, City of Warsaw

MARTA DERMAŃSKA
Manager in Volunteering Development Team, Center for Public Communication, City of Warsaw

The city and ngos cooperate

The "Warsaw Volunteers" project is implemented and financed by the City of Warsaw. It assumes comprehensive activities undertaken by the local government and its partners for the development of volunteering. The project introduces system solutions to increase the involvement of residents and to support volunteering organisers actively. Non-governmental organisations and institutions actively work together to implement the measures.

The online portal is the knowledge base

The Municipal Volunteering Portal ochotnicy.waw.pl provides a platform where individuals can offer and search for volunteering opportunities all over Warsaw. In 2019, it had more than 130,000 users. It is a source of knowledge about volunteering organisations, training and various other initiatives. The City of Warsaw organises social campaigns to promote the idea of volunteering and to encourage people to visit the portal, as well as to promote school volunteering. The city furthermore assigns places where senior citizens with no access to the internet can find volunteer opportunities. The local government provides different free training and supervision services for people working in the care and treatment sector and volunteering organisers receive support such as free volunteer coordinator training. Meetings, conferences

and events are organised to facilitate networking and the sharing of good practices (about 400 training and meetings per year).

Adequate funding for 130 institutions

The "Warsaw Volunteers" project is the first such action in Poland. It makes use of the local government's potential to introduce system solutions, e.g. in the field of financing the activities of municipal institutions or transferring grants to non-governmental organisations. The role of local government is not to organise volunteer work for the city but to provide active and diverse support for thousands of NGOs and hundreds of institutions that engage volunteers in Warsaw. Comprehensive volunteer development programmes take place in municipal institutions such as libraries, cultural centres, child care facilities, social welfare homes and others, totalling about 130 institutions per year, which are all provided with adequate funding. The project is an investment in culture, sport, education, social assistance, healthcare and the development of civil society and the non-governmental sector overall.

COPING WITH COVID-19

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic imposed previously unknown challenges on our societies. The Finalists of our new category Coping with Covid-19 are from the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and the UK. They all deal with the crisis innovatively and effectively and have developed measures across Europe and at all political levels. Coping with the corona crisis means to establish municipal support services and improve governance structures, to quickly and effectively crowdsource solutions, to find ways to protect and also empower vulnerable groups, or to offer social and cultural events in a new creative format.

HOME QUARANTINE WITHOUT A HOME?

BRATISLAVA, **SLOVAKIA**

Bratislava sets up a fully-furnished quarantine town with medical and psychological care, for people without homes during lockdown.

MATÚŠ VALLO
Mayor of Bratislava

Being homeless in a pandemic

Having no access to hygiene facilities, healthcare or housing, while daily meeting other people: this is the reality of being homeless during a pandemic. Homeless people are a very vulnerable group in society and were especially vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the rest of society was in isolation at home, homeless people were left on the street to fend for themselves.

Immediate relief for the homeless

The City of Bratislava decided to set up a quarantine town. Aided by the IKEA department store and the Tatra Banka Foundation, thirty residential containers were brought to a designated location. These were intended to house homeless people showing symptoms of the disease, who were awaiting test results. The containers were furnished with a bed, a bedside lamp, a table and a wardrobe. The furniture was purposely basic, to facilitate regular disinfection. An additional twenty units were made available for those who tested positive but did not need to be hospitalised. Staying in the quarantine town was free of charge.

Compassion for the vulnerable

The quarantine town in Bratislava was the first quarantine facility for homeless people in Slovakia. Subsequently, 37 other such facilities were established in other towns and villages. The Ministry of Defence ensured the facility complied with hygiene standards. In addition to a doctor and nurses, the municipality also provided a psychiatrist and social workers to help the homeless. Thanks to the involvement of IKEA, the costs of the quarantine town were significantly reduced. Besides the container furniture, they also provided food. The quarantine town improved the safety not only of homeless people but also of all the other residents of Bratislava. It limited and buffered the spread of the disease within an unprotected segment of society. This response helped one of the most vulnerable groups during the pandemic, raised awareness of the problems marginalised groups face in general and deepened overall societal empathy.

#WIRVSVIRUS HACKATHON & SUPPORT PROGRAMME

GERMANY

A varied pool of 28,000 participants came together to collectively "hack" digital challenges related to the Corona-crisis, resulting in a wide range of solutions co-created by civil society and public authorities.

HELGE BRAUN
Head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks

ANNA HUPPERTH
Head of Communication

A collective search for answers to sudden challenges

This project set out to pool creative potential within civil society, to engage the public to work together with the government and local authorities on solutions to the various challenges associated with COVID-19. The close cooperation between federal and local government, civil society, as well as corporate and third sectors, is still relatively novel, characterising the innovative approach of the project.

We versus the virus

"Hacking" describes the process of working together to come up with creative solutions to challenges. Between 20 and 22 March, over 28,000 citizens responded to an invitation to participate in the #WirVsVirus (#WeVsVirus) hackathon. Participants worked together on COVID-19 challenges in a digital environment. It was an open invitation to anyone with the time, inclination and internet access. The hackathon challenges came from society itself, from 80 million citizens as well as the federal ministries. With over 43,000 registrations and 28,000 participants, #WirVsVirus is the world's biggest hackathon.

The solution-finding community

The hackathon resulted in 1,500 solutions, a growing #WirVs-Virus hack community, a support programme, as well as the realisation that problem-solving skills lying dormant within civil society need to be used more actively in order to find solutions to the challenges of our time. The hackathon allowed citizens to participate hands-on in co-creating solutions with the government, attracting wide participation from public servants and public authorities themselves. Around 200 of the 2,000 submitted challenges came from federal ministries. Moreover, close to 3,000 mentors helped to organise the hackathon workspace and guide participants through the process. On top of the impressive participation numbers, there was also great diversity among the participants. Female

#WIRVSVIRUS
DER HACKATHON DER BUNDESREGIERUNG

Gemeinsam mit der Bundesregierung haben wir einen digitalen Beteiligungsprozess in der Corona-Krise geschaffen. Vom 20.-22. März haben in 48 Stunden 28.361 Menschen zusammen an über 1.500 Lösungen gearbeitet. Das war der #WirVsVirus Hackathon.

Mehr

participation rates were close to 40%, while 23% of participants were over the age of 45 and approximately half did not have a technological employment background. Younger participants supported pensioners via the telephone, while parents shared caring duties to participate. Additionally, over 1,000 companies offered their help in the form of resources and infrastructure support. Over 3,000 experts signed up as mentors to help teams with specific requests. #WirVsVirus is a blueprint for how future challenges can be tackled with a community-led, bottom-up approach.

3D PRINTED RESPIRATORS

CZECH REPUBLIC

This Czech 3D printing innovation allows for the quick and efficient, international production of high-quality reusable masks that can be stored for ten years.

KAREL HAVLÍČEK

Minister of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic

Solidarity in the face of crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many people closer together and prompted greater solidarity worldwide. Several Czech firms have also come together to help, surprising businesses and scientists. Thanks to this cooperation and the possibilities of modern technology, innovative solutions to the crisis have been found, including an immediate response to the growing demand for protective equipment. The speed with which the idea went from a concept to final physical production has rarely been seen before.

3D printing masks

It took only one week for the professionals from the Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics (CIIRC) at CTU to come up with a 3D print-ready proposal for respirator masks. The plans then landed in the hands of the firm TRIX Connections, which developed it into a respirator mask design suitable for mass production. With the assistance of the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade, scientists and 3D printers, different companies started producing respirator masks. Due to its quality, the mask obtained the European certification FFP3. The respirator masks were produced to be reusable. Thanks to the replaceable filter, they are safe to be used again once they have been disinfected.

International success

As a result, healthcare workers, army personnel and citizens were safe and protected while carrying out their duties and taking care of the sick. The model for the respirators was made freely available and shared openly, allowing the masks to be easily produced abroad in other countries. The mask became internationally successful and even attracted the interests of NATO and the US Navy. Owing to the integration of different initiatives, the production of the masks was economically efficient. The masks can be stored for ten years while the filters for twenty years, therefore the respirators can be used when needed. The world will likely face a similar situation again – thanks to this resource our country is better equipped for future challenges.

ANTIVIRUS CROWDHACKATHON
GREECE

Creative and hacking minds meet remotely, interpret the changes caused by COVID-19 and convert the global crisis into an opportunity for progress.

GIORGOS PATOULIS
Governor of the Region of Attica

MICHAEL PSALLIDAS
Managing Director at Crowdpolicy

Covid-19 changes everyday life

People, healthcare systems and economies all around the world have been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we all take steps to prevent the spread of the illness and protect ourselves, our everyday, social life is changing and the whole economy is transforming. This can be seen in the way businesses and organisations operate, as well as the way normal models of employment have adapted. We need immediate solutions now - the significant changes that are occurring in society, the economy and entrepreneurship are most likely here to stay.

Innovation in a crisis

Every crisis is an opportunity. New technologies and tools help us stay optimistic, active and creative. The Antivirus Crowdhackathon was the first remote innovation marathon organised in Greece to develop solutions to tackle the pandemic. The Crowdhackathon supported innovative ideas and proposals which addressed important economic and social issues caused by the pandemic. People from all over the country, not only from the Region of Attica, participated to create new systems and solutions. The Antivirus Crowdhackathon has evolved into an ongoing network of technological innovation that will operate continuously throughout the pandemic – with the help of collaborative tools.
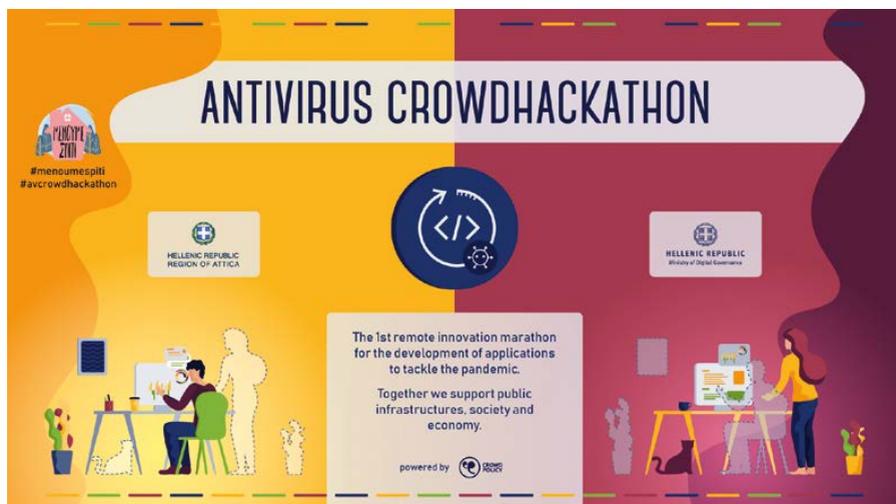
Providing solutions across sectors

Together, the participants found remedies for a range of problems relating to public infrastructure, society and the economy. So far, the two Hackathons have involved over 300 participants in 90 teams, who finally presented 56 ideas for innovative solutions to everyday problems. The goal of the project was to positively impact the whole country, not just the region of Attica. The Antivirus Crowdhackathon will continue to enhance youth entrepreneurship in Greece and proceeds with a third cycle between September and October 2020.

CAN DO BRISTOL –
GIVE, LIVE, LOVE BRISTOL

BRISTOL, UNITED KINGDOM

Bristol's unique "One City" governance structure allows the city to face the corona crisis with resilience, as volunteers, politicians, communities, as well as the public and private sector work together holistically.

ASHER CRAIG
Deputy Mayor

Holistic, citywide policies

The internationally recognised One City Approach is an innovative governance structure changing how Bristol operates as a city and how cities view themselves. One City provides a mechanism that enables holistic, citywide policies across public, private and voluntary sectors. Most crucially, it is delivering services that are having positive impacts on communities and citizens.

Integrated administration responds fast

One City was integral to Bristol's COVID-19 response. The culture of working together and investment in community development meant that it could mobilise at pace. That is how "Can Do Bristol" came to life, which carried out many different actions. Bristol City Council collaborated with the voluntary sector to establish 23 Community Hubs, which organised the "Can Do" volunteers and other volunteer activities. After the "Can Do" volunteer platform was set up, the project received nearly 4,000 volunteer pledges from new volunteers. Feeding Bristol opened four new food banks, linked to the Community Hubs, which increased its food network by 300%. The "We Are Bristol"

freephone helpline was established to receive citizens' requests for help and new systems were established by redeploying colleagues to match requests for help with volunteers and manage data related to these activities. Local politicians from different parties worked together in the neighbourhood response teams, while 36 new people linked up to neighbourhood activities in the St. George suburb of Bristol alone.

The one city approach works

From the co-design of new systems and processes to the development of new partnerships, the pandemic provided evidence of what can be achieved when a whole city works as one. Volunteers actively participated and were matched to those needing help. Many established a connection with the same person throughout the period of lockdown, creating new, lasting friendships and social networks. More connected and resilient communities have been built with better neighbourly bonds of mutual support and understanding between people from different backgrounds. Bristol's One City Approach proved invaluable as a mechanism to stimulate and support the public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as citizen collaboration.

8,801 members

Can Do Bristol
Give, Live, Love Bristol

2,447
Number of residents supported with the following tasks:

1,400
Regular shopping visits

1,073
Prescription collections

1,087
Telephone befriending connections

111
Regular dog walkers

322
Volunteer pledges to other organisations working on the coronavirus response

CULTURE TO THE COURTYARDS

KAUNAS, **LITHUANIA**

Kaunas brings culture to citizens throughout the pandemic thanks to decentralised artistic performances in backyards in the city.

MANTAS JURGUTIS
Member of Kaunas city municipality council

SARUNAS SUKEVICIUS
Director of Administration of Kaunas district municipality

◀ **IRUTĖ TUMAITĖ**
Head of Marketing

EGLE ZEMAITIENE
Communications Coordinator

Homes become schools, offices and cinemas

Under quarantine, the homes of people around the world turned into schools, offices, sports clubs, cinemas and music halls. A live-streamed concert online is better than nothing at all, but of course it does not evoke the same emotions or connection with the performers as a live performance.

Balconies convert into vip-lounges

In response Kaunas, the European Capital of Culture 2022, introduced "Culture to the Courtyards". The project was launched in two district municipalities in collaboration with the District and City Municipalities. Without breaking social distancing rules, culture and social life were brought to the courtyards between apartment blocks. Surprised audiences in VIP lounges (their balconies) or in front of big screens (their windows), were able to watch the performances of well-known Lithuanian theatre, dance, contemporary circus and music professionals. The productions took place in dramatically different commu-

nities, where people have different political views and social backgrounds. Nevertheless, everyone got involved – children, seniors, disabled people, foreigners, as well as people who could not afford to attend cultural events normally. Neighbours called each other to announce the shows, waved at each other, allowed performers to use their electricity and provided chairs, among others. Most of the action was broadcast live on the Lithuanian National Television and drew huge interest on social media networks. In total, the project reached more than 350,000 people, which is more than the population of Kaunas.

Solidarity in the crisis

The project continued throughout the quarantine in Lithuania. It culminated in the birthday celebrations of the city of Kaunas, when more than forty cultural organisations delivered their best performances – all of them unannounced so people would not form crowds. This show of solidarity brought people together, highlighted the city's cultural wealth and thanked citizens for staying at home. The decentralisation of culture, which is a core value of "Kaunas 2022", was achieved in the process.

FORMIGINE 2020

FORMIGINE, **ITALY**

A community of 34,000 people, including city authorities and residents, come together to help the municipality recover and develop – both during and in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

MARIA COSTI
Mayor, Municipality of Formigine

Confronting change

Formigine 2020 is a project designed to offer new opportunities and strategies for lifestyle changes in response to the COVID-19 health emergency. In the wake of the crisis, the Formigine citizen services were urgently redesigned to meet the need for new organisational methods. The municipality developed this project to actively involve citizens and help achieve the sustainability objectives of the United Nations' Agenda 2030. Since the rules and controls of public authorities were not sufficient to achieve the proposed common objectives alone, citizens became the primary protagonists in this new phase. Formigine 2020 has been widely disseminated in the public and has received contributions and proposals from residents. Development, solidarity and security are the three key principles of the programme.

Public service during the pandemic

The Municipality of Formigine took many steps to deal with the emergency phase of the pandemic, including strengthening online services through the Formigine Smart Community framework, setting up phone services for elderly residents (Formigine Ti Chiama), providing psychological assistance with the help of voluntary psychologists (Formigine Ti Ascolta), as well as launching a local e-commerce platform to support businesses in the area. The development of digital services has been crucial

for increasing and improving communication with citizens. It marks a new era in the field of public service provision.

The value of solidarity

Never have the participation, responsibility, sharing and co-planning of an entire community of 34,000 inhabitants been so integral to finding new ways of development and gradual recovery of social, productive and associative normality. In addition to the measures adopted by the government, various activities have been put in place to create sustainable improvements for citizens. The staff, together with a group of volunteers, gave vouchers to families, coordinated the deliveries of food, medicine and meals, as well as created a solidarity fund for people with economic difficulties. The project also made it possible to reactivate two important public works (reconstruction of the main square of the village and construction of the new ring road) as rapidly as possible. This created work for local companies, who had been unable to work for several weeks and was facilitated by a dramatic drop in road traffic in the historic centre.

FREE TELEMEDICINE INITIATIVE AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

REGION OF THESSALY, GREECE

Free teleconsultation services help keep citizens safe and informed through the coronavirus lockdown, thanks to a collaboration between medical staff, local government and the startup-sector.

KONSTANITINOS AGORASTOS

Governor

Citizens receive care at home during coronavirus

Within days of the coronavirus outbreak, medical associations in the region of Thessaly moved to collaborate with the health-tech startup, Dr Button, to deliver free teleconsultation services to citizens through mobile and web applications. This system ensured that people were able to stay safe at home throughout the lockdown.

Free medical teleconsultation service

This was a groundbreaking initiative in Greece, where virtual medicine is not yet well established. Citizens were able to benefit from free virtual access to doctors through their smartphones, tablets, or computers. Medical associations in the region swiftly invited their members – practicing doctors – to join the local Dr Button platform. Within a few days the initiative was flourishing, with almost 100 voluntary physicians ready to provide their services for free to thousands of citizens.

Hundreds of cases were managed remotely

Amid the lockdown, citizens felt safe and secure, as they were able to see a doctor from the safety of their own homes using the free teleconsultation service. Hundreds of cases were properly managed, with timely diagnosis and guidance. The system also allowed for the monitoring of more worrying cases. Furthermore, this project initiated a digital transformation of the local healthcare system. It marked a shift in the culture and mentality of the citizens, who now understand the safety and efficiency benefits of using digital technology to support health services.

GDYNIA STORM SHELTER

GDYNIA, POLAND

A complex system of financial, social and cultural support services helps local residents in all social groups weather the "storm" of the coronavirus pandemic.

WOJCIECH SZCZUREK

Mayor of Gdynia

Local government offers what it can

The role of local authorities in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic is often limited to the implementation of laws established by parliament and state government as a matter of urgency. Despite the restricted capabilities of local governments in Poland, Gdynia City Council took several measures to fight the epidemiological threat, to support the efficacy of the local administration and services, as well as to support residents in weathering this difficult time.

Support for a variety of social groups

The authorities of Gdynia found it important to prepare the city and its residents for surmounting the crisis and its aftermath. That is why they created the Gdynia Storm Shelter – a comprehensive programme for helping residents during the pandemic. It consists of several pillars that offer assistance to various social groups requiring support: entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations, culture, education, sport and social welfare. The key objective is to reach the widest possible groups of recipients. Inspired by the concept of a Storm Shelter that protects against sea storms and gusts of different intensity, the programme protects a variety of social groups, who, thanks to simplified procedures, can obtain support quickly and easily.

Preventing the damage of an unstoppable storm

The Gdynia Storm Shelter is a unique solution in Poland because it provides tailored support, adjusted to the needs of different groups of residents. Ranging from activities targeted at maintaining the liquidity of entrepreneurs and social policy tools, to advisory support and artistic competitions. The activities of the local government contribute to providing financial resources, but also increasingly improve non-material values, such as a sense of community and solidarity within the city. A specially appointed supervisory body, the Economic and Social Council, monitors the effectiveness of the already implemented activities, working towards developing possible improvements for the subsequent months. The "Storm Shelter" is a symbolic name that captures the maritime character of Gdynia: all those who live by the sea know that a well-constructed shelter cannot stop a storm, but it can prevent some of the damage it might cause.

HARINGEY TOGETHER

HARINGEY, UNITED KINGDOM

Covid-19 brings people together in a London district experiencing deprivation, through phone volunteering, food parcel delivery, donations, Mutual Aid Groups and more.

SARAH JAMES
Cabinet Member for Adults and Health

FLORENCE GUPPY
Programme Lead

The borough in a difficult starting position

Haringey is the fourth most deprived London borough, where nearly 10,000 residents are 'clinically extremely vulnerable', 38% of the community are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and at a greater risk of COVID-19. This difficult landscape could have caused residents to hibernate, to retreat inwards, or to look only after themselves - however, this did not happen.

Haringey together

Haringey's greatest strength is its people, who, as history has shown, can work together, look out for each other and come through the toughest of times - including the corona crisis. During the COVID-19 restrictions, residents reached out to each other for support, to access food and medicine, if they were not able to leave their homes, for financial guidance, if they lost their jobs, or for emotional support, as the lockdown affected everyone's emotional wellbeing. To date, 10,000 residents have called the Haringey Together phone line, 2,500 of the residents also received further support from Haringey Council. The Council helped those in need to maximise their income, find em-

Connected Communities

Resident
- Self-introduction
- Introduction from services and VCS organisations

Phone line
Inbox
Online form

Crisis Support
- Food
- Prescriptions
- Utilities
- Finances

Triaged around who is best able to support the resident from amongst all partners, recognising the needs of specific cohorts i.e. rough sleepers, families with NRPF

Resident's Good Life
- Introduction to services
- Introduction to VCS Organisations
- Access to information, advice and guidance

Support available across a variety of formats:
- In person
- Online
- On the phone

From Council and non-Council services and offers

ployment and resolve housing issues, to strengthen residents' long-term resilience. Working together as a community and as a team, people identified as needing support received information and help before they reached crisis point.

Residents, volunteers and the council work together

Local residents relied on the Council to guide and support them, but, critically, the Council also relied on local residents to identify and communicate the specific challenges they were facing. No individual, group or organisation could have done this on their own. Haringey Together was coordinated centrally but organised locally. It used all its resources to help active communities support their family, friends and neighbours. Everyone brought their own strengths and all forms of support was welcome. This extended to 400 volunteers delivering 20,000 food parcels, 100 pairs of "telephone friends" helping those in need through the tough times, as well as £300,000 raised by Haringey Giving. 4,000 residents furthermore joined 14 Mutual Aid Groups in the area through the internet and a dedicated Amazon Wishlist helped deliver donations of baby milk, nappies, pet food and toiletries to those in need.
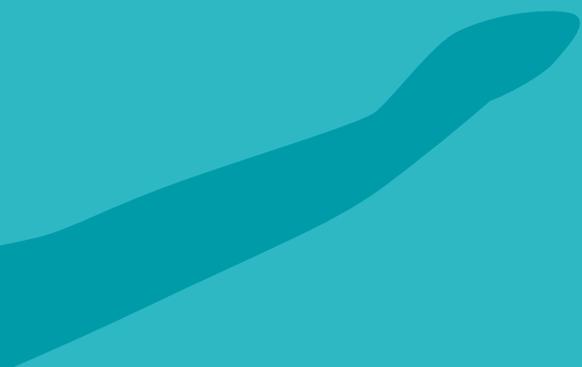
CATEGORY
DEMOCRACY

European cities and communities play an essential role in strengthening democracy, thereby showcasing groundbreaking work to improve politics in Europe. The Finalists in the category Democracy come from Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and Ukraine. They all aim to structurally involve citizens, increase civic participation in opinion-forming and decision-making and to empower people. Planning their neighbourhoods, rejuvenating town centres and public spaces, democratically deciding how city funds are spent, contributing to keeping their cities organised and helping to prevent corruption are just some of the ways to bolster democracy.

WINNER MAP OF REPAIRS

UKRAINE

A digital tool monitors the funds allocated from the national budget for local repairs, across all of Ukraine.

YULIA GRECHKA
Head of the Board of CSO Anti-corruption Headquarters

Observing repairs for the taxpayer

Regardless of political views or backgrounds, people care about the conditions of the buildings where they live, the schools or kindergartens where their children study and the parks where they take their pets for walks. So when it comes to improper repairs performed in areas that people see every day, they become aware that it is their own taxes that are being misused.

A map updated in real-time

The Map of Repairs is an innovative online tool, created to allow taxpayers to monitor the implementation of repair works throughout Ukraine, which are paid for with allocated national budget funds. The open platform automatically downloads data in real time about all repairs in communal facilities, such as residential buildings, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, libraries, etc.

MAP OF REPAIRS

ANTICORRUPTION
HEADQUARTER
WWW.SHTAB.NET

Digital anti-corruption

This is the first and only digital anti-corruption tool in Ukraine, which is updated in real time every minute; links information about repair work to the address, which is clear and convenient for citizens; covers the entire territory of Ukraine – from the largest city to the smallest village; and has a user-friendly interface, feedback form and the ability to comment and leave a complaint. Thus, any citizen using the website can find out how much money was spent on any repair shown on the map. This allows the reporting of infringements, corruption, or budget funds embezzlement. The project has a sustainable impact on reducing faulty repair works. For the first time, information about repairs in Ukraine is transparent and accessible to all citizens.

CORRUPTION PREVENTION THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

UKRAINE

A platform connects people to crowdsource actionable data on corruption, offers training and educational activities, helping find solutions and close legislative gaps.

◀ **LIUDMYLA IEVSIEIENKO**
Project Director

TETIANA BILOTSERKIVETS
Communication Manager

Corruption is ingrained in daily transactions

Ukraine is fighting two parallel wars – the war to secure its territorial integrity and the war against very-well organised, large-scale corruption. This type of corruption is deeply rooted in daily economic, social and political transactions. To conduct effective counter-corruption work, the Innovation and Development Foundation launched a project to support the prevention and investigation of corruption through civic engagement at a local level.

Crowdsourcing investigations

The goal of this project is to counteract corruption in Ukraine by supporting cooperation between activists, professionals and the public to uncover corruption webs at local and national levels. To achieve this goal, the project launched a platform for crowdsourcing investigations of corruption called WikiInvestigation. The platform provides a unique opportunity to connect individuals and groups and delivers actionable analytical data, which can be passed on to law enforcement agencies. Its functioning mechanism is similar to Wikipedia, as it allows users to create investigations and download data, while other users can

add supplementary information. The project distributes information using numerous social media communication channels. Besides, training and educational activities are offered to interested individuals on both local and regional levels, regardless of their profession, gender or ethnicity. Materials are distributed electronically and include detailed investigative manuals on open source investigation techniques.

Society actively supports anti-corruption efforts

Finally, society has the chance to get directly involved in investigating anti-corruption cases. The project provides opportunities for cooperation with activists and professional lawyers. It also contributes to preventing corruption by pushing for regulatory and administrative reforms and engaging with advocacy activities through developing solutions and closing legislative gaps. The project has been implemented in five major Ukrainian cities. In the three years years that it has been running, the collaborative platform has grown in content and the investigations have advanced in quality. Significant maintenance investments have been made to ensure the platform continues to work efficiently and effectively.

DELIBERATIVE COMMITTEES

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

A new permanent procedure engages randomly selected citizens in policy-making alongside parliamentarians, to democratise reforms and increase public support for decisions.

JONATHAN MOSKOVIC
Counsellor
on Democratic Innovation

MAGALI PLOVIE
President of the
Brussels French-speaking
parliament

A mix of politicians and citizens

The public generally disapproves of policies that do not involve citizens in the legislative process. To counteract this, in December 2019, the Parliament in Brussels amended their internal regulations to create 'Deliberative Committees'. Members of Parliament compose a quarter of the committee, while three quarters are randomly selected citizens.

Establishing a permanent solution

This initiative follows the innovative experiences of the German-speaking community of Belgium, known as Ostbelgien, where Deliberative Committees were used for the first time, as well as the famous Irish Constitutional Convention, which launched the debate on important constitutional matters. This project establishes permanent forums for direct citizen involvement as a progression from previous deliberative processes, which were one-off experiments. The Deliberative Committees are embedded in Parliamentary Procedures, ensuring their sustainability and continuing to provide parliamentarians with direct citizens' input. Deliberative Committees mean decisions will generally be more widely supported by the public, because of the way they were formulated. For example, environmental reforms will not only be perceived as punitive but as widely consensual, improving their legitimacy and sustainability.

Participation in a cosmopolitan context

Firstly, citizens will be part of the agenda setting, with 1000 citizens having the opportunity to put forward a topic to the Committees. Secondly, the Committees will be composed of 45 randomly selected citizens and 15 parliamentarians, who will debate a wide range of topics and issues, formulating official recommendations to parliament. Thirdly, the citizens will be invited to discuss the issue six months after the end of the recommendation phase. The innovative nature of the initiative lies in the fact that Deliberative Committees have now been directly implemented into the legal framework of the Brussels region. This establishes the region as a pioneer in terms of citizen involvement in Europe and the world. Simultaneously, the region pioneers different inclusion mechanisms for vulnerable people. Incentives, such as remuneration, preparatory sessions, daycare for children and multilingual facilitation, as well as an invitation in seven languages, increase the diversity of the participating citizens. After all, Brussels is the second most diverse city in the world after Washington DC. With its relatively large population of over 1.2 million inhabitants, the lessons learned through the Deliberative Committees will help in understanding their potential on a wider scale.

DELIBERATIVE COMMITTEES

GIVE A VOICE TO CITIZENS

1 **SUGGESTION OF A TOPIC :**
citizen's suggestion (1000 citizens) or parliamentarians.

VALIDATION OF THE SUBJECT :
Notice of the extended bureau + validation by the presidency.

REFUSAL OF THE SUBJECT
In the event of refusal, extended bureau must give reasons for their decision.

2 **CONSTITUTION OF THE DELIBERATIVE COMMITTEE :**
Citizens of Brussels are drawn by lot.
They must be at least 16 years old and meet the 4 inclusion criteria provided in the regulation.

3 **CALL-UP OF THE DELIBERATIVE COMMITTEE.**
3/4 of citizens and 1/4 of parliamentarians

Information   Deliberation   Recommendation proposal

CITIZEN'S VOTE
Secret vote

4 **MPs' VOTE**
Public vote

VALIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

REJECTED RECOMMENDATIONS
+ reasons for rejecting those recommendations

5 **FOLLOW-UP BY PARLIAMENTARIANS**   6 month maximum

SUBMISSION OF A PROPOSAL

+

THE ACCOMPANYING COMMITTEE

A committee made up of experts on participatory democracy and thematic experts is set up to ensure the smooth running, monitoring and evaluation of the process.

HELVETIA CALLS!

SWITZERLAND

Helvetia, the female national personification of Switzerland, campaigns for women to enter politics, run for office and improve democracy.

KATHRIN BERTSCHY
National Councilor / Co-President alliance F

FLAVIA KLEINER
Swiss political activist

SOPHIE ACHERMANN
Director of alliance F

The icon of switzerland

"Helvetia Calls!" is the new cross-party movement for women in politics. Helvetia – the female icon of Swiss democracy – calls on women to run for office. She is concerned about the quality of Swiss democracy, since democracy is only as good as its representatives and the political bodies that serve the population.

Helvetia's call was heard

2019 went down in Swiss history as the first true women's election year. For the first time, more new women were elected than new men – both in the National Council and the Council of States. In the National Council, 84 instead of 64 women now hold political office, with women holding a record 42% of seats. And in the small chamber, the Council of States, women have doubled their number of seats and now occupy twelve seats. Helvetia organised a spectacular event to motivate all women to run for office themselves or to get a woman to run. A total of 1,873 female Swiss nationals applied, more than ever before,

an increase of 43% compared to 2015. More than 600 women from 21 cantons, 11 parties and all language regions followed Helvetia's call and became part of the movement. Among them were at least 200 candidates who have never been politically active before.

The three-point plan

The fact that women were so successful in the 2019 elections on a cross-party basis was initially anything but predictable and the prognoses looked bad. However, Helvetia had a three-point plan, she (1) encouraged women to run for office, (2) supported their efforts to obtain prominent positions on the election lists and (3) subtly put the parties under pressure with letters and ratings. Throughout the entire period, active media work raised awareness in society. The project is unique in many ways. Helvetia is non-partisan: the project has promoters from all parties from the left to the far right, everyone agrees that women should have equal representation in the decision-making process. Helvetia has a sense of humour: the ambitious campaign has always taken a humorous approach and remains positive in its communication, to reach a broad audience. And Helvetia exceeds all expectations: more women have been elected to parliament than ever before.

ONLINE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY OF ŁÓDŹ – GREENERY IN THE CITY

ŁÓDŹ, POLAND

The Citizens' Assembly of Łódź finds democratic solutions for the city both online and offline through a two-part system based on education and deliberation, together with the support of experts and neutral facilitators.

AGATA BURLIŃSKA
Deputy Director of the Urban Activitiy Bureau

KATARZYNA DYZIO
Deputy Director, Public Participation Bureau, City of Łódź

ALEKSANDRA LATOCHA
Coordinator of the Facilitation Team

KONRAD SZPAK
President of The Institute of Public Policies Foundation

HANNA ZDANOWSKA
Mayor of the City of Łódź

OLGA ZUCHORA
Public Participation Officer, City of Łódź

Deliberative democracy in action

The Citizens' Assembly of Łódź is a form of deliberative democracy. It is a way of making important decisions for the city with a randomly selected group of 67 inhabitants – aged between 16 and 76, from different city districts and with different educational backgrounds –, reflecting the general population of the city. Their role is to resolve specific issues, taking the common good of all citizens of Łódź into account.

Preparing recommendations

The Assembly consists of two main parts: education and deliberation. In the educational part, experts and stakeholders in the field related to the subject of the Assembly provide the citizens with the knowledge needed to make optimal decisions. In the deliberation part, participants discuss solutions, guided by neutral facilitators. The purpose of these meetings is to prepare recommendations for the Mayor of Łódź to implement. All recommendations supported by at least 80% of the assembly are presented.

Greening the city goes online

Between March and July 2020, a Citizens' Assembly on the topic of Greenery in the City was organised. It was initially planned as an offline process, but due to the Covid-19 outbreak after the first meeting, the remaining meetings were organised online. NGOs helped equip people with computers and internet access and, during the meetings, elderly participants received support from volunteers. It was the first online Citizens' Assembly in Poland and one of the first in the world. The panellists not only gained new experience of reaching a consensus with people who are from different social groups and have different opinions, but also knowledge in the field of ecology and water retention. As a result, there is now a group of citizens, ready to work with the City as local drivers of change in their districts (online and offline). They have begun to take on responsibility for their surroundings.

OUR BALBRIGGAN REJUVENATION PLAN 2019-2025

BALBRIGGAN, **IRELAND**

Participative public consultations and citizen engagement help a young and diverse town deliver nearly a hundred action items, to rejuvenate the town centre, improve public areas and enhance residents' lives.

GRAINNE MAGUIRE
Councillor

GERRY MCDERMOTT
Head of Communications, Fingal County Council

TONY MURPHY
Councillor

A young town struggles with rapid population growth

Balbriggan is the youngest and one of the most ethnically diverse towns in Ireland. It has witnessed rapid expansion in housing and population growth. As a result, its amenities do not meet local demand. The perception of the town, internally and externally, is low - the administration identified the need to rejuvenate the original town centre.

Renewing balbriggan together

The project aims to create a more attractive, connected place where people want to live and spend their time - for work, shopping, or recreational purposes. It focuses on community-driven renewal by strengthening relationships between society and the economy to create a more resilient, sustainable Balbriggan. In 2018, several public consultations, engagements and World Café

events were undertaken with various stakeholders, as well as over 4,000 residents of Balbriggan, representing 25% of the town's population. Residents were encouraged to get involved, to imagine new possibilities and have their say in the town's future development. The Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Plan commits to delivering 93 action items. It aims to create a vibrant, inspiring place, where. residents want to live, relax and work. The vision of "Our Balbriggan" included both long-term and new residents' wishes.

A collaborative vision of the future town

The community met the challenge to "Imagine the Possibilities" and "Get Involved", engaging in their thousands to shape Balbriggan and set Rejuvenation Plan objectives. The municipality invested EUR 30 million in rejuvenation efforts to improve the town's public areas, attract business and enhance the quality of life. The Rejuvenation Plan's public consultation method helped Balbriggan become the first Smart District town in Ireland. It was the first time a municipality used this approach, winning an award for public engagement in Ireland.

RESIDENTS' INITIATIVES IN KRETINGA DISTRICT

KRETINGA DISTRICT, **LITHUANIA**

Residents can bring their ideas to the municipal agenda to vote on its implementation and use of budget, thereby influencing political and administrative decisions in the locality.

VAIDA JAKUMIENĖ
Member of Kretinga Distric Municipality Council

A participatory budget

Vaida Jakumienė, a newly elected Kretinga District Council member, introduced an initiative based on the participatory budget principle to Kretinga District in 2019: the Residents' Initiative. Kretinga's 25-member Council unanimously approved it.

Residents get involved through proposals and votes

The Residents' Initiatives project has become a new tool to involve residents in decision-making and budget allocation processes. It offers two forms of participation: (1) people can submit their proposals for improving the living environment, as well as improving or creating new public infrastructure. (2) People can vote and decide which ideas should be implemented and financed by the Kretinga District Municipality. The residents warmly welcomed the project. Introduced as a pioneer project that allows individuals to influence final decisions, around 200 residents from various backgrounds decided to participate. Residents submitted nearly 50 ideas for improving the living environment or creating public infrastructure. Out of these, 43 proposals made it through selection and 2,630 residents voted for the initiatives they supported the most.
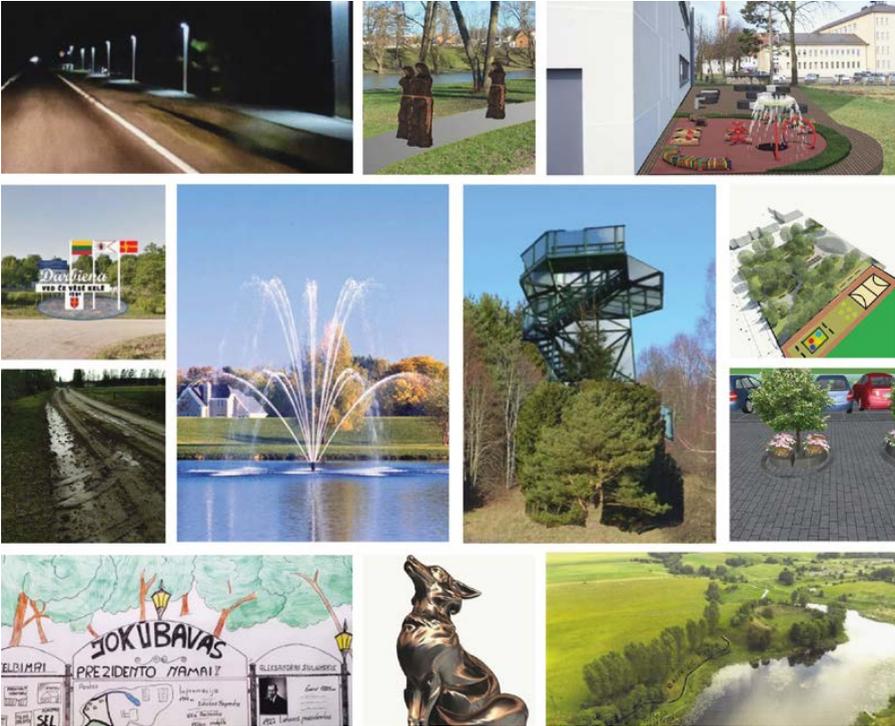
The mindset changes

The project is novel in Kretinga District as it lets individual residents get involved. Other programmes have mostly targeted local organisations, registered communities, or local action groups. The Residents' Initiatives allow a person to step up and contribute their ideas to the municipal plan. Kretinga District has implemented the participatory budget since the beginning of 2020. The project changes the format of the region's politics and, most importantly, changes the mindset of residents. People have the chance to influence political and administrative decisions which affect their living surroundings, not only during municipal elections but all year round. The high number of participants - around 7.7% of all voters - is a sign of the project's success. This number is three times higher than in comparable pioneer municipalities in Lithuania.

THE CITIZENS' CONSTITUTION OF MOLIÈRES: PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY IN ACTION!

MOLIÈRES, FRANCE

The City of Molières manages its municipal activities in a participatory manner, structurally involving all residents in local decision-making.

YVAN LUBRANESKI

Mayor of Molières

Citizens create policies

The Citizens' Constitution of Molières emerged from the desire to create policies in local ecosystems, which involve citizens in the decision-making process. Since 2019, the Constitution has formally reorganised the village. All projects are co-constructed, analysed and implemented through six participatory institutions.

The institutions of the citizens' constitution

The following are the institutions of the Citizens' Constitution: the "Council of Wise People" makes proposals, reports on issues and participates in projects, while it is the role of the Extra-Municipal Commission and Municipal Council to co-constructs projects and publish information. The Municipal Council is also tasked with initiating and organising the citizens' decisions. The Thematic Advisory Committees and the Municipal Children's Council propose and implement initiatives and work on projects. To analyse and submit opinions on a project falls to the Citizen Jury.

A participative municipality

The city is the first French municipality to co-construct and put in place a Citizens' Constitution. It is one of the few cities in France that manages all municipal activities in a participatory manner. The constitution was, in fact, just one more step towards citizen involvement in Molières: it formalised the participation that was already taking place. Since then, citizen participation in political life has exploded – around 200 out of the 2,000 local inhabitants regularly take part in projects. An interest in a project or a specific topic has politically activated people to take part, who were politically inactive before. All residents can participate in the discussion, analysis and implementation of the projects. The role of the mayor and the municipal council is to make decisions following the Citizens' Constitution. The citizens themselves thus create the Municipality of Molières.

THE SCHOOL OF THE SUBURBS – CITIZENS MAKE THE CITY

MILAN, **ITALY**

A school without classrooms empowers Milanese citizens to participate in city planning and go from designing to realising neighbourhood projects.

CRISTINA TAJANI
Cabinet Member of Business, Commerce,
Human Resources Division in the Municipality of Milan

Citizens plan the city

The Scuola dei Quartieri (School of the Suburbs) is a project of the Municipality of Milan to increase the planning capacity of its citizens. Milan currently leaves large parts of its community at the social and geographical margins, needing urgent improvements for its neighbourhoods. Scuola dei Quartieri is part of the Municipal strategy to develop innovatively and inclusively.

Free and open classrooms

The "School" is a public service, free, open and accessible to anyone who wants to design and work to change their neighbourhood, without age or educational restrictions. The Scuola dei Quartieri does not have classrooms and takes place where people live and work: in social spaces, in offices, in shops, in backrooms and so forth.

The School's activity occurs in cycles, although several elements overlap. (1) Before the public call: the municipality holds open meetings, lessons and seminars to discuss the problems and potential of the neighbourhood, to get to know the area and build collaborative networks. (2) Didactic activity to support the submission of applications: workshops on planning and submitting the project idea. (3) Advanced training courses: twenty informal groups are selected to participate in a 100-hour intensive training course, learning to design and transform ideas into projects. (4) The municipality awards up to EUR 25,000 to enable the realisation of projects along with the customised services that accompany them.

The new generation of city-makers

The low access threshold allows the project to open spaces and create opportunities for as many people as possible. The project builds a widespread capacity for urban planning and transformation, supports open innovation and produces a new generation of city-makers in an inclusive community. The added value of the School of the Suburbs is the creation of a community of supporters. For example, hashtags such as #BELLASTORIA (beautiful story) narrate positive neighbourhood experiences in which associations, committees, artisan shops and representatives of private or public places are the protagonists of small innovation stories who, in different ways, make the city. EU Pon Metro Milan 2014-2020 supports the project financially, with the assistance of a network of organisations specialised in community development and supporting entrepreneurship and social innovation.

URBANLAB GDYNIA

GDYNIA, **POLAND**

A cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary programme helps a city achieve sustainability goals, thanks to activities ranging from small community projects to large participatory innovations.

◀ **MICHAŁ GUĆ**
Deputy Mayor

JOANNA KRUKOWSKA
UrbanLab Gdynia Coordinator

Changing the city's approach to public dialogue

UrbanLab is an innovative programme focused on changing the city's approach to diversity and the scope of public dialogue and participation. Each of its cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary components – Strategic Group, Thematic Teams, Working Groups, City Incubator, UrbanCafé and civic tech – represent original developments, which in combination allow the sourcing and transferral of knowledge and experience.

Contemporary topics and the lab's components

The UrbanLab's UrbanCafé serves as a forum for a structured dialogue between citizens, activists and municipal representatives. It seeks to inspire, improve knowledge exchange and promote global trends in sustainable development and Smart City initiatives. The Urban Competence Programme within UrbanLab's Incubator enables participants to exchange their perspectives on developing innovative concepts. This year's winning participatory ideas include an urban gardening training course, voluntary bag sewing from recycled clothes to be used at the local market, a welcome pack for new residents and a sports organisers' training course. The Lab's Thematic Team tests and develops the topics of participation standards, local initiatives and civic education. For 2020, the team undertook reflections in the areas of public awareness of climate change, water retention, as well as the city's greenery

and carbon emissions. The 2020-21 Thematic Team consists of Economic and Social Councils which analyse challenges the city faces during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Space for developing new skills and ideas

The programmes of the UrbanLab create a space for developing new skills of emerging local leaders and civil servants, forging new ideas for solutions: the joint efforts of the Strategic Group, Thematic Team and Working Groups result in new policies and practices; the City Incubator brings new solutions for local operations and committed residents open to partnership with the municipality; and the UrbanCafé and civic tech make new networks, ideas, tools and shared understanding of all stake-holders possible. As a result, several innovations have been proposed, from small community-based ideas to large-scale participatory innovations. Those selected are to be tested and further developed throughout Gdynia. In one year of UrbanLab's existence, 874 citizens from all walks of life took part in almost 200 meetings concerning the challenges facing Gdynia and its residents.

CATEGORY
DIGITALISATION

The digitalisation of public services should benefit both administrative processes and citizens. The Finalists in this category from Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, and Sweden therefore apply and improve information and communication technologies to strengthen democratic processes and promote the common good. They encourage ecological behaviour, such as increasing waste separation, educate citizens about the basics of artificial intelligence, find healthcare solutions for the elderly, bring people closer to local government and improve public services. Above all, they ensure that everybody has access to digital tools.

NO DATA WASTE IN KOŠECA

KOŠECA, SLOVAKIA

A modern data collection system encourages waste separation and incentivises recycling by reducing waste collection fees.

RADOMÍR BRTÁŇ
Mayor of Košeca

MAREK KURINEC
Municipal waste management specialist

The old ways of waste disposal

At first sight, it looks like an average story about waste separation. But this one is much more than that. It's a story about how a village managed to motivate its inhabitants and showed them a better, more sustainable approach to waste production and separation. Before the change in attitude, households were used to throwing their waste in containers in whatever way they wanted. This new system changed just that.

Incentivising waste consciousness

Since 2008, the community of Košeca has been continuously trying to motivate its inhabitants to be more waste conscious. However, real change only came about after the new system was implemented in 2019. Nowadays, every household gets stickers with unique QR codes for every bag of waste they take out to the containers and each container has an electronic chip. Both the chips and the QR codes are scanned during waste collection. In this way, the village keeps track of every household, knowing not only how much waste they produce, but also how well they separate it. And here is where the motivation comes in – the more a household separates, the lower their waste collection fees. Citizens appreciate the new electronic register, as every household can participate in the system. Consequently, even the most reluctant inhabitants are motivated to separate as much as they can!

Establishing a lasting change

After the introduction of motivational fees, people have naturally become more interested in improving their waste separation rates. Already when the first data was collected to determine those fees, the amount of separated waste had started to grow and the amount of mixed waste decreased by 18% in 2019. These trends became even more pronounced with the intro-duction of the motivational fees in January 2020. Not only have people's views on sorting changed; their overall perception of their impact of the environmental burden has shifted. And this change in perception is bound to have a lasting impact.

BASIC AI EDUCATION
FINLAND

Finland seeks to educate 1% of European citizens in the basics of Artificial Intelligence to bring to the EU an understanding and capability to match China and the USA in these applications.

TIMO HARAKKA
Minister of Transport and Communications

TEEMU ROOS
Professor, Helsinki University

VILLE VALTONEN
Managing Director, Reaktor Education

Normalising artificial intelligence

In what is often dubbed the "Finnish Miracle," Finland transformed itself after World War II from a poor rural, agricultural society, to one of the most prosperous and technologically advanced nations in the world. Finns achieved this without oil or huge financial investment, but with strategic investments in research, development and education. Investing in education is deeply rooted in the Finnish DNA. Finland thinks that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is too important to be left in the hands of a few elite programmers. The country wants to enable normal people, such as dentists and plumbers, to discover the possibilities AI offers and realise its potential in our daily lives. It wants to empower people not to feel threatened by this new technology, so that they can make informed decisions about its use on their own terms.

Investing in future skills

It has been customary for countries holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union to hand out gifts at the end of the Presidency. Normally, these items have been the likes of ties and scarves. In 2019, Finland wanted to provide an extraordinary gift to the whole European population by making the award-winning "Elements of AI" course available across the union, translating it into all official EU languages. The ambitious goal is to educate 1% of European citizens in the basics of AI by 2021.

Knowledge leads to empowerment

The purpose of the course is to equip all European citizens with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about artificial intelligence, to harness this new technology for the benefit of Europe and their respective nations, matching the upcoming trends in China and the US. By July 2020, 450,000 people had already signed up for this free course.

CULTURE TOKEN

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Digital tokens use the carrot approach to reward environmentally-friendly behaviour with free access to arts and culture.

ALFRED STRAUCH
Media spokesman cultural affairs and science

Humans respond to nudging

As is well-known in behavioural psychology, human beings usually respond well to incentives when it comes to changing learned habits. This is especially true when the learned habits are detrimental to health or the environment. This pilot project rewards environmentally-friendly activities with free access to cultural events. People who actively reduce their carbon emissions by walking, cycling, or using public transport receive a virtual token. The tokens can then be exchanged for tickets to renowned cultural institutions.

Art project backed by blockchain technology

The installation of the Culture Token app is based, among others, on blockchain technology to guarantee data protection for mobile devices. The Research Institute for Crypto-Economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business has provided scientific advice and evaluated the pilot project from the very beginning. In terms of organisational and technical implementation, Wien Digital works in cooperation with Changers.com and Upstream Mobility. Since the Culture Token was intended as an art project right from the beginning, the City of Vienna is delighted to announce the celebrated street artist "Frau Isa" as the leading Artistic Director. The Culture Token can be viewed as antithetical to the concept of the social score card, which uses the same technology but seeks to regulate the behaviour of citizens.
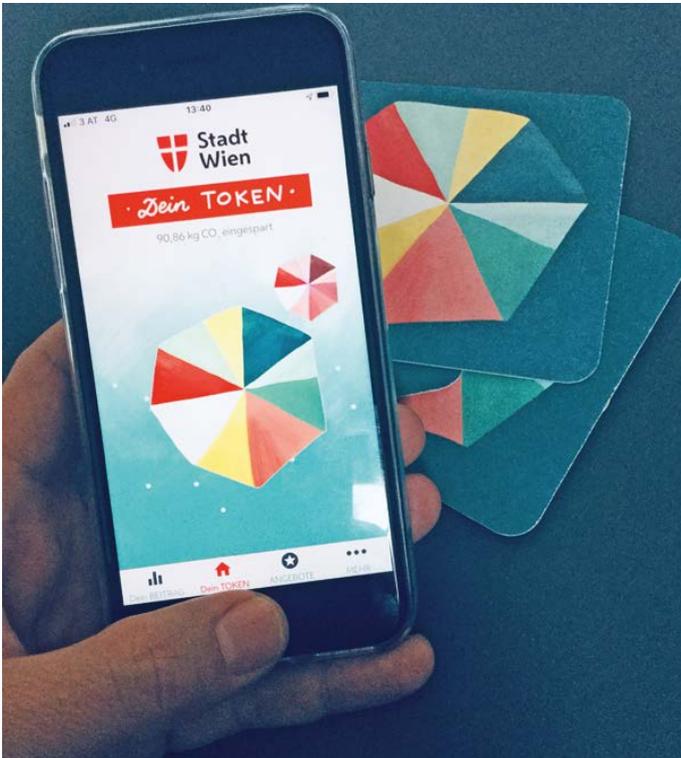
Sustainably increasing access to arts and culture

The Culture Token is being tested in a limited pilot scheme in 2020 and can be rolled out internationally. The use of digital credits, which can be spent in various art and culture facilities across the city, not only increases the presence of arts and culture in people's daily lives, but also effectively responds to the climate crisis. Vienna, thus, steps up as a forward-thinking city, ready to take concrete measures towards carbon-neutrality. The pilot scheme involves maximum 1,500 participants over a little more than six months.

DIGITAL AUTHORISATION FOR SOCIETY'S SERVICES

FINLAND

Finland has become the first country in the world to allow people to electronically authorize another person to make important decisions for them online.

MIKA KING
Development Manager and Business Owner of Suomi.fi-e-Authorizations

JANI RUUSKANEN
Chief Senior Specialist, Owner of Suomi.fi-services Platform

Some citizens cannot use digital services

The ability to act on behalf of another legal entity in terms of digital services increases digital productivity. Such systems make digital services available to those who are not able to use them themselves. The Finnish government designed Suomi.fi-e-Authorizations to enable digital services to be utilised by every citizen. The system was designed to minimise social exclusion in a digital society.

Authorization makes digital services available to all

Suomi.fi-e-Authorizations are free to use by public and private sector service providers, such as social and welfare, banking, insurance and IT services, as well as citizens. In short, it increases the credibility and security of electronic transactions, bridging the public-private gap in the provisioning and governance of services. This means that citizens who do not own a computer or have an internet connection can still go to a service location (such as a tax office) and mandate another person to act on their behalf in chosen digital services. Suomi.fi-services are developed using flexible methods, adapting the principles of user-centric design in collaboration with end users. Service providers, companies and citizens are regularly involved in idea generation and feature prioritisation.
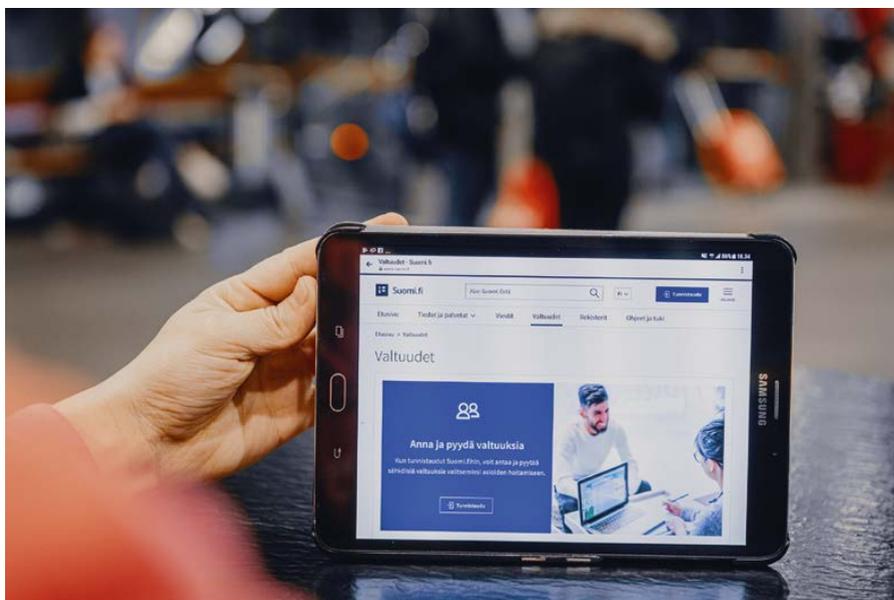
Significant financial and social benefits

Using the Suomi.fi-e-Authorization tool significantly reduces service provider costs. The biggest savings are generated by the digitalisation of the official authentication process, which speeds up the verification of mandates and reduces the need for telephone calls and other manual work related to validating authorisation. For example, The Social Insurance Institution of Finland has estimated that allowing citizens to mandate others to use their digital services instead of visiting service locations saves up to EUR 6-10 per visit. Suomi.fi-e-Authorizations are very widely used and create both financial and social benefits for service providers and citizens alike. The service is built and shared as open-source and can be utilised by other countries and organisations to provide similar e-Authorization-services. During the Corona outbreak, the tool proved to be very useful. The ability to digitally mandate other people to pick up your medicines from any pharmacy in Finland is a great example of how digital mandates can also be used in physical transactions.

MAKEITMODENA - DIGITAL GYM

ITALY

"Cyber workouts" help children and adults gain digital literacy, realise digital projects and spread open-source culture.

LUDOVICA CARLA FERRARI

Councillor for Smart City, Modena

A digital world requires digital skills

In a digitalised world, people of all ages are required to have the skills necessary to use phones, computers and other technical devices. To be able to access the best opportunities in the era, everyone should be able to confidently navigate the internet.

Training our virtual muscles

This service provides children and adults with the equipment, space, skills and planning support needed to realise digital projects, including coding, mini-robotics, or 3D printing. Makeitmodena works with school students to provide training and refresher courses for teachers. It supports local associations in organising digital cultural events, such as the Linux Day, which is held annually in collaboration with the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia and Associazione Conoscerelinux. Makeitmodena has more than 1,200 members. The organisation of digital cultural events, along with participation in fairs such as Play, Modena Nerd or Electronic Expo, allows hundreds of people of different ages and cultures to take part in the project every year.

Improving digital literacy for all

Makeitmodena does not simply provide space and equipment to people curious about digital possibilities. It also provides skills and training in planning, to help them develop their own projects. It collaborates with schools and institutions to encourage active participation. It promotes and spreads open-source culture. Workshops for children and adults improve digital literacy, particularly amongst older local people. Opening up these channels of understanding improves access to many processes of daily life, therefore increasing the integration of people of all ages into modern society.

MEDICATION ROBOTS

KALMAR, SWEDEN

This project supports old people who wish to continue living in their own homes, by providing electronic medicine dispensers that periodically alert them to take their prescribed medication.

MICHAEL LÄNDIN

Chair of the Elderly Care Committee

Taking prescribed medicine at home

Many elderly people in need of medical care enjoy a much higher quality of life when they can continue to live in their own homes, instead of having to move into a residential facility. An important challenge in this effort is to make sure that the elderly who need medication take the correct dose of their prescription medicine at the right time of the day.

Medication robots take over

As chair of the elderly care committee of the Municipality of Kalmar, Michael Ländin has introduced Medication Robots. Medication Robots are electronic dispensers. When it is time to take a pill, the dispenser alerts the patient with sound and light signals. There is a written message on a display, but the robot also gives verbal instructions. If the pill is not taken from the dispenser, the robot alerts care service staff.

A role model for other municipalities

Medication Robots are groundbreaking technology, which will be used to meet the most pressing challenge of elderly care in Sweden at the moment: the lack of skilled staff. Thanks to this, among other innovations, Kalmar has been designated as a "Model Municipality" in elderly care and will receive the state's support in spreading the municipality's methods and digital solutions to other municipalities.

MOBILITY FLAT RATE IN THE CITY ZONE

AUGSBURG, GERMANY

The City of Augsburg encourages the use of car sharing, cycling and public transport via a flat rate that provides a low-cost package for mobility at a fixed monthly price, on top of free public transport in the city zone.

WALTER CASAZZA
Managing Director of municipal utilities

EVA WEBER
Mayor

ROBERT UNDERBERG
Staff leader Mobility development

Mobility packages are usually limited to one type

Flexible mobility today is crucial for urban areas: buses and trams, cycling when the weather is fine and, if necessary, having a car for the weekly shop, excursions or holidays. Most mobility packages are limited to one means of transport, i.e. car sharing, bicycle rental, or public transport. Since November 2019, Augsburg's public utility company Stadtwerke Augsburg (SWA) has been offering a flat rate solution for mobility. The "swa Mobil-Flat" includes the use of buses and trams, car sharing, as well as car and bike rental in Augsburg's city zone and the surrounding region.

Transport at a fixed price

Everyone knows the term "flat rate" from mobile phone tariffs. SWA are now the first to bundle all types of mobility into one product, at a fixed monthly price. The "swa Mobil-Flat" is available in two price packages, for EUR 83 and 115 per month, depending on how often car sharing is used. These rates include: public transport in Augsburg's city area; 30 minutes of bikes usage multiple times per day, along with car sharing for 15 hours or 150 km per month (Mobil-Flat S), or up to 30 hours with unlimited kilometres (Mobil-Flat M). In addition, the mobility flat rate offers a special bonus – local public transport in the city's central zone is free of charge.

Staying mobile and protecting the environment

The "swa Mobil-Flat" clients are encouraged to use all means of environmentally-friendly transport, such as trams, buses and bicycles in the city zone. Car rental (car-sharing) is incentivised over private car use. By sharing the means of transport, the usage rate of each vehicle increases. The price of Mobil-Flat therefore signifies a good investment in both individual mobility and in sustainable transport generally.

ONLINE CITIZEN

OPOLE, POLAND

A highly intuitive electronic citizen platform allows the citizens of Opole to participate in municipal decisions, vote in district elections and decide which tasks should be implemented in the city.

◄ **ARKADIUSZ WIŚNIEWSKI**
Mayor of the City of Opole

DOROTA PIECHOWICZ-WITOŃ
Head of the Civic Dialogue Center

Modern technologies for communication

The City of Opole is constantly investing in modern information technologies to facilitate communication with its citizens. Consequently, electronic citizen platforms are prepared in a clear and simple way. They enable the citizens not only to obtain information on current activities but also to get involved in the life of the city, without having to leave home.

Online platforms facilitate citizen engagement

All you need for civic activity in Opole is a computer or a smartphone with internet access. The elderly and digitally excluded have the opportunity to use the help of an assistant (an employee of the Opole Municipality) by phone or in person, at their place of residence or in public facilities, as well as in shopping centres. This project is particularly innovative due to the highly intuitive usability of the online platforms. The electronic online platforms make it possible to (1) submit applications to the Participatory Budget and Local Initiative, (2) vote in the district council elections and (3) reserve conference rooms for NGOs and informal groups.

The Participatory Budget consists of allocating a part of the city's budget to tasks proposed by the citizens. The citizens decide which tasks will be implemented, most often in the form

of voting. The Local Initiative is a form of cooperation between the citizens and the city's authorities. The essence of this cooperation is the implementation of city tasks, mainly thanks to the involvement of a social work group.

Remote contributions of considerable relevance

The opportunities provided by the online platforms build the citizens' trust in authorities, influence sustainable development and give them the sense that they can have a real impact on the shape and functioning of the city. Furthermore, internet communication platforms accelerate the pace of information exchange and the ability of people to react to and submit ideas – all at low project maintenance costs. The project costs less than PLN 50,000 per year. The dedicated platforms allow citizens to decide on the following allocation of funds: nearly PLN 6 million in the Participatory Budget; PLN 100,000 for the Local Initiative; nearly PLN 3.5 million for activities undertaken by District Councils.

The platforms are also an ideal solution during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, since people continue to get involved without any risk of infection.

RESIDENT'S ACCOUNT – GDYNIA E-SERVICES CENTRE

GDYNIA, POLAND

An interactive tool combines multiple municipal services, to allow people to settle administrative affairs from the convenience of their homes.

◀ **BARTOSZ BARTOSZEWICZ**
Deputy Mayor for the Quality of Life, Gdynia

MALGORZATA CZAJA
Unit for the quality of life and integrated management systems

Multifunctional tool for interaction

The idea of the project is to simplify contact with the local administration by providing residents with a multifunctional tool for interacting with the City Hall. The innovation of the solution is the integration of individual digital tools, which previously operated independently, on one platform.

Convenient citizen communication

The Resident's Account now allows residents to settle a variety of administrative matters without leaving home. They can also report and monitor irregularities in urban space, organise a place for their children in a kindergarten, identify themselves with a card in public transport and in Gdynia's libraries, or get tangible benefits that the city offers through a Residents' Card. The last important element is the Gdynia Contact Centre, which is a call centre staffed by a well-trained team who keep in touch with residents through one number. Their knowledge and experience means that 85% of cases are dealt with during the first contact. Their remote work has additionally facilitated access to information during the pandemic, which positively influenced residents' sense of security.
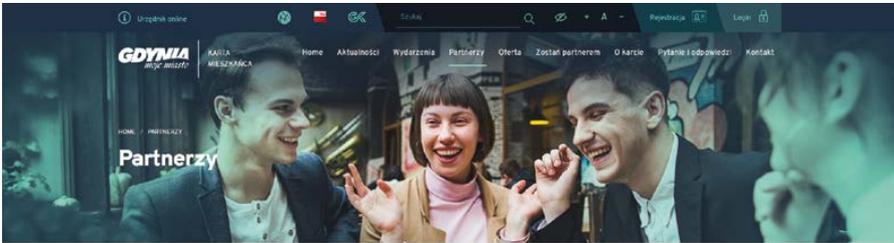
A local platform adapted to local needs

This project represents the city's comprehensive approach to implementing the Gdynia Development Strategy 2030, which aims to continuously improve the quality of life of its residents. By integrating many city services, this solution ensures high-quality two-way communication between residents and their administration. Residents decide which form of communication with the City Hall is the most suitable for them – telephone, e-mail, or a virtual clerk. Currently, this is the only such platform in Poland. It is fully designed and implemented by the staff of the Gdynia City Hall, which undoubtedly makes it well adapted to the needs of the residents and the city. By offering residents multi-channel communication, the city does not exclude anyone. On the contrary, the accessibility also encourages people with restrictions to use intelligent communication channels.

STAATSLABOR (STATE LAB)

SWITZERLAND

A non-profit social laboratory provides experts, resources and a platform to bring innovation and resilience to the public sector.

ALENKA BONNARD
Co-Director

DANNY BÜRKLI
Co-Director

Non-profit public sector lab

Staatslabor (State Lab) is the first non-profit laboratory for public sector innovation and reform in Switzerland. While the Swiss public sector provides reliable public services, these are not adapting rapidly enough to the changing needs of the population. This is the first organisation in the country to bring together an understanding of leading innovation methodologies with the specificities of government organisations. It encourages the application of innovative methods in order to develop effective solutions for the societal challenges that the public sector is confronted with.

Equipping public administration with resources

The Lab is devoted to building capacity, as well as fostering a contemporary, resilient and sustainable public sector. To this end, it provides a platform, resources, experts and spaces for public administration leaders. The Lab's work has covered the areas of service design and delivery, digital transformation, project management, inclusive and user-centric project design, organisational change and many more.

The lab fosters cooperation

Since 2016, Staatslabor has supported dozens of public administration units on all three government levels (federal, regional and municipal) to innovate, transform, design and improve their processes and citizens' services. It has partnered with foundations, universities, experts and public sector institutions to propagate ideas and good practices. Its monthly, free flagship event, the Staatskantine (State Canteen), has become a gathering place and catalyst for change, where expertise and experience are shared among an open community of civil servants. Staatslabor champions the role of civil society participation in public service design. In this capacity it was recently mandated to set up and operate a Covid-19 Civil Society Point of Contact as part of the Swiss Federal Government's central crisis unit during the pandemic.
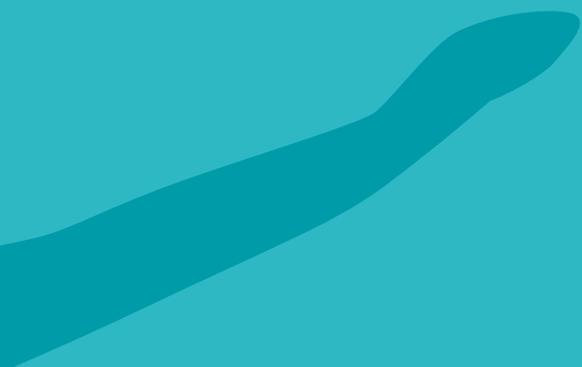
CATEGORY
ECOLOGY

Climate change is the most pressing challenge of our time. Coming from Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain, the Finalists in the category Ecology put their goals of living in greener and more liveable cities into action. They all take a responsible approach to solving ecological problems and achieving climate neutrality. They do this through a variety of measures, including retaining rainwater to reduce the risk of floods, building green electricity networks, the adaptive reuse of old buildings as social housing, improving waste management, as well as by decreasing the use of plastic.

WINNER SUPER CIRCULAR ESTATE

KERKRADE, NETHERLANDS

Outdated high-rise buildings are deconstructed and the recovered materials re-used to build sustainable, modern social housing units, with low carbon footprints.

MARCO THEUNISSEN
Junior Project Leader

TIM WEIJERS
Alderman and Deputy Mayor

Declining population reduces housing demand

Kerkrade, like many other towns in the south-east of the Netherlands, is experiencing a declining population. Over the next thirty years, the population of the town is expected to decrease by 27%. This will result in a reduced demand for housing in the coming decades. Old high-rise apartment buildings, built in the 1960s, have therefore become redundant.

Redundant buildings converted into modern housing

However, old buildings contain valuable materials that can be re-used to construct housing for the 21st century. The Municipality of Kerkrade, in collaboration with public and private stakeholders, is currently building new housing units using 100% recycled material from the outdated high-rise buildings.

Social houses built with 100% recycled materials

The Super Circular Estate project aims to experiment with innovative building techniques and encourage social housing associations to use sustainable and resource-efficient solutions. The project's practical outcome is the creation of 130 new social houses built with 100% recycled materials. A great example is the block on Voorterstraat, half of which will be demolished while the other half will be renovated using the materials recovered. As a result, no less than 1 million kg of CO_2 emissions are saved compared to building new flats.

Website: www.superlocal.eu

A PIONEER CITY FOR SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL INNOVATION

GRANDE SYNTHE, FRANCE

The municipality of Grande Synthe took a holistic approach tackling unemployment, poverty and pollution by improving health and ecological conditions, as well as fostering social integration.

◄ DAMIEN CAREME
Former Mayor

CORALIE GUILLOT
Parliamentary Assistant at European Parlement

Solving major challenges through large-scale projects

Grande Synthe has been profoundly transformed by major ecological and social projects, led by Mayor Damien Careme. The aim is to counteract the impact of the high levels of unemployment, poverty and pollution experienced in the region. In 2004, the city engaged in the Local Agenda 21 process and has become a pioneer city in terms of ecological innovation.

Environmental health means human health

A range of ecological actions were carried out, including a commitment to reduce endocrine (hormone) disruptors. Endocrine disruptors can be found in many household or industrial products. The city launched the biggest endocrine disruptor screening ever organised in France, which led to a study on the impact of endocrine disruptors on health. The study revealed the pervasive presence of endocrine disruptors in the environment and their negative impact on health, contributing to the public debate on this topic. As a consequence, all the household products used by the municipality are now homemade and inhabitants can take classes on how to make their own. In addition, all canteens are now 100% organic and communal vegetable gardens have been built in poor neighbourhoods.

The benefits of socially inclusive ecology

The city has become a leader in terms of ecological action and has seen a substantial improvement in the quality of life for all citizens. Several social projects were also carried out in parallel with ecological interventions. The city now offers inexpensive complementary health insurance, open to all. This allows all inhabitants to access quality healthcare, in a country where 5% of the population do not have health insurance. Furthermore, in 2016 the city welcomed 1,300 refugees on a site built specifically for this purpose. The camp has now disappeared as the refugees have been able to integrate into the social fabric of the city. By offering a multitude of interventions, the city has developed a socially inclusive ecology that benefits all. Improving quality of life leads to a more dynamic city, with people sharing experiences, developing new skills and creating bonds.

ENERGY INCOME

PORTO TORRES, **ITALY**

The project supports socially vulnerable citizens in achieving energy independence, whilst creating a beneficial circle where non-consumed energy is used to finance new photovoltaic systems for further households.

SEAN CHRISTIAN WHEELER

Mayor, Municipality of Porto Torres

Combining green technology and social assistance

Energy Income is an innovative project that has positive environmental, social and energy impacts. This is the first project to be developed by the Municipality of Porto Torres with the aim of reducing energy poverty through the use of new solar technologies. The long-term aim of the project is to enable citizens to become energy independent. The Municipality has initially allocated EUR 500,000 to the project, which is also supported by the Photovoltaic Revolving Fund.

A self-financing solar installation

Eligible citizens receive a free photovoltaic system which promotes the use of green technologies whilst revolutionising social assistance. At the same time, the project encourages the sharing of resources, as all the energy produced but not consumed is fed back into the grid and sold. The proceeds go towards a fund, managed by the municipality, which finances the purchase and installation of new photovoltaic panels in the homes of other citizens. Thus each beneficiary helps another citizen take part in the project and the number of beneficiaries exponentially increases, creating a mutually beneficial cycle.

Environmental and financial benefits

The project officially started on 27 July 2017 with an agreement between the Municipality of Porto Torres and their partner for this initiative, the GSE (Energy Services Manager). Photovoltaic systems have already been installed in 49 homes, chosen through a selection process that took into account, among other things, household size and income and whether anyone with a disability lives in the house. These citizens have reported a direct economic benefit of a 30% to 65% reduction in their electricity bill. There are also far-reaching environmental benefits to this project, as it reduces the amount of fossil fuels used for energy production, resulting in a cleaner and safer environment.

Website: www.comune.porto-torres.ss.it /Comunicazione/Argomenti/Reddito-energetico

KATORESIDENT

KATOWICE, **POLAND**

Katowice involves its citizens in the development of a green and safe city that has more trees, repairs defects immediately and offers well taken care of public spaces.

MARCIN KRUPA

Mayor of Katowice

Katowice is changing rapidly

KATO – how local residents call Katowice – is a city which has undergone tremendous changes in recent years and its residents are its best ambassadors. Thanks to their contribution, the city was a serious contender for the title of European Capital of Culture in 2016 and afterwards received the title of UNESCO City of Music. After years of big investments in specific local landmarks, the residents have turned their focus towards all districts, including previously neglected ones. The *KATOobywatel* (KATOresident) project springs from the residents' needs for a clean, green and safe city.

Using apps and campaigns to drive change

The project is unique in its use of the most intuitive and attractive tools. For example, thanks to the *NaprawmyTo app* (Lets Fix It app) residents can report defects and the *wCOP drzewo app* (an app about trees) enables them to point to locations where new trees should be planted. Owing to these apps 10,000 defects have been repaired and 600 trees have been planted across the city. Apart from the apps, residents sow meadows and clean up public spaces together. Furthermore, many campaigns have had great success; such as one for drinking tap water (which 60% of Poles do not trust), a street art project to fight vandalism and a green mini park on top of three car park-

ing spaces. Locals now have new tools and means to influence their surroundings, record the results of their cooperation and sometimes even compete to get things done.

A focus on agency results in lasting change

Residents believe the most important aspect of the project is agency – having a direct and tangible influence on shared space. They focus on building a civic society which takes responsibility for its surroundings. Since 2018, participants have been using apps and carrying out actions and campaigns. All the activities highlight social engagement, as the residents involved believe that only close cooperation and mutual trust can result in good, long-term outcomes. The project develops in line with participants' expectations and responds to changing interests and needs, as well as to global challenges such as climate change.

LEUVEN 2030

LEUVEN, BELGIUM

Leuven 2030 is a city-wide non-profit organisation that has created a comprehensive roadmap for a climate-neutral future which engages citizens in an innovative quadruple-helix model of cooperation.

KATRIEN RYCKEN
Director, Leuven 2030

The desire for a climate-neutral leuven

In 2010, the city of Leuven, the Catholic University of Leuven and a number of other key stakeholders expressed the importance of achieving a climate-neutral Leuven. In May 2011, the Mayor of Leuven signed the European Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy – a declaration of intent to make the city climate-neutral. In November 2013, 60 founding members (including residents, companies, institutions and public and semi-public authorities) jointly founded the city-wide non-profit organisation "Leuven 2030".

A roadmap until 2050

To achieve a climate-neutral future by 2050, Leuven 2030 and numerous experts co-authored the Roadmap – a comprehensive and detailed plan of all the "whats, whens and hows" for realising a sustainable future for all. Leuven 2030's Roadmap consists of ten vertical programmes (such as climate adaptation, building retrofits, local energy production) and three cross-cutting programmes (social justice, governance, data and monitoring). The programmes are broken down into 80 project clusters, which are set out on a timeline with clear milestones, co-created with experts and endorsed by key stakeholders, including the city, the university and the Chamber of Commerce.

Leuven's admission into the 'Healthy, Clean Cities' programme, a Deep Demonstration of Radical Climate Action, has shifted its efforts into a higher gear. To put the Roadmap into action, Leuven 2030 enlisted a team of 17 coordinators which reflects Leuven 2030's commitment to activating a distributed form of leadership across the full spectrum of society.

Knowledge, businesses and citizens come together

Leuven 2030 represents all actors in our society. The close cooperation between knowledge institutions, companies, local government and citizens is known as the quadruple helix, a unique model. Leuven was awarded the European Commission's prestigious Green Leaf Award 2018 as a result of the success and effectiveness of this concept. Creating a healthy, resilient and climate-neutral city can only succeed if everyone is involved. Leuven 2030 is therefore an open membership organisation with more than 600 members.

Website: www.leuven2030.be

RELABS –
LABORATORY OF LIVING WASTE

MADRID, SPAIN

A circular system of material usage and re-use changes the urban design and waste management landscape of Madrid, leading to the construction of playgrounds from repurposed materials, as well as to fundamental systemic changes.

MÓNICA GUTIÉRREZ

Member of Basurama Collective

Promoting circular economy and repurposing waste

ReLabs (Laboratory of Living Waste) began as a research project in response to the climate emergency and the Sustainable Development Goals. The aim is to identify materials that have not yet reached the end of their purposeful life and to reuse them using a circular economy approach. ReLabs combines bottom-up proposals with top-down policies to improve waste management, citizen participation and the use of public spaces. This project works with the understanding that realising small, innovative projects leads to fundamental systemic changes. The changes proposed by ReLabs are three-fold: 1. Law: making proposals to adapt designs and distinguish between public spaces and playgrounds. 2. Waste Management: increasing reuse and repair to promote a more circular economy. 3. Participation: actively involving citizens in the process of repurposing waste materials to refurbish schools and public spaces.

Publicly designed playgrounds

First, Madrid's waste management system was reviewed and materials were identified for reuse. A public call was then made to collectively co-design a new purpose for these materials, which resulted in the construction of playgrounds at several municipal schools. In addition, the laws concerning urban design and waste management were reviewed, in order to support citizen participation in urban planning and to guarantee the right to set up playgrounds in public spaces.

Democratic and sustainable urban design

The construction process is a pedagogic tool for environmental awareness and for education in participatory urban planning and spatial design. ReLabs shows that there are more democratic and sustainable ways to design cities. This has an impact on three aspects of sustainable development: 1. Economic: encouraging repair (generating employment) and reuse (reducing expenses). 2. Environmental: combining the reuse of waste materials with an education programme. 3. Social: empowering communities to become more or-

ganised and resilient. The participatory approach of the project strengthens the bonds between communities, it fosters local economies and creates robust local networks. Citizens are supported by artists, architects and designers in the co-designing process, ensuring integrated participation at every stage.

Website: basurama.org/proyecto/relabs

SEACHANGE ON GREEK ISLANDS

ISLAND OF DONOUSSA, **GREECE**

The Greek island of Donoussa is a successful model for other islands where residents and businesses commit to reducing their usage of disposable plastic items to improve the environment and encourage sustainable tourism.

CHRISTOS SIGALAS

President of the Community of Donoussa Island

Single-use plastics pollute the islands

Due to a lack of incentives, businesses across the Cyclades Islands continue to use single-use plastic items, such as plastic straws, cups and bags, contributing to pollution, both on land and in the water. A five-year pioneering experiment on ten Cyclades Islands aims to raise environmental awareness.

Islanders commit to reducing plastics

The project tailors the agenda of actions according to the specific profile of each island, based on the fundamental principles of GESTALT psychotherapy. For example, Donoussa is an island with 150 inhabitants and 3000 summer visitors where single-use plastics were reduced by over 50% from 2019 to 2020. The Athanasios Laskaridis Charitable Foundation collaborated with three very active local associations under the auspices of the municipality. Local residents and almost all of the island's businesses agreed to reduce single-use plastics and signed commitment forms stating their willingness to replace plastic takeaway packages with biodegradable ones and to promote reusable cups and bags. Another innovative element of the project was the organisation of the island's first plastic-free festival.

One island provides a model of success

Donoussa was the first island to attempt to go plastic-free. In 2018, the 16 participating businesses had used 138,000 plastic straws, 42,700 plastic cups and 88,400 plastic bags. In 2019, they had only used 65,200 biodegradable straws, 29,300 biodegradable cups and 12,300 biodegradable bags. The impressive almost 60% drop in single-use plastic usage makes Donoussa a successful model for other islands to follow, which has proven to be an effective and efficient strategy. Donoussa's clear message to be an ecofriendly destination has a positive effect on tourism, too. Besides, the reduction of disposable plastics and the wider usage of reusable items have lowered on-going operational costs.

THE FIRST URBAN NETWORK OF GREEN ELECTRICITY IN POLAND

OSTRÓW WIELKOPOLSKI, **POLAND**

A city creates the first municipal green energy network in Poland, providing cheaper and cleaner energy to businesses and residents, independent of the national network.

BEATA KLIMEK
Mayor of Ostrów Wielkopolski

Non-renewable energy is dirty and expensive

The city of Ostrów Wielkopolski is facing the challenge of producing energy from non-renewable sources and is striving to become independent from the National Power System. The aim is to reduce the price of electricity, power cheaper public transport, create new jobs and improve air quality. Accordingly, securing the local energy supply has become a top priority for the local government.

Biomass fuels a green electricity network

The city of Ostrów Wielkopolski has created its own green electricity network, with the goal of making it the city with the lowest carbon emissions in Poland. The network's electricity is produced from biomass by the Municipal Heat Supply Company in Ostrów. This is the first municipal green energy network in Poland. It is used by both residents and businesses. The first 3.2 km length of the network includes 26 residential buildings. It will ultimately cover several dozen private companies and public institutions as well.

Cheap, clean and secure energy

Owing to the new network, at the beginning of 2020 the first group of Ostrów Wielkopolski's citizens had green electricity supplied to their houses. Beyond the ecological dimension, the city, looking forward, wants to give entrepreneurs and residents a chance to benefit from cheaper urban electricity. To date, the project has created over 20 km of its own municipal electricity networks and the distribution of energy alone is about 20% cheaper. Thus, the project not only benefits the local government and municipal entities but also the residents as individual energy consumers.

Website: www.umostrow.pl

TRANSFORMING A RUBBISH DUMP INTO A SOLAR POWER PLANT

PÉRIGUEUX AND LA CHAPELLE-GONAGUET, FRANCE

A public-private collaboration converted a former landfill site into a solar power plant which supports the region's transition to a more responsible energy system, benefitting the local environment and economy.

STÉPHANIE ANDRIEU
Executive Director

ARNAUD MINE
Chairman of Urbasolar

JOAQUIM FILIPE
Energy and Environment Department Manager

FRANCK MOISSAT
Mayor of la Chapelle-Gonaguet

Reusing abandoned land

After having been closed for more than twenty years, the landfill site in La Chapelle-Gonaguet has been repurposed to serve a significant role in the area. This transformation began in spring 2020. The innovation of the project lies in converting land that is no longer in use into a local energy production site.

Powering homes with solar energy

The Mayors of Périgueux and La Chapelle-Gonaguet have decided to turn the former dump into a solar power-plant, in collaboration with the company Urbasolar. The solar power plant will produce enough electricity to power the homes of the 6,300 inhabitants of the region. Additionally, residents were offered the opportunity to invest in the project, enabling them to actively participate in the local energy transition.

Sustainable energy future

The project is a crucial element of the region's transition to a more responsible energy system and it also has significant economic benefits, as both cities will receive a stable rent from the company for using their real estate. Furthermore, the solar power plant is in line with respecting the environment and the biodiversity of the region, both being a priority for the mayors. The site is a great example of landfill rehabilitation, which preserves forested land and conserves wetland.

Website: www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/dordogne
-l-ancienne-decharge-de-perigueux-rehabilitee-en-centrale
-solaire-photovoltaique-1566822831

WE RETAIN ALL RAINWATER

PODKOWA LEŚNA, POLAND

A complex and comprehensive water management system allows Podkowa Leśna to mitigate the effects of climate change whilst protecting precious water resources.

◄ **ARTHUR TUSIŃSKI**
Mayor of the City of Podkowa Leśna

JOANNA PIETRZAK
Chief specialist

Climate change increases the risk of drought and floods

Climate change and the accompanying weather phenomena, such as long-lasting droughts and short-term heavy rainfall, will have a significant impact on everyone's everyday lives and the environment. In Podkowa Leśna, a programme to mitigate the negative effects of climate change has been rolled out.

Effectively managing water resources

The programme We Retain All Rainwater consists of collecting and managing rainwater and snowmelt on site, for example on the streets and the surrounding areas. Due to the drainage and absorption wells system, the water goes to underground tanks as well as to infiltration boxes. Rainwater is also collected in rain barrels which are installed under the gutters of public buildings. In Podkowa Leśna, many different types of roadside retention technologies have been used which effectively collect rainwater from paved surfaces, especially on pedestrian routes and local roads, where there is no traditional rainwater drainage system. The system's task is to restore drainage ditches and watercourses that have remained dry for most of the year, thus allowing even more rainwater to be stored and subsequently infiltrate deep into the soil to replenish the groundwater.

Replenishing groundwater and improving the cityscape

The purpose of these activities is not only to collect rainwater from the city surface but also to supply groundwater with it. Above all, the programme retains as much precipitation as possible within the town, maintaining the desired level of soil moisture for as long as possible. The general rule is to improve water balance by minimising losses due to water runoff and evaporation, while at the same time recharging water resources. The whole system supports the irrigation of urban trees as well. The solutions used in Podkowa Leśna can be considered as examples of good practice. Four years after their implementation it can be clearly stated that they have proven themselves in the local context: (1) flood areas with long periods of standing water have been eliminated; (2) traffic has been slowed by converting existing local streets into shared-use paths for pedestrians and cyclists; (3) street greenery, such as shrubs, ground cover plants and lawns, has improved the quality of the urban environment and enhanced the aesthetics of the surroundings.

CATEGORY
ECONOMY

Prosperous cities depend on the economic resilience of their citizens and businesses. The Finalists in the category Economy come from Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. They support inclusive urban development and secure our well-being and independence by making better use of what is already there. They find non-bureaucratic ways to help local businesses in times of crisis and empower young people and low-skilled job seekers to reduce unemployment levels.

COVID-19 SUPPORT FOR GDYNIA'S ENTREPRENEURS

GDYNIA, POLAND

A city administration offers all businesses legal, marketing and business-counselling support for free, to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown.

KATARZYNA GRUSZECKA - SPYCHAŁA

Deputy Mayor of Gdynia for Economy

Top-down ban on business activity

The Covid-19 pandemic negatively affected most companies within the various fields of industry found in Gdynia. Many of them were subject to the top-down ban on business activity, which is why the local government of Gdynia responded by providing comprehensive and universal support from different business operations experts. The main value of this project is its universality – expert support is available to all entrepreneurs in Gdynia. The support given is also highly individualised, as it is the entrepreneurs who decide what type of support they need.

Experts consult entrepreneurs

The expert consultations include assistance in obtaining financial support within the government's anti-crisis programme, as well as legal, tax, financial and marketing counselling, supporting difficult strategic decisions regarding the future of businesses. Free consultations provided by experienced and carefully selected business practitioners are necessary, especially for micro-entrepreneurs who do not have specialised legal or marketing departments and do not have the financial resources to support specialists. For many entrepreneurs, the need

to change their company's business model, for example going digital, or finding new customers, is a key decision for their future survival. The project includes six vouchers for 60 minutes of consultations with a selected advisor – three vouchers for legal, financial, tax and business counselling, as well as three vouchers for marketing or strategy advice.

Higher turnover and less unemployment

Gdynia's consulting companies and law firms were primarily hired as experts, so the project also supports the operation of these business specialists through difficult times. Due to their higher turnover, more funds from taxes are returned to Gdynia's budget. The procedures are simple and clear and the advice is quick and effective, while the consultancy activities for Gdynia's businesses directly impact the reduction of unemployment and poverty in the area.

MITTELSTAND-DIGITAL – MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES GO DIGITAL

GERMANY

The government provides small and medium-sized companies with expert guidance and advice on how to take part in the digital transformation, through a cross-sectoral programme of knowledge and technology transfer.

◀ **PETER ALTMAIER**
Minister for Economic Affairs & Energy

MARTIN LUNDBORG
Head of Research Group

CHRISTIAN MÄRKEL
Senior Economist at Research Group

Small businesses struggle to digitalise

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are essential to European industries. They are the guarantors of prosperity, both as employers and innovators. The digital transformation offers great opportunities for SMEs but also the risk of widening the gap between large and small enterprises. Due to a lack of IT specialists and suitable databases, SMEs have structural disadvantages that limit their capacity to participate in the digital transformation.

Transferring knowledge and technology

The aim of the government initiative "Mittelstand-Digital" (Mittelstand refers to medium-sized companies) is to close this gap and promote SMEs as the guarantors of prosperity in the digital age. "Mittelstand-Digital" provides a broad range of nationwide and provider-neutral offers, free of charge for SMEs across all industries. The initiative is cross-sectoral and cross-thematic, supporting knowledge and technology transfer to SMEs. The concept is that of a "one-stop-shop" that provides a contact

point for all SMEs, regardless of their sector and degree of digitalisation, with the centres deliberately distributed throughout the whole country. The centres will help companies assess their own digital efforts, develop a digitalisation roadmap tailored to their individual needs and support them as they select and implement specific actions.

Experts from various fields

More than 1,000 digitalisation experts are now located in 26 "Mittelstand 4.0 Centres of Excellence". From workshops and training sessions to pilot projects and webinars, all of the services offered by the centres are impartial, easy to understand and specifically designed with SMEs in mind. In addition to the classic Industry 4.0 topics such as sensor technology, robotics and 3D printing, topics such as new work-based and platform-based business models are also addressed. Furthermore, the centres support more advanced digitalisation topics, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and blockchain, with more than fifty AI experts located in the centres. In addition, the broad media presence of this programme disseminates information about the challenges SMEs face in terms of digitalisation, which creates greater societal awareness of SMEs and their important role in the economy. In this way, the programme initiates societal debates on how the digital transformation can be a success for everyone in society.

PASSPORT4WORK

EINDHOVEN, **NETHERLANDS**

A gamified approach closes the gap between a low-skilled labour force and the fast-growing technical sector, with the help of a skills passport and a tailored education programme for job seekers.

◄ **YASIN TORUNOGLU**
Alderman of housing and employment

ERIK LUBBERS
Project lead

Imbalances in the labour market

Eindhoven in the south-east of the Netherlands is experiencing the well-known paradox of economic growth: on the one hand, there is growth in the technical sector, which is affected by shortage on the labour market, but at the same time a growing group of low-skilled workers face difficulties in finding employment. In cooperation with the public authorities and various regional stakeholders, Passport4Work aims to close the gap between the low-skilled labour force and the fast-growing technical sector in the Eindhoven region.

A skills passport for job seekers

The innovative Passport4Work allows employers to easily identify the jobseekers' skills and knowledge and assists jobseekers in finding new job opportunities. A very innovative element of Passport4Work is the development of a skills passport, which is continuously expanded, based on 'gamification'; skills are tested and learned in a playful manner. In other words, the project enables job seekers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills through a personal e-learning experience.

Assess and improve skills for sustainable employment

Ultimately, the goals of the project are to (1) develop an inter-sectoral skills passport with a gamified assessment; (2) design a restructured education programme for skills improvement; (3) improve the efficiency of finding a job and increase sustainable employment.

The workplace has increasingly become a place where people establish contacts and experience a sense of community and belonging. Therefore, new strategies for including disadvantaged groups in the fast-growing labour market in the region are crucial, if a society aims to provide fair opportunities for all citizens.

PERDOPO – REACTIVATION OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

LATRONICO, **ITALY**

Citizens invest in their favourite services and restaurants with advance payments that are doubled by the municipality, reactivating the local economy in a time of crisis.

VINCENZO CASTELLANO

Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Latronico

Supporting the local economy

The aim of the project "PerDopo – riattivazione economia locale" (ForLater – reactivation of the local economy) was to support business activities, citizenship and the local economy during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Advance payments doubled by the municipality

The project was simple: every citizen could make an Advance Payment of EUR 10, 20, or 50 to the participating businesses. In return they would receive the goods or services they had purchased when the businesses reopened. In addition, every Advance Payment was matched by a voucher of equal value from the municipality, which could be used at the participating business. The objective was to inject funds into local commerce at a time of strong economic stagnation. The scheme also supports those who have experienced economic difficulties due to COVID-restrictions.
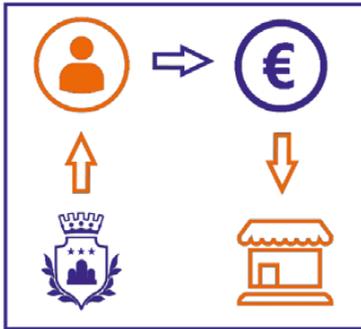
PerDopo

riattivazione dell'economia locale

Reactivating businesses in a time of stagnation

The result was powerful: businesses received advance funds, which covered their fixed expenses during the period of closure, while citizens doubled their purchasing power. In less than twenty days more than 105 PerDopo Vouchers were issued, with a total value of over EUR 8,000, involving a total of 400 participants. This helped reactivate local business activities and stimulate the citizens' economic activities. The project has had a strong impact on the local economy, activating a mutually beneficial economic cycle. In fact, since the project was carried out, local businesses have actually acquired additional customers. These customers had previously used businesses located in other municipalities, but through the scheme discovered new products and services in their own locality. It can also be considered a sustainability improvement, as it led to more zero-mileage purchases and neighbourhood commercial activity.

REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL ECONOMY

BANSKÁ BYSTRICA, **SLOVAKIA**

A regional employment agency sets up two integrative social enterprises to support and address the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalised people with employment difficulties, providing skills development and work experience.

JÁN LUNTER
President of the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region

Unpromising labour market

The region of Banská Bystrica has one of the highest unemployment rates in Slovakia and an unpromising labour market. In 2019, the region started implementing a novel and complex strategy to reduce unemployment and develop the social economy.

Structural support for employers and clients

A regional employment agency was set up in cooperation with the NGO "People in Need". It focuses on long-term unemployed and disadvantaged Roma people, who have either lost their access to work or never had any. The agency actively looks for suitable clients and reaches out to possible employers, while its social enterprises provide training and work experience. Unemployed clients receive training and are educated in financial literacy, work habits and social and digital skills. Debt and other financial problems are also addressed. Counsellors help clients with their CVs and applications, prepare them for job interviews and support them in their new jobs after successful employment. The agency also looks after non-Roma people living in districts where getting a stable job is a challenge. Furthermore, two integrative social enterprises were founded to train and

employ people: a construction company, where the unemployed hone or refresh their working skills and an agricultural company, based on an ecological model that connects beekeeping, fruit and vegetable production with orchards.

Exporting the model

The employment agency, founded in December 2019, already has a database of 650 prospective clients. It has managed to facilitate over eighty job interviews so far and has successfully placed forty job applicants. Thanks to the construction company, the region can reconstruct its real estate and improve its school and social service facilities. During its first year, assignments worth EUR 700,000 were completed by the company, which expects to complete contracts worth EUR 1 million in 2020. The agricultural company on the other hand has saved a large orchard with original varieties of pears and apples. Due to its success, this model has now been extended to other regions. The project actively assists other municipalities and NGOs, providing them with advice on founding and running social enterprises – all of which makes it a unique service in Slovakia.

TAKE-AWAY LUNCHES HELP SCHOOL KIDS AND RESTAURANTS COPE WITH CORONA

BORÅS, SWEDEN

A ground breaking public-private partnership scheme supports local restaurants through the Corona crisis, while providing home-schooled pupils with alternative school canteen lunches.

ULF OLSSON
Mayor, Chair of the
Municipal Board

ANNA SVALANDER
Member of the
Municipal Board

A replacement for lunch at school

In Sweden, kids are served lunch at school. In March 2020, the upper secondary schools were closed and the Municipality of Borås quickly decided to organise an alternative: takeaway lunches from local restaurants!

Supporting local restaurants

A technical solution was developed by a local company, Optidev. Each pupil received a personal QR code via email which they could then scan at affiliated restaurants to pick up their lunch worth SEK 75. The project represents a ground-breaking local cooperation between a digital solutions firm, restaurants and municipal schools. The project supported hard-hit local restaurants through the corona crisis.

School kids engage with the new service

Between 30 March and the end of the school semester on 12 June 2020, school kids in Borås picked up over 120,000 lunches; 3,711 pupils chose to use the service and on average of 2,750 lunches were served every day. In total, 132 local restaurants took part. Participation in the project was only possible for a limited time, but the municipality had to act fast to secure lunches and to help local restaurants. It was particularly of value to socially disadvantaged pupils who would otherwise have missed out on a free school meal and successfully helped sustain the restaurant business in the City of Borås during the crisis.

THE POPULATION OF SLOVAKIA'S CAPITAL GREW BY 120,000 ... BEES!

BRATISLAVA, **SLOVAKIA**

Bratislava's Mayor increases biodiversity by bringing bee colonies to the city to produce honey on top of municipal buildings.

MATÚŠ VALLO
Mayor of Bratislava

The mayor is a beekeeper

How often do you see the Mayor of a capital city with a bee-keeping hat on? And on the roof of the municipal building? In Bratislava, this is now a normal sight. Due to their mosaic structure and all the different flowers that are grown not only in parks but also on balconies, cities have significant potential when it comes to biodiversity. Unlike in the agricultural country-side, urban areas are better suited to bees due to the fact that there are significantly fewer pesticides on flowers than there are on crops. Although more and more bees are appearing in cities, it is now up to the initiatives of civic associations or individuals to keep this trend going.

120,000 new hardworking inhabitants

The state capital became an inspiration for both private com-panies and public institutions when it decided to place two beehives on the roof of the municipal building. Matúš Vallo, the Mayor of Bratislava, regularly checks on the bees and was hap-py to announce the arrival of 120,000 new and very hardworking inhabitants of the city. The City of Bratislava cooperated with the initiative *Uletená včela* (Flying Bee), a project initiated by three beekeepers who are trying to repopulate cities with bees

and popularise beekeeping itself. They take care of the city's bees and their main goal is to inspire as many Slovak villages, cities and companies as possible to keep bees themselves and set a good example for their fellow citizens.

The results are delicious

And how does the honey taste? It is as exquisite as the city itself: it tastes like the flowers in the window of your favourite shop; it tastes like a morning walk in your nearest park; like an afternoon picnic with friends. The city can be as good a home for bees as it is for its human inhabitants. And even more so since bees do not have to worry about traffic jams and living costs, do they? The project did not require any funding from the city, as the hives were installed by the NGO *Uletená včela*. Half of the honey goes to the town, which gives it away at various events and occasions. Part of the remaining honey is kept by the NGO and the rest stays in hives to allow the bees to survive winter, without any additional feeding with sugar. The presence of bees in the city contributes to the improvement of urban greenery and naturally raises the quality of life in the city.

USE-IT! UNLOCKING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INNOVATION TOGETHER!

BIRMINGHAM, UNITED KINGDOM

This project has created a unique model of economic development that is inclusive and results in lasting urban regeneration, by raising aspirations, building community resilience and connecting people to local resources.

BRIGID JONES
Councillor / Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council

KAROLINA MEDWECKA-PIASECKA
European Affairs Manager

JOHN COTTON
Councillor / Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities, Birmingham City Council

KAREN MCCARTHY
Councillor / Chair of Planning Committee, Birmingham City Council

SHARON THOMPSON
Councillor / Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, Birmingham City Council

New approaches to persistent deprivation

The "Unlocking Social and Economic Innovation Together!" (USE-IT!) project began with the aim of pioneering innovative approaches to inclusive urban development in Birmingham, to combat poverty in areas of persistent deprivation. Recognising that orthodox urban economic development approaches often exacerbate inequality and have little impact on enduring patterns of deprivation, the USE-IT! partnership set out to test an alternative approach in a neighbourhood in West Birmingham.

A unique regeneration model

After three years, the inclusive growth project has successfully trained over eighty people from the local communities to become Community Researchers, connected medically qualified migrants to well-paid medical jobs, supported over 120 community-led businesses and social enterprises, promoted social mobility by raising people's aspirations, as well as encouraged community leadership and grassroots innovation. In fact, much more than this has been achieved – a unique model has been created with a new way of thinking about inclusion, that has revolutionised the approach to regeneration – resulting in a regeneration that works! There has been a focus on building resilience in communities and linking people with their local resources and assets, such as opportunities linked to large development projects, under-utilised buildings and green spaces.
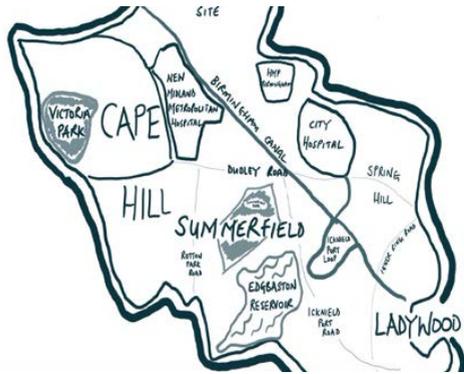
Identifying and using local assets

At the heart of this approach resides the principle that the physical, financial and human assets of a place can be leveraged for local economic benefit. USE-IT! has delivered lasting change through anchoring institutions and identifying and developing relationships amongst local assets. The project has unlocked a number of opportunities for people that were previously not accessible to them. For example, the project led to the transformation of an under-utilised church space into a vibrant co-working space. Most importantly, the project raised people's aspirations and showed them that they can actively shape their futures. This project represents a new way of working and thinking about regeneration. In three years, it has engaged with over 3,000 people, who have contributed to the project's successes.

WORKATION IN KLAIPĖDA

KLAIPĖDA, **LITHUANIA**

A collaboration between the public and private sector invites young professionals to attend a "Workation" in Klaipėda, to encourage them to stay for good in a modern urban environment with a high quality of life.

VYTAUTAS GRUBLIAUSKAS
Mayor of Klaipeda

EGLE SONGAILIENE
Interim Director

The talent pool

For the second time, the Workation Klaipėda campaign unites the private and public sectors for one purpose – to increase the talent pool in Klaipėda. This is an interactive marketing campaign to strengthen the image of the city and help spread the word about the quality of life there. The EUR 4,000 invested in 2019 led to the project attracting more than 200 participants, whilst gaining high visibility on social media and receiving attention on national news outlets.

Work-life balance

Three co-working spaces and the city's promotion agency Klaipėda ID invite young, talented people from other cities to swap their usual environment for the Workation Klaipėda experience – a seamless combination of work and leisure activities. The goal is to showcase Klaipėda and all its potential, to entice those who come to stay for a lifetime of adventure. In the summer of 2020, one of the co-working spaces invited participants to share their know-how with local NGOs. This allows the benefits of the newly gained insights to stay within the city, even if the participants leave. The project promotes quality of life in the city, demonstrating that it is possible to achieve work-life balance here.

Test-driving a city

While the usual way to attract talent is through new job creation, this project invites young professionals to "test-drive" the city. The project requires little investment and fosters the image of the city as an attractive place to live. Young professionals are encouraged to consider Klaipėda by showing them there is a city in Lithuania where they can have enough time for their family, friends and the activities they enjoy most, as well as enjoying a high quality of life. The programme is a part of a long-term strategy of job relocation and talent pool growth, that will attract new investments in the city.

WORKS+ EMPLOYABILITY SERVICE
SCOTTISH BORDERS, UNITED KINGDOM

Young people gain access to work due to a person-centred approach that teaches key skills and builds confidence, tackling a complex range of social issues and economic barriers.

MARK ROWLEY
Elected Councillor,
Scottish Borders Council

MARK TIMMINS
Programme delivery
manager

Social disadvantage in rural areas leads to unemployment

Rural poverty, poor transport infrastructure, social isolation, low educational attainment, poor mental health and the socioeconomic effects of disadvantage are key issues young people face in the Borders area. Works+ assists young people in overcoming these barriers, building up their confidence and achieving their full potential.

Supporting young people into employment

Works+ is a successful and award-winning employability charity based in the rural Scottish Borders. This project works with disadvantaged, disenfranchised and socially isolated unemployed young people between the ages of 16 and 24, to help them achieve a positive prospect of employment, a return to education, or long-term training. Works+ receives support from all sectors of society within the Scottish Borders. Local councillors from across the political spectrum keep in touch with the project, whilst members of the Scottish Parliament regularly praise its work, supporting funding applications to major funders. The business community also helps Works+ through corporate fundraising, financial support and job placements.

Building confidence with a person-centred approach

The Works+ person-centred approach builds confidence, removes barriers and connects young people with support organisations. This service also teaches employability skills and techniques, which lead to positive and sustained work opportunities appropriate to the young person's ambition and abilities. Delivering one-to-one support, time, compassion and empathy are the key skills of the staff, who in the last 12 months have managed to deliver a 98.5% success rate in achieving positive destinations for the young people attending Works+. In-depth knowledge of both the barriers and opportunities that young people experience is key to supporting the disenfranchised and isolated local youth. It helps them to reengage with society, providing long-term benefits for young people and their communities.
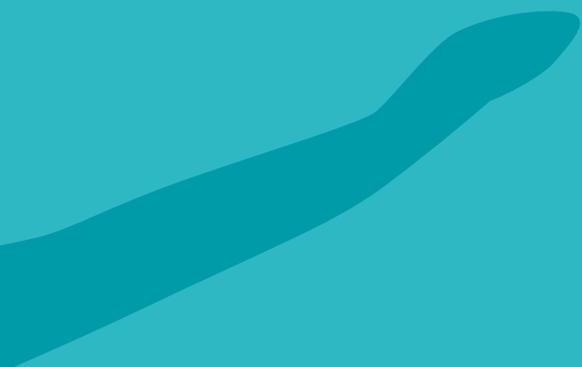
CATEGORY
EDUCATION

The Finalists from Poland, Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Ireland and Lithuania address significant challenges and explore new solutions in the field of formal and informal education. They find innovative ways to redefine learning, knowledge sharing and opportunities to develop new skills. Among them are gardening projects, volunteering services, improving schools with cloud technologies and open democracy, as well as a Vision Symphony.

WINNER MUNICIPAL FARM FOR MOUANS SARTOUX'S SCHOOL CANTEENS

MOUANS SARTOUX, FRANCE

The initiative supplies school children with organic food and educates them about organic farming, changing the lifestyle of many families in the region.

GILLES PÉROLE
Deputy Mayor for childhood and food

Organic food production for and with school children

The Municipality of Mouans Sartoux produces organic vegetables for its school canteens with a bilateral approach: On the one hand, high quality of food in school canteens is necessary to strengthen children's health and level of concentration and on the other, the project aims to raise the children's awareness of where our food comes from and how it is produced. Since 2012, children in Mouans Sartoux have been eating lunches made with 100% organic foods coming mostly from a farm owned by the municipality.

Children learn about farming

The children also participate in activities promoting healthy food, local agriculture and respect for the environment. These activities are organised by educational staff on a pedagogical plot next to the farm and are included in the school curriculum. With its food lab, classroom and educational kitchen, the project receives students and interns, as well as hosts conferences and seminars. It is evolving as an innovative structure, at the crossroads of public projects and private initiatives. All parties work together to develop solutions for more organic production and local consumption.

Eating habits change

Thanks to the different actions and the feedback from kids eating at the canteens, nine out of ten families say they have modified their food habits. The influence of the actions taken at a municipal level means families are eating more organic, local and seasonal products, cooking more at home. Producing organic and local food supports the fight against climate change, while also supporting civic health. The municipal farm is a low-cost initiative, which resulted in a transformation of the city and its inhabitant's approach to food. Supplying children with 100% organic and local meals, without any extra cost, progressively transforms the culture of eating and food production.

Website: mead-mouans-sartoux.fr/en

ANTI-BULLYING APP – "BULLY BOX"
LITHUANIA

"Bully Box" is an app which allows young people, parents and teachers to safely and anonymously report acts of bullying in schools.

KAMILA GASINSKA
Project Manager

LAURA VARSLAUSKAITE
Project Manager

ARUNAS PLIKSNYS
Vice-minister of Education, Science and Sport

LIGITA CELEDINIENE
Senior Manager

Bullying is a big challenge

One of the most pressing issues in modern society is bullying in schools. Bullying has been proven to cause significant harm to developing young minds. It is one of the main social challenges in Lithuania, with about 30% of children becoming victims once or several times per week. Recording bullying incidents accurately and efficiently is still a difficult task. Most bullied children do not report these incidents. Students are often afraid to be labelled as a 'snitch' or do not want their parents to know about their problems at school.

Report bullying safely and anonymously

"Bully Box" (Patyčių dėžutė) is an anti-bullying app, designed to allow students, their parents and teachers to safely and anonymously report acts of bullying. The development of the project involved extensive consultations with more than fifteen stakeholder groups, including public and private sector organisations, non-governmental organisations, teachers, pupils and

local authorities. This innovation requires everyday commitment from the school community, including documenting incidents, organising help, informing school leaders and, when necessary, parents. It requires the whole school to trust each other, bringing people together. To date, around two hundred Lithuanian schools have joined the initiative. The platform consists of an easy-to-use website and a mobile app, as well as a management system which can be downloaded and installed free of charge by all schools.

It allows reports to be made about students or any member of the school community who suffers from bullying or is a bully themselves. It is also possible to attach a screenshot of potential cyberbullying to the report.
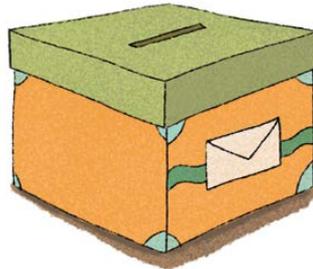
PRANEŠK APIE PATYČIAS

Improving children's mental health

The innovation underpinning "Bully Box" is that it provides a digital solution that results in a cultural change in Lithuanian schools. "Bully Box" provides an opportunity to effectively ask for help and to stop bullying at an early stage. It reduces the likelihood of requiring significant psychological support or community-wide interventions in the future, thereby reducing the long-term cost of mental health support. The platform creates sustainable improvement, not only in school communities, but also in the children's perception of their own safety in school.

Website: www.patyciudezute.lt

DIGITALISATION OF MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS IN PLOVDIV

PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

Cloud technologies make the digitalisation of every aspect of the education process possible, allowing students to learn online anywhere and at anytime, preparing students for a future digital world and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the education process as a whole.

STEFAN STOYANOV

Deputy Mayor "Education and Business Development" in the Municipality of Plovdiv

Digital world – digital schools

In an increasingly digital world, it is important to equip school children with the skills they will need for a successful future. This project aims to fully digitalise the learning process in municipal schools in Plovdiv. It will not only provide a better learning experience for students but will also make the whole education process more efficient and effective.

Cloud technologies improve education

Plovdiv Municipality assisted schools in the implementation of advanced cloud technologies in order to increase the quality of the educational processes. The platforms allow unlimited user profiles for head teachers, teachers, students, parents and administrative staff. All necessary documents and programmes are collected in one place, accessible anywhere, anytime. Using their personal accounts, students get full access to the school's database, e-lessons, textbooks, homework, group assignments, ready-made tests, etc. This allows them to have a complete learning experience and eliminates the need for printed learning materials. As of 2019, the programme covers all 52 municipal

schools and currently over 35,000 active student profiles let pupils learn in virtual classrooms with video links and chats, take ready-made tests, do homework and perform group assignments online. Over 900 teachers and school administrators from Plovdiv have received training as part of the programme, funded by the municipal budget. Of these, nearly 170 have become Google-certified educators. The digitalisation provides effective tools for creating an open, flexible, high-quality learning environment suitable for 21st century students and educators of all backgrounds, supplying less fortunate pupils with top-quality devices free of charge.

Students and teachers become digitally competent

This project has led to a revolutionary transformation in schools, with highly accessible learning, more effective acquisition of knowledge and teaching methods which excite and motivate children. Learning through cloud platforms develops the students' digital skills and experience of working with computers, including using online resources and programmes. Their soft skills are also enhanced, in terms of teamwork and presentation skills, self-organisation, time management and online social interactions. This results in much more knowledgeable and capable adolescents, as well as open-minded teachers and parents. This project affects the whole local ecosystem and produces promising future employees and employers with a sought-after skill set. The project has proved to be particularly beneficial during the COVID-19 lockdown, allowing for a smooth transition between classroom learning and home schooling.

Website: cloud.plovdiv.bg

INNOVATIVE SCHOOL WUTÖSCHINGEN

WUTÖSCHINGEN, GERMANY

An evidence-based approach leads this school to stop using fixed classrooms and hours for its pupils while providing the latest technology and adapting to individual needs.

GEORG EBLE

Mayor, Municipality of Wutöschingen

An innovative secondary school

In 2012, the Municipality of Wutöschingen built one of the most innovative schools in Europe. This small municipality with 6,900 inhabitants, located in southwestern Germany, breaks new ground by managing a secondary-level school (grades 5 to 13) that continuously adapts to the latest research on how children learn.

Flexible and individualised learning

Based on the latest education research, the school offers highly individualised learning content and gives students the freedom to arrange their own schedule. The concept is centred around contemplation, input and consolidation, allowing every child to learn at their own pace. There are no more physical class-rooms, instead students have their personalised spaces and can choose different locations for different learning activities in one of the three school buildings. Older students can access the various school buildings 365 days of the year and the municipal-ity even opens up the City Hall and other public buildings for stu-dents whenever they are not in use. In this way, pupils become more connected to their community, increasing the sense of

social cohesion. The municipality equipped all students and teachers with tablets and a digital learning platform, allowing communication and learning at any time and according to the child's needs. This meant the students, parents and teachers were well prepared for homeschooling during the coronavirus lockdown of 2020.

Inspiring future generations

The open and welcoming design of the school creates a positive environment that proves that learning is fun. Currently, new buildings are under construction to provide further opportunities for studies. By making these extra investments, the Municipality of Wutöschingen creates an enormous value for the entire community, which will benefit the region over the next generations. At the same time, Wutöschingen sets an example to the world that even a small municipality can be at the forefront of innovation, inspiring others to follow their lead.

Website: www.alemannenschule-wutoeschingen.de

LITHUANIAN YOUTH VOLUNTARY SERVICE

LITHUANIA

Encouraging and rewarding the voluntary services of young people through the implementation of an official programme with mentors.

EITVYDAS BINGELIS
Vice-minister of Social Security and Labour

SANDRA GAUČIŪTĖ
Chief Specialist of the Program

LINAS KUKURAITIS
Minister of Social Security and Labour

JONAS LANIAUSKAS
Director of Youth Affairs Department under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

ALGIRDAS MONKEVIČIUS
Minister of Education, Science and Sport

National volunteer programme

The Youth Voluntary Service is a unique and long-term national programme created and financed by the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour. It is the first and the only national voluntary programme specifically targeting youth competences and their recognition.

Active youth are targeted

The Youth Voluntary Service requires each volunteer to serve no less than six months, collect at least 35 hours a month and accumulate 240 hours in total. Contrary to most other similar voluntary programmes in Europe, the participants of Youth Voluntary Services are not necessarily inactive youth. Most of the programme participants are students. The unique element of this programme is that volunteers are supported by their mentors and coordinators. They help them not only to serve in the programme and overcome the challenges of long-term volunteering, but most importantly to reflect on the experiences and competences obtained in the process.

Benefits of volunteering

All volunteers, who fully carry out the Youth Voluntary Service, receive documents confirming the competences they obtained. Since 2019, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport also allocates additional priority points to the volunteers when applying to all Lithuanian state-funded higher education programmes in universities, colleges and academies. The success of the programme has led to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour confirming long-term funding for the programme until 2023. The state investment will support training and consultation for the mentors and coordinators, as well as further update the accreditation system. Consequently, the programme will continue to support civil society by developing the practice of long-term volunteering and participation in community activities.

Website: jrd.lt/savanoryste/jst

PLOVDIV ORGANIC GARDEN

PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

Being surrounded by plants reconnects young people to the earth and their fellow humans; learning about farming gives them new knowledge whilst enhancing their personal development.

DIMITRIYA TODOROVA
Manager of Youth Centre Plovdiv

GEORGI TITYUKOV
Deputy Mayor of Youth and Sports in Plovdiv

Plants are generally not included in education

Many young people move through their school years without experiencing nature as part of the curriculum. Nonetheless, according to modern teaching methods, an organic garden can be an innovative and attractive place to unleash the potential of the adolescent person. Children build an important connection with nature and develop compassion, tolerance, patience and responsibility.

A natural learning environment

The Youth Centre in Plovdiv, with the support of partners, has built an organic garden as an Educational Centre. The aim of this was to create a natural learning environment for children. Through the garden, the children can harmoniously interact with nature and are able to learn values and gain knowledge about nature through actual practical work. The children learn to plant and grow plants themselves, fabricate materials and tools, as well as – in the specially built pavilion – take part in various discussions and training programmes. Some of the main topics of the educational activities are the connection between human and nature, the protection of the environment, caring for and understanding the land, along with providing knowledge about biodiversity and ecosystems.

Cultivating plants and values

This knowledge helps to develop the physical, intellectual and emotional intelligence of children and young people. The innovative way of teaching in the garden strengthens the relationship between children and their natural environment. This creates a new local community of children, educators, parents, supporters and friends. Through outdoor learning in the "natural" classroom, lasting values are cultivated in adolescents and models for a harmonious way of life are set.

PRESIDENT-SCHOOL-NGO PARTNER-SHIP FOR OPEN DEMOCRACY

OSTROŁĘKA, **POLAND**

A series of events and activities are co-designed by participants from the administrative, educational and non-governmental sectors to educate the new generation about the conditions necessary for the development of open democracy.

ŁUKASZ KULIK

Mayor, Municipality of Ostrołęka

ALEKSANDRA NOWAK

President of the Association

ROBERT TYSZKA

School Director

Open democracy and self-governance

The President-School-NGO Partnership for Open Democracy is a series of activities that began in September 2018. The project is based on the concepts of solidarity, democracy in practice, tolerance, equality and cooperation to educate people about the necessary conditions required for the development of democracy. Recognising that the essence of self-governance is the community, the project has initiated inter-sectoral cooperation between offices, schools, NGOs and individuals so that the project benefits the common good.

Activities and events cover a range of topics

Participants have the opportunity to participate in the culture of open democracy with the use of many tools, including dialogues, debates, deliberations, cognitive workshops and educational trips. Open Democracy covers the topics of Polish-European integration, war and peace, the meaning of values, multiculturalism, the youth version of the European declaration,

the importance of civic activity, a story about the celebration of freedom and solidarity, the climate crisis, biodiversity and many others. The Open Democracy project in Ostrołęka consists of 17 activities and events. Before implementing them, tasks are co-developed with young people so that they can, for example, actively moderate debates. Anyone can join the activities at any time. Besides civic deliberations and workshops, research and a diagnosis of the status quo are carried out as well. Meetings with culturally significant figures, along with the organisation of educational trips.

Activating a new generation of citizens

This cooperation aims to implement innovative practices and activate the new generation of Ostrołęka residents as Poles and as Europeans, based on mutual respect and comprehensive education. The cooperation of institutions and citizens from three social sectors (administrative, educational and non-governmental) combines the dreams and uncompromising nature of young people, with the formality of officials and the experience of civic activists. As a result, they can discover new opportunities to innovatively strengthen the civic urban community.

RESPECT – STRONGER TOGETHER

VIENNA, **AUSTRIA**

The prevention programme addresses everyday problems at school by giving children a voice and involving social workers, teachers and parents.

JÜRGEN CZERNOHORSZKY

Executive City Councillor for Education, Integration, Youth and Personell

The school as a political playground

"Respect – Stronger Together" is a new prevention programme in which the City of Vienna specifically addresses the various challenges of everyday school life. In the political discourse about Viennese Middle Schools, pupils, teachers and parents are regularly played out against each other. Nobody can benefit from that, least of all those who are supposed to learn or work at school.

Creating helpful mechanisms

The City of Vienna wants people in schools to be able to live together respectfully. This requires an honest and constructive examination of the specific challenges city schools face, without pointing fingers or focusing on blame. Teachers, pupils and headteachers are to be empowered to combat devaluations based on gender, origin, sexual orientation, religion, or belief, in order to quickly resolve tensions and conflicts in the classroom together. Discrimination experienced by children and adolescents should be taken seriously and bullying, lack of respect in the classroom, or online hate must be dealt with professionally. Teachers need to be valued for their important work and parents should be able to get actively involved in school, regardless of their background. Ten pilot schools engage in a two-stage process that gets everyone involved. Based on the needs of directors, students and teachers, measures are tailored and

developed according to the specific situation of each school, which are then implemented over the course of a year.

Launching a pilot project

The pilot phase of the programme is being implemented by the Vienna Youth Centres Association. The largest provider of Viennese youth work coordinates social workers, non-school educators, parent counsellors, artists and trainers. They focus on the defined key topics: strengthening girls and boys, democracy and participation, empathy and resilience, classroom diversity and social media. Their approach involves students, teachers and parents, on an equal footing. Viennese Middle Schools open up to the attitudes of Viennese youth work and develop new approaches for dealing with apparently unsolvable problems. Workshops and further training create space for reflection and pupils can deal with topics that are neglected in everyday school life. This way, the City of Vienna creates effective school development that is not hierarchical but has been created sustainably with the participation of all target groups.

Website: respekt.wien.gv.at/site

SELF-GOVERNED NURSERY IN RZEKUŃ

RZEKUŃ, POLAND

An environmentally sustainable and modern nursery provides state-of-the-art facilities for young children, as well as more flexibility for parents.

BARTOSZ PODOLAK
Mayor of the Commune of Execution

A social media survey identifies local needs

Childcare responsibilities have previously hindered residents from taking part in economic activities in Rzekuń. For the first time in Poland, a social media survey of residents helped point out the need for building a self-governed local nursery, developed according to the specific local conditions. The facility is a response to the needs of parents, who can now return to the labour market and also focus on their professional development. Currently, there are 47 places for children in the nursery, with the possibility of extending this to 75 places.

A new environmentally-sustainable building

The nursery in Rzekuń is currently the most modern facility in Ostrołęka County. It was built with passive house technology and natural materials and is equipped with air pumps, photovoltaics and well-insulated walls, which make the building very environmentally friendly. The facilities consist of several rooms for children, a fully equipped kitchen, a breastfeeding room, as well as a specially designated area for sunbathing. The playground outside the nursery was built without artificial surfaces, in a way that allows children to avoid sensory disturbances and overstimulation.

Supporting parents to return to their workplace

The nursery helps provide much-needed childcare services for small children (up to three years of age) in the community of Rzekuń. It furthermore facilitates increased professional activities among parents of small children in the community. Having access to early childhood education also significantly increases human capital and leads to a higher rate of economic growth in the future.

THE VISION SYMPHONY

CLARE COUNTY, **IRELAND**

Visually impaired musicians participate in research which helps them improve memorisation techniques, thereby preparing the musicians to perform a newly composed Irish symphony with an orchestra.

◄ MARY HOWARD
Councillor

SIOBHAN MULCAHY
County Arts Officer

Visually impaired musicians face specific challenges

The Vision Symphony is an initiative of the Arts Office of Clare County Council, creating musical performance opportunities for visually impaired musicians, both nationally and internationally. The musicians face specific challenges, particularly when it comes to memorising long passages of music. This initiative supports and promotes their musical endeavours.

Research improves support

An initial research and development phase created and tested potential support for visually impaired musicians in learning orchestral material by using multimedia platforms (audio and video files). The Arts Office partnered with Dave Flynn's Irish Memory Orchestra (IMO) and 3L music in supporting seven musicians with various levels of visual impairments to participate in the research using the IMO's memorisation techniques. Project funding was then secured from the Arts Council that enabled the research findings to be put into practice. Clare Arts Office commissioned Dave Flynn to compose The Vision Symphony which was performed by the IMO, joined by visually impaired musicians (including international musicians) and the Visionaries Choir, in glór, Ennis, in October 2019.

The Vision Symphony creates new opportunities

Clare Arts Office leads in the fields of arts and disability, as well as commissioning musical works. The Vision Symphony creates quality new music that includes the participation of visually impaired musicians in its composition and performance. It offers employment opportunities to visually impaired musicians who may not be able to professionally participate in an orchestra. The technology developed enables visually impaired musicians from around the world to learn music from a newly composed Irish symphony. It also gives them the opportunity to perform with the Irish Memory Orchestra (IMO), as in the case of Wu Jing from China who performed at the premiere. In addition, a short documentary on the project was created by filmmaker Myles O'Reilly. The project received local, national and international acclaim, winning two awards at the 2020 All Ireland Community and Council Awards. The legacy continues with additional funding secured to develop elements of the symphony for younger visually impaired musicians to learn and perform with the orchestra in 2021.

Website: www.vimusic.ie

CATEGORY
HUMAN RIGHTS

Promoting social inclusion and striving to provide a life of dignity for everyone is what characterises the Finalists in this category. The projects from Bulgaria, France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK focus on supporting and integrating vulnerable groups, including survivors of domestic violence, the homeless, as well as marginalised and minority communities. They also fight hate speech and help young people with non-formal education activities.

WINNER PROXYADDRESS

UNITED KINGDOM

People without a fixed address can use a proxy address through a period of instability to receive assistance and access to needed services, in order to get their lives back on track.

◄ **CHRIS HILDREY**
Architect and director at Hildrey Studio

TOM COPLEY
Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development

No address – no support

An address is no longer just a location – it is now, in fact, a means of identification. It means that if a person becomes homeless, they are immediately cut off from the essential services they need to recover. The ability to apply for jobs, receive benefits, open a bank account, receive post: all are out of reach just when they are most needed. Those who might have otherwise got back on their feet with a little early support become entrenched in the situation, developing more complex and care-intensive needs over time.

Long-term empty houses as proxy addresses

ProxyAddress provides a stable address through periods of instability. Using the existing data of over 270,000 long-term empty homes in the UK as well as those donated by partner organisations, it creates and provides consistent 'proxy' address details. These addresses help beneficiaries access vital support services regardless of their location, or how many times they have moved. The council provides each ProxyAddress, which are free for those who use the service. The service users have varied backgrounds – rough sleeping, sofa surfing, or in temporary accommodation – and represent a portion of the estimated 320,000 people facing homelessness in the UK today. Unfortunately, data suggests that these numbers will only rise due to the effects of Covid-19. With a

broad array of needs to be met, a range of partners is also necessary. These include people and organisations who had previously never worked together, including policymakers, front-line charity workers and organisations such as Crisis, The Big Issue, Monzo, Barclays, Monese, Ordnance Survey, Mastercard and InnovateUK.

A ProxyAddress allows people to access services

Using this system, individuals can apply for jobs, receive benefits, open a bank account, receive post, register with a doctor and get NHS aftercare – all services that would otherwise be lost when needed most. It is much more sustainable to prevent someone from falling than to pull them back up. By reconnecting people with critical support services at an early stage, ProxyAddress gives them the best chance of a full, long-term recovery. The system is cost-effective too: each case of homelessness in the UK costs between GBP 24,000 to 30,000 per person; up to an estimated GBP 1 billion annually, in total. By using existing information and a comprehensive partner network, ProxyAddress can prevent individuals from becoming entrenched in homelessness – for less than 1% of the average cost of a case of homelessness.

CITAD'ELLES

NANTES, FRANCE

A well-equipped shelter with a multidisciplinary team not only offers refuge to women and children fleeing domestic violence but also assists them in administrative and legal procedures, offering further activities to help them regain their self-confidence.

JOHANNA ROLLAND
Mayor of Nantes

AURÉLIE VERNIN
Chief of Staff

Secure emergency shelter

In 2019, 150 women died at the hands of their current or former partners in Nantes. Citad'elles is a post-traumatic treatment centre for women and children who have experienced domestic violence. This confidential and secure emergency shelter opened in 2019 and is a free service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Multidisciplinary team on site

Citad'elles helps women rebuild their lives through psychological care. Police presence facilitates legal action for women who wish to press charges against their abusers. An information point and care facilities for children, who have become co-victims of the violence suffered by their mothers, are also on site. A multidisciplinary team of nurses, lawyers, social workers, psychiatrists and midwives works at Citad'elles. The secure location has communal areas and is the first institution of its kind in France. Women here can start administrative and legal procedures while receiving shelter, as well as moral and psychological support.

Citad'elles

Le lieu pour les femmes victimes de violences

Accueil, écoute, soutien, information des femmes et de leurs enfants

(Découvrir Citad'elles)

Rebuilding lives

Open 24-7 free of charge, Nantes' Citad'elles offers emergency aid at the first signs of domestic abuse, to stop the cycle of violence and to keep women and children safe. The team supports women when it comes to health, law, social and psychological issues, offering activities such as discussion groups and art therapy to help them regain their self-confidence. The women receive comprehensive support, all of which facilitates their recovery in the long term.

FROM SHACK TO HOUSE

RANKOVCE, SLOVAKIA

A housing project helps to integrate marginalised Roma communities in a village, in a joint effort by families, the bank and an NGO.

◄ ÁBEL RAVASZ
Former Plenipotentiary of the Government
of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities

MIROSLAV GALAS-ZAUFAL
Mayor of Kecerovce

STANISLAV HADA
Mayor of Rankovce

Example village Rankovce

Rankovce is a small village of approximately 900 inhabitants in Eastern Slovakia, yet it has become a prime example – not only within Slovakia but also abroad – of how to cope with the complex housing challenge faced by marginalised Roma communities. Roma people often live in shacks with no running water or electricity.

Brick housing project

In 2013, the village launched a pilot project, which enabled Roma residents to build their own brick houses legally. Four actors cooperated to make this project happen: the village provided the available land, the non-profit Projekt DOM.ov coordinated the project, the bank provided an attractive micro-loan and the families interested in legally building their own home became co-creators. To participate in the project, prospective residents save money for a year, with the support of the non-profit organisation and pay a loan for the building material. After that, the village assigns them a building area and ensures the buildings are technically sound with the support of a construction teacher and coordinator.

Responsible ownership

The project represents a unique approach towards resolving the Roma housing issue in Slovakia, as well as across the EU. Similar projects from the past did not result in a workable solution, as they failed to engage with the Roma themselves. However, in this project, they played an integral role right from the start, indicating a strong potential for deepening the integration of Roma communities within broader society in Slovakia or other countries. Future residents build their own houses – the sense of ownership that results from this process means that they take responsibility for their property. Furthermore, those involved developed personally; their social status in the community also improved, which gave them a sense of belonging. The cooperation helped overcome stereotypes held by both the marginalised group and the majority population. Thanks to this project, 28 Roma families are now legally part of the community.

GDAŃSK CENTRE FOR EQUAL TREATMENT

GDAŃSK, POLAND

"Safe places" in several locations in the city provide on-site support for people experiencing discrimination and raise awareness among the citizens of Gdansk.

◀ **ALEKSANDRA DULKIEWICZ**
Mayor of Gdańsk

BARBARA BOROWIAK
Supervisor

Support for discriminated groups

The City of Gdańsk established the Gdańsk Centre for Equal Treatment (GCRT) to meet the needs of people experiencing discrimination. The necessity of a "safe place" became evident in the process of writing the pioneering Equal Treatment Model for Gdańsk report on implementing equal treatment measures. The pilot project, which took place from April to December of 2019, offered comprehensive legal, informational and psychological support to overcome unfair treatment or prejudice-based violence. Since the Polish government does not fulfil its duties and obligations in this matter, the City, together with NGOs, decided to take action to increase the sense of security and support for people from excluded groups.

One-stop shops

The city's commissioned partnership of seven non-governmental organisations helped to implement the project. It is the first action of its kind in Poland funded by local authorities.

Creating "one-stop shops" was the primary purpose of the project. This vast network of places of support in the city help people experiencing discrimination and violence due to their identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, reli-

gion, non-denominationalism, ethnic background, or nationality.

Legal and psychological assistance

The WAGA Association and the FOSA Aleksandra's Social Support Foundation established the Centre. In addition to WAGA (involved in the activation of seniors) and FOSA (acting for the benefit of people in a mental crisis), there were five other organisations, with many years of experience working with socially excluded people, involved in operating the Centre.

The service provided almost 800 hours of assistance in the pilot phase. At the same time, 18 support groups held 55 meetings for people with mental illness, intellectual disabilities, women experiencing violence, solo-parent fathers, the elderly, LGBT-QI+ persons and persons suffering from discrimination on the grounds of non-denominationalism. Additionally, 42 interventions took place in public spaces, including appeals against hate speech based on ethnic background or race, as well as unclear parking regulations for people with disabilities. A further eight cross-sectoral meetings helped build cooperation between municipal institutions which regularly deal with the various aspects of discrimination in Gdańsk. The service is a much-needed product for Poland, which will need to continue to function in these areas for the foreseeable future.

LOCAL DERADICALISATION NETWORK

DĄBROWA GÓRNICZA, **POLAND**

A local multi-agency group uses a systemic approach to investigate and counter radicalisation among vulnerable groups, to recognise diversity, promote inclusion and encourage dialogue and participation.

MARCIN BAZYLAK
Mayor of Dąbrowa Górnicza

Facing ideological violence

Politically, ideologically or religiously motivated hate speech and violence have become major global problems. Radicalisation and violent extremism can be witnessed in the growing number of attacks, for example, in Germany, the US or New Zealand. In Eastern and Central Europe, far-right extremism is a complicated and highly politicised issue.

Systemically addressing mistrust

The mayor of the Polish city Dąbrowa Górnicza was forward-thinking enough to address this problem in an innovative, systemic way. In 2019, Dąbrowa established Poland's first local team to prevent the radicalisation process in the city, in partnership with an expert civil society organisation. The group, composed of municipal officials from various departments and civil society representatives, focuses on the prevention of further polarisation in Dąbrowa. With an increasing sentiment of distrust across Poland, the key to address the issues before they escalate. The interdisciplinary initiative is a first of such initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe (the other two are in Romania and Hungary). The team in Dąbrowa Górnicza gath-

ered best practices from EU experts in various areas affiliated to the European Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network.

Creating a welcoming atmosphere

The team has already met twice to discuss local threats and started working on selected local cases, such as the recruitment of young people to extremist groups at sports facilities. It aims to ensure a safer, more welcoming environment to all inhabitants by, for example, establishing workshops, sporting and cultural events, as well as meetings with minority representatives to promote tolerance and diversity. The project is sustainable because the interdisciplinary team of officials from various departments of the municipality of Dąbrowa Górnicza and local civil society organisation members are committed to working together long-term. There are further plans to appoint a "plenipotentiary" or representative for the prevention of radicalisation, equality and diversity at the municipality. They will be responsible for leading the group, meeting citizens who wish to discuss these issues in their community and establishing a personal reference point.

MATGLAD – FOODHAPPY

BORÅS, SWEDEN

A simple cooking app for people with mental impairments helps them prepare their own meals to strengthen their self-esteem.

YVONNE PERSSON

*Chair of the Committee on Social Affairs, City of Borås
(ordförande för sociala omsorgsnämnden, Borås stad),
houshold teacher by profession*

Improving nutrition

Yvonne Persson, Chair of the Committee for Social Affairs of the City of Borås, identified the need to improve the nutrition of the clients of the municipality's programme for people with mental disabilities. Therefore, the City of Borås hired Birgitta Toll as a food coach to develop the MatGlad, or FoodHappy, cooking app.

Targeting the challenges of cooking

The idea behind the app is to make cooking easy for persons with intellectual disabilities. For example, they may find it challenging to translate a recipe into a shopping list or have difficulties knowing which utensils and tools to use in the different stages of cooking. Through the app, people with intellectual disabilities can take responsibility for cooking their own meals. This activity strengthens their self-esteem and also provides essential exercise and mobility training. The project has also proven to be of great use for other groups in society, for example schoolchildren.

Downloads show demand

"MatGlad" is a project that shows how politics can focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised, using innovative methods to empower people in their everyday lives. The app was initiated within the Municipality of Borås and later received support from the Rural and Agricultural Society of the West, which has enabled it to grow well beyond the city of Borås. The app has now been downloaded more than 200,000 times, which shows it has filled a gap in the support available for people with mental impairments who want to cook delicious and nutritious food!

MIFRIENDLY CITIES

BIRMINGHAM|COVENTRY|WOLVERHAMPTON, UNITED KINGDOM

A unique, multi-sectoral project brings together migrants, employers, citizens and other services, to establish strong communities, build businesses, improve people's lives and foster integration.

PETER BARNETT
Head of Service Libraries and Migration

ABDUL SALAM KHAN
Deputy Leader of Coventry City Council / Cabinet Member, Policing and Equalities

DAJANA VASILJ
Programme Officer

Building stronger communities

MiFriendly Cities is a unique migration initiative that not only sets out a programme of activities for migrants but also engages employers, the health service and the wider public to build healthier communities. It does so by unlocking cities' wide-ranging assets, coming together to drive change at both city and regional levels, as well as testing a mix of innovative and sustainable approaches to integration.

What constitutes a migration friendly city?

The programme benefits wider communities in Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton. It was co-created with migrants and collects feedback from participants, residents and employers feeding into a collective vision of integration, delivered by 11 partners with 31 activities in three cities. MiFriendly Cities established two Eco Furniture Factories (in Coventry and Wolverhampton). These facilities represent new approaches to changing negative perceptions of migrants by showcasing their talents and community contribution in a novel way.

Older skilled volunteers work together with migrants on community projects to exchange skills, using local waste materials to upcycle 1,000+ pieces of furniture, to support 100 home and community makeovers, make artefacts for City of Culture 2021-22 and overcome integration challenges. Open to anyone, they build trust and encourage sustainable behaviours through migrant-led repair cafes, social enterprises and UK-recognised qualifications. Overall, the innovative partnership of public, private and voluntary sector organisations within MiFriendly Cities provides a unique network of skills and knowledge to improve the understanding of what constitutes a welcoming or 'migration friendly' city.

Community spaces for common interests

The investment in two welcoming community spaces, built and co-created by over 3,000 people and organisations, motivates different parts of society to participate. These facilities were co-designed to respond to needs and interests common to everyone; specifically education, skills, employment, climate change, fun, creativity and social interaction. The UK Home Office recognises the innovative project, which builds connections between communities to improve people's lives and foster integration. The project will help thousands of individuals gain qualifications, improve hundreds of homes and community settings, give a second or third life to thousands of items of broken furniture, reduce waste and will also establish new social- and eco-businesses.

MINORITY SAFEPACK INITIATIVE
GERMANY

This programme promotes linguistic diversity and minority languages in Europe through cultural support, policy-making and the creation of a European Language Diversity Centre.

◄ **LORÁNT VINCZE**
President of FUEN and Member of European Parliament

ÉVA ADÉL PÉNZES
Secretary General

Minority languages in europe

Many EU citizens belonging to ethnic minorities face daily discrimination and treatment like second-class citizens. Many do not benefit from language or education rights in their mother tongues. There are 50 million speakers of 60 minority languages - many of them endangered - across the European Union today. These communities want to live their lives according to their traditions. The Minority SafePack Initiative - launched by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and coordinated by the President of FUEN and MEP Loránt Vincze - was established for this very reason.

The main proposals of the initiative

The initiative makes recommendations on how to protect and promote cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU, through functional language, education and culture policies, to help national and linguistic minorities in the Member States. The initiative created the European Language Diversity Centre. It also recommends changes to cohesion policy - taking the situation of national minorities and the role of cultural and linguistic diversity into account. Minority SafePack furthermore aims to ensure equality for stateless minorities, improve cross-border access to audiovisual media services and content for minority regions and proposes EU state aid rule adjustments for the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Linguistic diversity for europe

The Minority SafePack Initiative created a platform of solidarity for the almost 50 million people belonging to national minorities. It used the legal tool of EU participatory democracy to address the unevenness in minority rights protection legislation at the national level. By taking a European approach, the Minority SafePack can request concrete measures and EU funding. This grassroots, decentralised, pan-EU campaign is adaptable to local conditions. The campaign is also available in several regional languages, including those not recognised by the state. The Initiative is a European Citizens' initiative signed by 1,128,385 EU citizens. On 10 January 2020, it became the fifth successful European Citizens' initiative and the first one to promote cultural and linguistic diversity across Europe. By proposing programmes and action in the field of minority rights, it is a call for a legal protection framework in the European Union - essential for the future social sustainability of minority rights initiatives.

STOP HATE SPEECH WITH BOT DOG
SWITZERLAND

An algorithm takes the shape of a likeable dog and tackles the global problem of hate speech with a creative, local approach.

SOPHIE ACHERMANN
Director of alliance F

KATHRIN BERTSCHY
*National Councillor / Co-President alliance F*

Finding hate speech

With the help of an algorithm, which learns from an active community, hate speech can be detected on the internet and rejected by the local community. Thus, with Bot Dog, a global social problem is fought locally and innovatively.

Making the algorithm likeable

A dog trained to detect hate speech represents the responsible algorithm in an understandable and likeable way. As a rescue dog, it is sent to social media to draw the attention of affected people and guide them to the platform. This project against hate speech on the internet does pioneering work in a critical global problem area. At the same time, the local approach takes into account the peculiarities of the respective language and media landscapes. The innovative approach of the project lies in combining the strengths of technological and civil society approaches. In terms of the technical process, Bot Dog acts as a hate speech radar and finds hate speech on newspaper platforms and in social media. In terms of the civil society approach, a community of counter-speech volunteers evaluate the reports generated by the Bot Dog, which in turn sensitises the Bot Dog. If it is hate speech, the community intervenes directly in the discussions with targeted counter-arguments, so-called counterspeech.
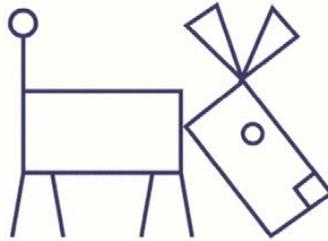
Passing a learning algorithm on to news platforms

The project's range of approaches have different outcomes: On the one hand, active work with civil society raises awareness in the community as a whole. On the other hand, the media can adopt the developed algorithm. A toolkit will be available, which will not only find hate speech but also give feedback to commentators about their comments. If the media implement this tool, the project can achieve a large multiplication effect. Several media houses have already announced their interest. The established learning platform fulfils various objectives in the process: targeted recognition and rejection of hate comments, data collection on the type and distribution of hate speech, a sensitisation of society to the problem of hate speech and its effects, competently tackling hate speech, as well as developing a learning algorithm which can eventually be made more widely available.

YOUTH CENTRE FOR ALL

PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

A multi-faceted youth centre in Plovdiv fosters social inclusion and provides education and training for all.

DIMITRIYA TODOROVA
Manager of Youth Center Plovdiv

GEORGI TITYUKOV
Deputy Mayor of Youth and Sports in Plovdiv

Youth education and training

Youth workers and local authorities in the Municipality of Plovdiv collaborated in the creation of a centre for the education and training of young people in the city. The centre aims to support and improve the well-being of young people by conducting non-formal educational activities, such as training programmes and public discussions related to human rights, discrimination and active citizenship, amongst others.

Open to all

The building is a space for the youth, with an area for accommodation, an administration office, a sports ground, an interactive educational centre and a dining area, as well as rooms for meetings, conferences, seminars and non-formal educational activities. The activities are available to all young people, including those from low-income families, young people in institutions, members of ethnic minorities and those living in small and remote settlements around the city of Plovdiv. Youth workers, aged between 15 and 29 and children attend the offered workshops on different topics, such as tolerance, teamwork, gardening, among others.

The work receives approval

From the beginning, the centre has trained thousands of young people and welcomed hundreds of young workers from other countries for exchange projects. Thanks to its excellent work, the centre has received the Quality Label from the European Council. The youth centre in Plovdiv provides a new and innovative form of education for young people using non-formal educational methods, in an environment that is creative and different. Since its implementation, the centre has helped to develop and expand the youth sector in Plovdiv in many different ways.

QUALITY OF LIFE

How can quality of life be measured? The Finalists of this category find answers to this question and contribute to the well-being of society: by providing easy access to modern health services, a safe and secure living environment, decent housing and better public transport, natural play spaces for children and measures against loneliness. The projects come from Austria, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and Slovakia.

WINNER REMIHUB – INNER-CITY DELIVERY HUBS

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Public transport operational areas become dual-use intelligent distribution hubs, to help reduce delivery vehicle traffic and promote sustainability goals in the city.

SARAH BITTNER-KRAUTSACK
Thematic field responsible for freight mobility – BMK

EVELINDE GRASSEGGER
Programme Manager Mobility of the Future – BMK

ROLAND HACKL
Project Lead

ULLI SIMA
Executive City Councillor for the Environment and Vienna Public Utilities

GÜNTER STEINBAUER
Chairman of the Management Board of Wiener Linien

CHRISTIAN WEISSENBURGER
Head of Section Innovation & Technology - BMK

Deliveries contribute to urban traffic

Many cities lack available areas for logistics operations. Consequently, parcels are delivered and distributed from far outside the city, resulting in a substantial traffic load and mileage. Once the delivery vans enter the city, they generate additional urban traffic and are therefore partly responsible for traffic jams, air and noise pollution, as well as negative effects on the quality of life.

New distribution points

One promising way of greening deliveries is to use climate-friendly vehicles, such as cargo bikes or small electric vehicles. They take up less space, run quietly and produce no emissions. However, they are not well suited for long delivery distances from freight distribution centres outside the city. RemiHub creates completely new distribution points within the city, by temporarily using areas belonging to Wiener Linien (Vienna's public transport operator) from which parcels are redistributed by cargo bikes. In a nutshell, RemiHub's key innovation lies in redefining stakeholder roles in the pursuit of climate goals and managing scarce resources. Using public transport operating areas for freight hubs is novel in itself and constitutes an organisational and governance innovation for Wiener Linien, logistics operators and the city of Vienna.

A new logistics model

RemiHub substantially shortens the so-called 'last mile' between transfer points and recipients, enabling environmentally friendly delivery. The RemiHub project develops, explores and tests this new logistics model with an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together stakeholders from freight logistics, science and public transport. The programme creates value for the urban population, in their role both as consumers and as citizens. While the volume of parcel delivery is constantly increasing (e.g. through e-commerce or same-day delivery), this new approach ensures that sustainable urban freight logistics services are available even in increasingly difficult times. It significantly improves the quality of life of all people, by reducing motorised urban freight vehicles, air and noise pollution, the risk of accidents, as well as traffic volume. Enjoying wide media attention, RemiHub raises public awareness about logistics operations and its future challenges, as well as the corresponding need for action by the administration, policy-makers and citizens.

AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS IN IRISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

IRELAND

Age-friendly housing specialists advise local government on how to improve housing options for older residents.

◄ DAVID GILROY
Cathaoirleach (Chairperson) of Meath County Council

EMER COVENEY
National Programme Manager, Age Friendly Ireland

An ageing population presents new housing challenges

This initiative was put in place to prepare for population ageing. The initiative is a direct action arising from the 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population' policy statement, published jointly in Ireland by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Department of Health in 2019.

Specialists advise local authorities

Across Irish local authorities, age-friendly housing technical specialists offer a service that ensures that older people have greater choice by developing a range of housing options that are suited to their needs. As far as possible, the aim is to make the right homes available for older people in society. The Age-Friendly Housing Specialists act as the key points of contact for technical queries, specifically around designing for life and universal design principles. They progress referrals from a range of actors, including local authority staff, external stakeholders and agencies, private sector developers, approved housing bodies, social housing tenants and private homeowners who are interested in rightsizing. Meath County Council facilitates the Age Friendly Ireland Shared

Service across the Irish local government. Participants whose needs are being addressed include older people with physical, cognitive and sensory issues, including people with dementia, live-in carers, social housing tenants, private homeowners wishing to rightsize, rural and urban dwellers, minority groups and people who need housing that is adapted to meet their needs because of their age.

Age-friendly housing solutions are developed

This is the first time that a dedicated technical role has been assigned in Irish local authorities to support the specific housing needs of older people. The national Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service network allows local authorities to share learning with each other about good practice. The specialists are helping to develop housing that is suitable for older people in order to prepare for population ageing. The state also achieves cost savings by reducing the need to transition to residential care, which typically costs EUR 60,000 per year, three times as much as the equivalent care at home. This project therefore contributes to developing sustainable communities in the future.

FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG

Revolutionary yet simple - free public transport enhances environmental sustainability, social welfare and the quality of life of the residents of this small country.

◄ **FRANÇOIS BAUSCH**
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Mobility and Public Works

DANIELLE FRANK
Deputy government advisor

Trams, buses, trains are free

From 1st March 2020, public transport in Luxembourg can be used free of charge throughout the country and for all modes of transport – trams, trains and buses. Public transport is now free for all its users: residents, cross-border commuters and tourists alike.

Transitioning from private to public mobility

Deputy Prime Minister François Bausch regards systematic and continuous investment as an essential condition for promoting the attractiveness of public transport: the range, punctuality and quality of the services on offer are crucial to motivating people to change their habits and switch from private to public modes of transport.
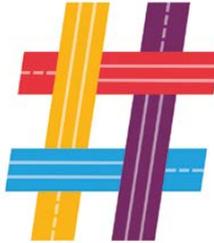
Multiple benefits for all

All the inhabitants benefit from the measure, thanks to reduced pollution and traffic, while foreign visitors can also enjoy free public transport. The project is a progressive dual social measure, with reduced expenditures for low-earners, while those who are better off pay more towards the service through taxes. The measure is primarily intended to improve the quality of life in Luxembourg, yet it also contributes to a more sustainable mobility infrastructure by reducing traffic, car usage and carbon emissions.

GARDENS OF CRACOVIANS

KRAKÓW, POLAND

Pockets of greenery transform forgotten patches of urban wasteland into community spaces for regeneration, social cohesion, nature and culture.

PIOTR KEMPF
Director of Krakow Municipal Greenspace Authority

JACEK MAJCHROWSKI
Mayor of Kraków

ANGELIKA MERCHUT
Junior Inspector of Krakow Municipal Greenspace Authority

Recovery in a densely populated space

"Ogrody Krakowian" (Gardens of Cracovians) aims to create small and friendly green areas in each district of Krakow. Pockets of greenery that give residents the opportunity to rest and experience nature are particularly important in densely built cities such as Krakow. It might not be possible to ensure that each citizen has a large park within a 5-15-minute distance of their homes, but it is possible to create smaller pockets of nature that can provide well-being. If properly managed, these small pockets of greenery will please the eye and become places of relaxation, where families, friends and communities can come together.

Pocket parks for the residents

Pocket parks are created much quicker and cheaper than large parks. As a kind of "city acupuncture", they first "puncture" and then "heal" through recovering spaces that have the potential to activate local communities. 24 pocket parks have already been

↑ before   **MATHEMATICAL POCKET PARK**   after ↓

created in Krakow, all with their own unique atmosphere and character and more are planned. These enclaves allow the inhabitants of this large city to experience aspects of welfare that they miss in a highly dense urban area. Thanks to pocket parks, even the smallest, most forgotten space can become a green oasis. Through this project, urban wasteland is "recovered" as pocket parks for use by all residents - the parks are designed with accessibility in mind.

Expanding life quality to the forgotten districts

Until now, high-quality public spaces were only characteristic of the city centre of Krakow. This approach aims to change that. The project "Ogrody Krakowian" proves that all public spaces matter – narrow inter-block spaces, forgotten street squares, or distant yards located on the outskirts of the city. The neighbourhood picnics and concerts organised in these places, as well as the physical infrastructure, such as deckchairs, pergolas and picnic tables, have become an intrinsic part of the inhabitants' lives and cityscapes. Each garden has its own theme, selected by the residents in public consultations. You can already visit, among others, literary, artistic or prehistoric pocket parks in Krakow today. These small places build local identity and create community.

HELLO, HOW ARE YOU?

SAN LAZZARO DI SAVENA, **ITALY**

Volunteers "adopt a grandparent" to help senior citizens battle isolation and loneliness, support them in daily tasks and remind them to take their medicine during lockdown.

ISABELLA CONTI

Mayor, Municipality of San Lazzaro di Savena

Isolated people in quarantine

The project *Pronto, come stai?* (Hello, how are you?) was born during the COVID-19 quarantine, to provide support for the lonely elderly residents of the city, who suddenly had to face a period of isolation, deprived of their social contacts.

Understanding the emotional and health status of elderly residents

The sindaca – as the mayor is called in Italy – felt the need and the duty to reach out to elderly residents, to understand their emotional and health status and to make them feel supported. The support required by elderly citizens ranged from a simple chat to keep up their spirits to the provision of essential services, including grocery and medicine deliveries. Through social services, the mayor obtained a list of people over eighty who were living alone and launched an appeal to the city to recruit volunteers willing to "adopt a grandparent". Volunteers set up daily phone calls with their adopted grandparents, at a specific time. The appeal was disseminated amongst the citizens through the city's official Facebook page, website and newsletter. An online platform was created to manage membership applications and to collect candidates' data. The residents started to look forward to these daily interactions, much like loving grandchildren and grandparents.

Building a trusting bond

This project in San Lazzaro has given life to a unique solidarity movement, which has emotionally enriched the lives of all the participants. The appeal "let us adopt a grandparent, we cannot leave anybody behind", mobilised an entire community. In less than 48 hours, volunteers - including the mayor - had called all of the city's 1,172 elderly residents on the phone. Day after day, call after call, a bond of trust was established between the volunteers and their "grandparents". This helped elderly citizens overcome daily difficulties caused by the crisis and became a point of reference, emotional support and irreplaceable companionship through these difficult times.

LABORATORY OF ARCHITECTURE 60+ (LAB 60+)

ŁÓDŹ, POLAND

An innovative integrated design project facilitates social cohesion and intergenerational residential communities, to prepare for an ageing society.

AGNIESZKA LABUS

Founder and CEO and Expert of LAB 60+,
Assistant Professor at Silesian University of Technology

Housing solutions for an ageing society

Laboratory of Architecture 60+ (LAB 60+) is the first project in Poland to focus on innovative approaches to designing for an ageing society. The Laboratory sets out to develop a model that ensures buildings function in a way that meets the needs of all residents, while facilitating neighbourly ties and social cooperation.

From policy change to innovative housing projects

LAB 60+ aims to change housing policy in Poland in the context of an ageing society. The scope of this project ranges from developing expertise within the Development Ministry to implementing innovative housing projects. LAB 60+ is a response to the demographic changes that are affecting societies across Europe and has been recognised by the European Commission as an Innovation Laboratory. LAB 60+ is a platform for exchanging knowledge and ideas, as well as for organising inspiring events on the issues surrounding ageing.

An innovation lab for age-inclusive design

LAB 60+ works in close cooperation with many partners, from academia to government, from private institutions to NGOs. The Lab has been supported in particular by the Faculty of Architecture at the Silesian University of Technology. LAB 60+ was co-created by experts in the field, who put forward a vision of a residential area, the buildings, layout and design, right down to the interior details and everyday functions. LAB 60+ has been recognised by numerous bodies, won the Polish Culture Portal's "O" Award in the category of Architecture and was also awarded a prize in the "Marka Śląskie" regional competition in Poland. An innovative example from the LAB 60+ project is the Multigenerational House. The House opened in Łódź in 2018 and was the first housing project of its kind in Poland. Residents of the Multigenerational House live in the city centre with convenient access to basic services, guaranteeing them a high quality of life. Residents who meet certain criteria are also eligible to pay reduced rent, to ensure the project remains socially diverse. The Multigenerational House in Łódź is a place for young people, older people, large families and people with disabilities, where they can live, meet, integrate and support one another.

LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS AND AREA HOSTS

ŁÓDŹ, POLAND

Area Hosts and Lighthouse Keepers guide residents through the complex renovation project of the historic city centre and provide tailored support to help with displacement.

JOANNA BRZEZIŃSKA
Deputy Director of the Revitalization and Housing Office

JOANNA SKRZYDLEWSKA
Deputy Major of the City of Łódź

Renovation causes relocation

In 2017 the largest revitalisation programme in Poland began – the complex renovation of the historical centre of Łódź. In connection with the investments planned, almost 1000 tenants in communal flats had to be relocated.

Mediators guide relocation and social renewal

Due to its scale, local authorities developed tools to improve the process and involve inhabitants. One of the key elements was the introduction of Area Hosts and Lighthouse Keepers (AH&LKs): the task of these 16 mediators was to support the residents moving to another place of residence and to use this change as a catalyst for social renewal. Face-to-face conversations, materials posted on information boards, as well as door-to-door leaflet distribution gave residents opportunities to learn about the renovation process and social programmes in the neighbourhood. The AH&LKs provided residents with reliable information and assistance at each stage of the process, in order to reduce the difficulties of such a life change. They also built a sense of security and trust amongst the residents, which helped create acceptance of ongoing changes in the city.

Comprehensive support for social activation

Although AH&LK are full-time civil servants, they have flexible working hours, work in the field, not behind a desk, have excellent area-specific knowledge, along with a wide network of contacts. This enables them to react to problems efficiently and effectively. Professionally active residents do not have to take a day off to deal with administrative matters, while people with disabilities do not need to visit the city office in person. Instead, support is tailored to individual and family needs. The comprehensive help provided to residents in the revitalisation area results in their social and professional activation, as well as helping them overcome other issues, such as rent arrears. The mediators' work brings about revitalisation in people's lives, on top of the physical revitalisation of the city. The AH&LKs support the development of neighbourhood schemes and comprehensively respond to the needs of residents in their areas - including clients who require special support, such as the elderly, the disabled, those struggling with addiction, or living on benefits.

MOBILE YOUTH WORK IN RURAL AREAS

LITHUANIA

Mobile youth workers from a social business company are assigned by the municipality to provide young people in rural Lithuania with individualised social and psychological support to help them reach their full potential.

◀ **VIKTORIJA GASPARIŪNAITĖ**
Director

VYTAS JARECKAS
Mayor of Birzai District Municipality

ANTANAS MATULAS
Member of the Parliament, Representative of the District in the Parliament

Adapted to individual needs

The project is run by a social business company whose main activity is mobile youth work in rural areas, as well as in a residential area with no youth work infrastructure. The company works with 14 to 29-year-olds, according to the participants' individual needs. Using a variety of interesting and attractive activities, the project ensures that children and young people in rural areas realise their potential. In the context of mobile youth work, dedicated inter-institutional cooperation and communication are crucial. Partner organisations are therefore invited to contribute to the project and, in exchange, their activities and events are supported.

Non-standard activities

The project helps young people get to know themselves, reduce their distrust, improve their impact on their environment and prevent social and psychological problems, such as social exclusion. This is the first social business company in Lithuania to provide mobile youth work services in rural areas. The chosen business model is unique in that it promotes cooperation between the public, private and voluntary sectors, in order to achieve positive social changes amongst the youth. It uses a new and economically stable business model: 50% of the income comes from municipalities, who buy these services; 35% comes from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour for Mobile Youth Work; while 15% comes from economic activities. This model provides an opportunity for municipalities to buy services from social businesses without increasing the number of public servants. In 2020, the project was recognised as one of the best social business ideas. The programme is distinguished by its irregular hours - between 4 and 9 pm - when no other organisation is working. Due to the non-standard activity model, the project can flexibly adapt to the needs of young people.

Support to make the shift

Through group and individual sessions with young people, the programme focuses on sexuality, citizenship, healthy living, physical activity, healthy eating and more, while supporting employment, socialisation, self-realisation and citizenship amongst the participants. If necessary, young people are assisted in their return to the education system, with getting a job, or finding volunteer placements. Furthermore, a psychologist who works anonymously helps young people deal with various psychological and social problems they might face in their daily lives. The project ensures a lasting and sustainable social impact through a six-stage model, which helps to analyse and present the results of the activities, along with the associated social impact. The intervention helps local communities become more active, as young people become more open, involved and struggle with fewer psychological problems.

NATURAL PLAY SPACE PROGRAMME

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY, **IRELAND**

Children co-create their own ecological and easily accessible play spaces within urban areas, to promote healthy lifestyles, inclusive development, and community-building.

◄ ED O'BRIEN
Mayor South Dublin Council

SUZANNE FURLONG
Senior Parks Superintendent

A young population has limited access to playspace

South Dublin County has a population of almost 280,000, one of the youngest in Ireland. It faces the same global challenge of sedentary lifestyles, decreased activity and increased childhood obesity. Children's access to nature is limited. The playgrounds were uninviting; located in the centre of large parks and dependent on children being brought on a visit. They were over-dependent on plastic equipment and rubber safety surfaces.

Children tell us what they want

The project started with play locations close to children's homes and asked children about what games they liked to play and what sort of spaces they liked most. Very few children picked the local playground. Access to nature was a recurring theme and the questioners heard about how they used their environment to create their own fun. Those playgrounds were then changed from sterile environments, dominated by plastic equipment and rubber safety surfaces, to natural playspaces with flowing earth mounds where playing can occur naturally. The designs for the playspaces was developed in tandem with people in each neighbourhood and children of all abilities were involved to help make them inclusive and welcoming. Established notions of safety and what children were allowed to do

had to be challenged, to develop new ways of playing in this county.

Natural and inclusive playspaces

One of the benefits of natural play is inclusivity. As there are no rules governing the type of play, everyone can play together regardless of ability. For each playspace provided, children of varying abilities were invited to tell the project owners what they thought. Over a six-year period, the aim of making each playspace inclusive and playful was honed. The old playgrounds were more expensive, with thousands spent on formal equipment, railings and flammable rubber safety surfacing. The new natural playspaces are easier to build, less expensive and consist mostly of natural materials set in a natural environment. Children use them more often and for longer. The natural materials used are not only less expensive to install, but they are also robust and lasting. With playspaces located close to where children live, children can play all day, every day. This has a long-lasting impact in terms of children's health and development. Parents and minders can relax and enjoy the natural settings, while communities are created.

TWO WHEELS INSTEAD OF FOUR

SLOVAKIA

A series of campaigns encourages cycling mobility while collecting data for an improved bike infrastructure in Slovakia.

PETER KLUČKA
National cycling coordinator at the
Ministry of Transport and Construction

Take a bike to work or school

The streets of cities and villages are full of cyclists, young and old, riding their bikes together. No, we are not talking about the Netherlands. We are talking about Slovakia and campaigns that encourage people to take a "Bike to Work" and a "Bike to School" – and they love it! Cycling conditions in Slovakia, especially for commuting by bike in bigger cities, are mostly underdeveloped and do not match the standards of other European cities. By demanding the participation of municipalities, the campaigns challenge local and regional governments to create better conditions and a safer infrastructure for cyclists.

Incentives create a virtuous cycle

The goal of the campaign is to motivate people to use alternative, ecological forms of transportation. However, safe bicycle paths are crucial for people to use their bikes. During the 2019 "Bike to Work" campaign, the routes used by commuters were analysed and processed into thermal maps, visualising the occupancy of the streets by cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users. This data offers local governments the possibility to understand the traffic behaviour of citizens, enabling them to plan and develop more sustainable mobility systems. For the 2020 campaign, organisers plan to enable the participants to report any problems encountered on cycle paths and roads. In

addition, employees will receive benefits for taking their bike. This poses a big challenge for both employers and the government. The more people who choose bikes, the more attention will be given to their needs and then when the conditions improve even more people will leave their cars behind and join the big bike movement.

More people join the movement

Last year, almost 13,000 people from more than 1,400 companies joined the project and used a bike instead of other means of transportation, when going to work. In total, they rode more than 1 million km, saving more than 333kg of CO2. Over the years, the situation has changed as municipalities themselves have started to ask the Ministry of Transport and Construction to help improve cycling conditions. Participating employers, too, are motivated to equip their premises with bike stands and showers, to make commuting by bike more attractive.