



BEYOND GOVERNANCE.

**TOWARDS
PARTNERSHIP
BUILDING**



FUNCTIONAL
AREAS IN THE EU

BEYOND GOVERNANCE. TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

This document showcases various tools and case studies, aiming to inspire partnership building at the functional area level. While it offers ideas, it does not prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach to partnership development.

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INTRODUCTION

Good governance is participatory, transparent, effective, efficient, consensus-oriented, accountable, equitable, inclusive, and follows the principles of the rule of law. Additionally, it is based on existing willingness to collaborate or takes into consideration the need to build it over time throughout different phases of a participatory decision-making process. Using this common knowledge, the document makes the case for a shift in focus from traditional forms of governance to a more collaborative and inclusive approach. This involves moving beyond approaches that revolve around managing and regulating, towards developing partnerships with various stakeholders, enabling more effective, sustainable, and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Under this approach, the public entities, academia, businesses, NGOs and residents are considered a valuable and central asset for the development of the functional area. Furthermore, it focuses on an integrated approach to respond to challenges and create solutions, emphasising the relevance of collaboration, shared goals, and collective actions.

The way functional areas are governed differs greatly across the EU, perhaps indicating the absence of an one-size-fits-all method for effective cooperation. These various governance setups, which range in how formal they are, stress the need for strong leadership to bring together willing partners. These partnerships include stakeholders from different levels of government, business, NGOs, academia, and residents, all working together towards common goals in functional area development.

All in all, this document showcases various tools and case studies, aiming to inspire partnership building at the functional area level. While it offers ideas, it does not prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach to partnership development.



What is a partnership?

Partnership is defined as an agreement between people to work together. From the neighbourhood to the functional area level, this term is essential and represents: **the most desired level of engagement between functional areas governing bodies, public representatives, and various groups of stakeholders**. This type of collaboration and cooperation can be formal or informal, depending on the preferences of the involved parties.

Partnerships are built on the complementary processes of information, consultation and dialogue (more information available in the section ***What are the different levels of stakeholders participation?***). The end result of these processes is to bring all actors together to debate issues, identify, and propose solutions and alternatives, enhancing participation in the decision-making process. By working together with the community at the functional area level, the functional areas governing bodies strengthen relationships and increase trust among stakeholders.

The following sections provide concise definitions of the levels of stakeholders participation, basic instruments, and examples to illustrate the applicability of these definitions and instruments. Moreover, they highlight that partnerships can be initiated from top-down and bottom-up approaches.



What are the different levels of participation?

INFORMATION

The basis to a good relationship and partnership is communication. Functional areas bodies and public authorities must offer information on various topics from challenges, solutions, benefits, and risks in a language accessible to the general public. Another important aspect is to make it easily accessible and on various channels, to allow residents of all ages and financial status to access it. This ensures stakeholders have relevant and accurate information to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

To ensure effective communication, a functional area must create a detailed communication strategy that ensures transparency and accessibility throughout the decision-making process. This plan should identify the target audience and map out the necessary channels, including both online and offline tools.

CONSULTATION AND DIALOGUE

Information is the bridge for consultation and dialogue. During these two processes, the stakeholders react, either from their own initiative or at the invitation of the functional area governing body. In both cases, the functional area collects and interprets these reactions and integrates them into the final decision.

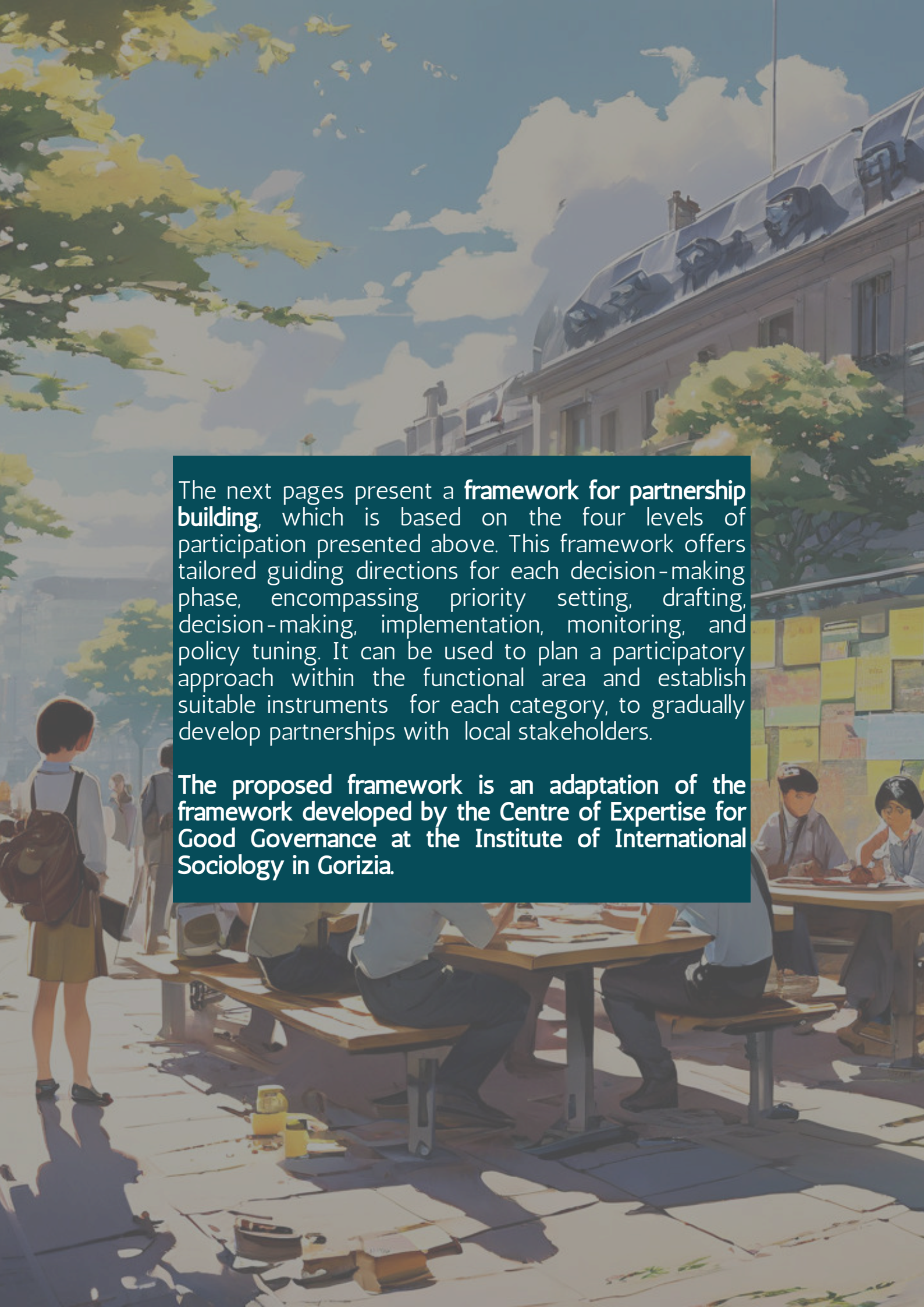
A successful stakeholder engagement process involves a continuous dialogue and is based on active participation. For functional area representatives to actively involve stakeholders, they should provide regular updates, set up various communication channels, and develop instruments for feedback collection. All in all, applications/platforms, online or offline meetings/workshops/working groups and email communication are some of the main communication tools to develop multi-stakeholder dialogue.

PARTNERSHIP

According with the Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia (ISIG), the setting of the partnership should include permanent committees with citizens' representatives, citizens' representatives seating within the governing body, and funding available for initiatives to be initiated in the different decision-making phases in partnership with the civil society. Additionally, ISIG also maps the following actions within partnerships for the phase of decision-making: mainstreaming consultation and multi-governance dialogue, co-drafting, co-decision-making, mainstreaming multi-level governance implementation, and co-monitoring.

The scope and role of the partnership between functional areas governing bodies, public representatives, and various groups of stakeholders can vary from the strategy formulation process of the area to jointly implementing projects or delivering services. Based on it, partnerships can be formal or informal. Formal partnerships are materialised through partnerships agreements and are the highest form of cooperation and collaboration because it goes beyond voluntary engagement and involvement to a well established mechanism. This type of partnership comprises a process to develop, monitor, and improve the partnership, while also establishing how to address any conflicts that may arise. This promotes trust and accountability between all parties.

Another important aspect in partnership building and maintenance is prioritising recognition and celebration in partnerships. Building a positive and collaborative partnership culture that fosters success and long-term relationships can be achieved through actions that celebrate success, recognise contributions of members and support collaboration. For example, the finalisation of a project or any key milestone could be celebrated by hosting a celebratory event or sharing success stories on social media. Showing appreciation and acknowledgement of key contributions of certain members can be materialised through public acknowledgment during meetings or events, or small tokens of appreciation.



The next pages present a **framework for partnership building**, which is based on the four levels of participation presented above. This framework offers tailored guiding directions for each decision-making phase, encompassing priority setting, drafting, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and policy tuning. It can be used to plan a participatory approach within the functional area and establish suitable instruments for each category, to gradually develop partnerships with local stakeholders.

The proposed framework is an adaptation of the framework developed by the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance at the Institute of International Sociology in Gorizia.

PHASES OF DECISION MAKING

Priority setting

Drafting

Decision Making

INFORMATION

Ensuring access to knowledge

Providing information

Informing stakeholders on
decision taken

CONSULTATION

Seeking and allowing input sharing

Gathering feedback

Engaging stakeholders

DIALOGUE

Exchanging diverse perspectives

Co-evaluating drafts

Collaborating for decisions

PARTNERSHIP

Encouraging partnerships

Collaborative drafting

Joint decision making

Implementation

Monitoring

Policy tuning

Transparency in management

Monitoring information sharing

Communicating decisions

Establishing solutions together

Gathering feedback

Seeking improvements

Citizens engagement

In-progress assesment

Exploring modifications

Joint implementations efforts

Collaborative assesment

Collaborative adjustments



What instruments are available?

Successful partnerships require recognising and aligning shared values and priorities to formulate a common vision and jointly implement solutions. With a mutual understanding of the overarching objective, partners can pool their resources, knowledge, and expertise to achieve more significant and long lasting outcomes. As a result, the delivery of public services and implementation of solutions are enhanced. The next section will outline basic instruments for stakeholder engagement in decision-making processes at the functional area level or that provide an impact at this territorial scale.

The list is not exhaustive; other instruments may exist. Moreover, not all of the instruments listed below are feasible for implementation by the functional area governing bodies. However, when implemented by local public authorities and correlated with the area's strategic goals or scaled up over time, they can have a significant impact on the functional area.

BASIC INSTRUMENTS



Website

A dedicated platform is essential for facilitating communication between the functional area and its stakeholders. This online tool is adaptable, offering a range of formats depending on the subject, including articles, announcements, and videos. Equally important is its role in publishing datasets and providing digital services tailored to the needs of stakeholders



Events

Events foster discussions and networking among stakeholders, serving as valuable opportunities for participants to share ideas and insights. These instruments for public participation in the decision-making process can take various formats, including workshops, public meetings, exhibitions, and thematic working tables.



Opinion polls

Opinion polls enable participatory planning, providing valuable insights into community views on different aspects of the area. They identify strengths, areas for improvement, urgent issues, and the overall impact of plans. This continuous feedback loop ensures alignment with community needs.

Surveys



Urban regeneration surveys play a key role in shaping effective strategies at the neighbourhood level by gathering feedback for regeneration initiatives. These surveys provide a straightforward platform for residents and stakeholders to voice their opinions on projects, ensuring alignment with community needs and expectations.

Urban aesthetics survey



As urban aesthetics increasingly impact quality of life, these surveys offer a structured approach to understanding public perception of the cities' visual aspects. They provide insights into appreciated features and areas needing improvement, fostering a collaborative approach to enhancing the visual appeal.

Working groups, advisory groups, or consultative bodies



Any form of collaborative groups, involving diverse stakeholders, enable stakeholder engagement in policy development or implementing solutions. Consequently, these instruments are useful for advancing participatory decision-making processes within the functional area. For example, the development of clusters between private actors, involving local authorities as partners.

Developing targeted strategies



Creating targeted strategies involves collaboration between entities such as functional area representatives, local governments, community groups, and business associations. For instance, they might collaborate on a tourism strategy that fosters economic growth while preserving the environment and cultural heritage. This type of activity fosters collaboration and cooperation among participants, amplifying the benefits that strategies offer to the area.

Drafting joint applications for funding



Collaboratively preparing funding applications is an effective method to properly respond to community needs and priorities, while working together to implement change. Multiple European funding programmes support projects developed through collaborative partnerships among several stakeholders, showing dedication to addressing complex challenges through systemic change. Recently, European funding programmes have been increasingly proactive in supporting the participation of functional areas in the funding calls.

Implementing joint projects



Implementing joint projects addressing the needs and concerns of multiple stakeholders requires extensive collaboration and puts the basis for enduring partnerships. These projects may range from small-scale projects like community gardens and public art installations to larger infrastructure improvements benefiting the entire community.

Participatory budgeting



Involving citizens in resource allocation ensures their priorities are integrated into urban management strategies. Participatory budgeting additionally facilitates monitoring and evaluating spending decisions' effectiveness.

Public-private partnerships



Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) foster cooperation between public institutions and private entities, pooling resources and assigning tasks to achieve common objectives. These collaborations typically engage stakeholders across different sectors. Functional areas, like government tiers or specialized agencies, may directly engage in PPPs to improve coordination or offer expertise in local projects.

Feedback mechanisms



These mechanism can be implemented through online portals, mobile apps, or community gatherings that empower citizens to report issues and voice their opinions. Feedback assists in pinpointing areas for enhancement, monitoring progress, and evaluating the effectiveness of urban management strategies.

Community-based monitoring



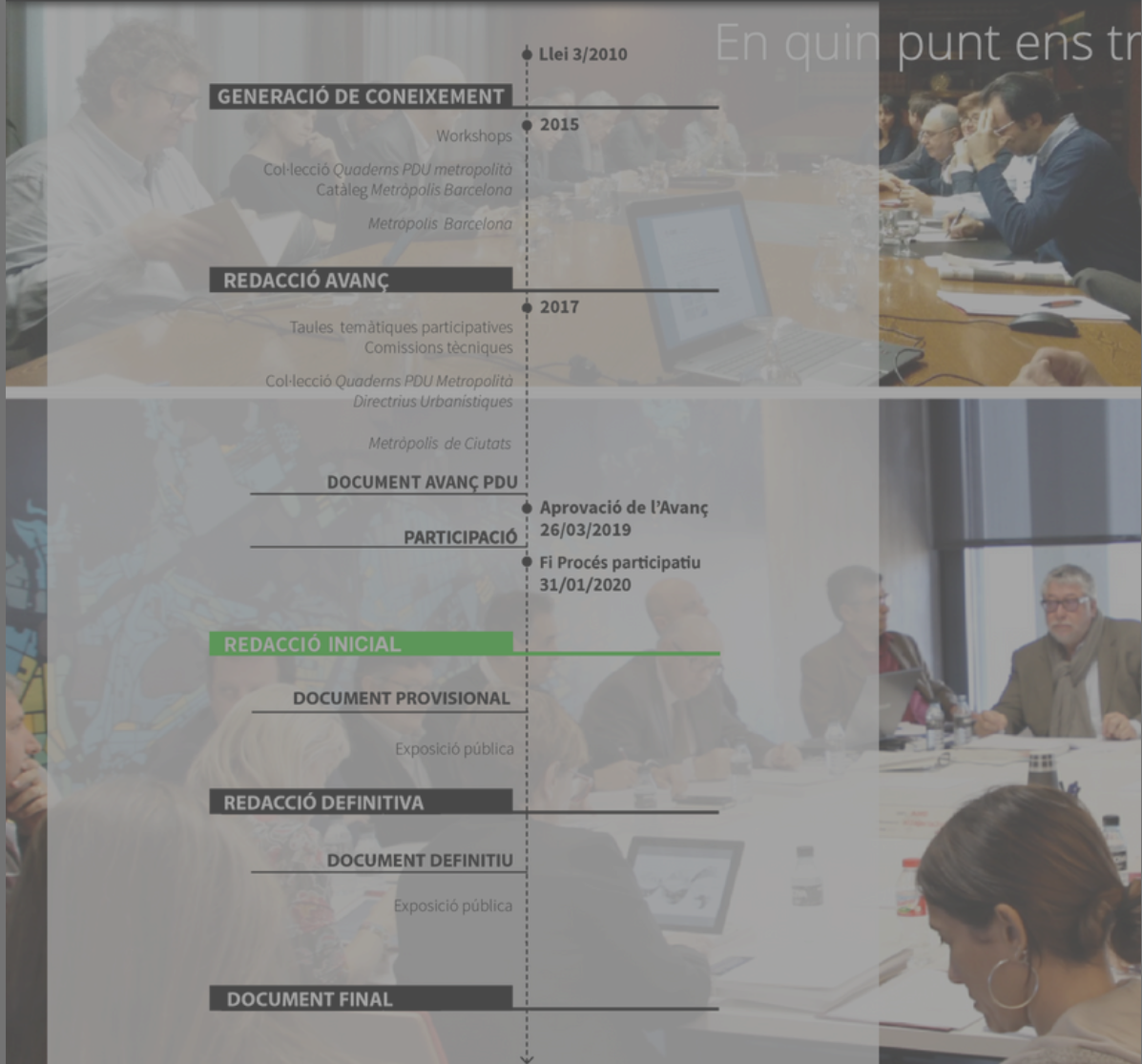
Community-based monitoring empowers communities to oversee urban management and outcomes through citizen-led initiatives. This includes training community members to monitor issues such as waste management, sanitation, and public services. The collected data can hold local authorities accountable and stimulate urban management improvements.



When to use
partnerships?

This section presents examples of various situations of stakeholders engagement and collaboration at functional area level. While some of these examples are developed specifically at the functional area level, others originate within the core city and yield benefits that extend to the functional area level. All in all, their scope is to serve as inspiration for similar endeavors.

- **The Barcelona Metropolitan Area** demonstrates the feasibility of collaborative strategic planning at the functional area level.
- **The Banska Bystrica Region** highlights the feasibility of co-developing and co-designing services to improve the economy.
- **The Brno Metropolitan Area** underscores the value of using academic expertise in strategic development at the metropolitan level.
- **The Cluj-Metropolitan Area** illustrates how a collaborative mechanism at the city level can be successfully extended to the metropolitan scale.
- **The Krakow Metropolitan Area** showcases the benefits of private-public partnerships in improving public services.
- **West Athens** represents an example of a co-drafted project aimed at improving housing and combat isolation within the neighbourhood, as well as a scalable innovative policy tool developed by the community.
- **The Jiu Valley Functional Area** emphasises the importance of NGO representation in the decision-making processes.
- **The Zagreb Urban Agglomeration** presents a process of co-drafting and jointly implementing a project aimed at achieving net-zero goals, while also establishing a cooperation mechanism for similar future initiatives.



Source: Barcelona Metropolitan Area

BARCELONA METROPOLITAN AREA, SPAIN

To incorporate a participatory and transparent approach, the representatives of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area used a collaborative framework and a diverse set of participatory tools to elaborate the 2023 Metropolitan Urban Master Plan of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (PDU). This enabled the active involvement of stakeholders throughout the entire process, allowing to gather input on documentation and analysis as well as the development of solutions.

What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **Workshops provide an effective setting for knowledge generation during the drafting process.** The Barcelona Metropolitan Area arranged these workshops as technical meetings focusing on various specific aspects of the territory, such as land use, infrastructure, and transportation. These sessions were tailored to allow experts to deliver presentations on the selected topics, followed by panel discussions to further discuss on the subjects.
- **Thematic round tables facilitate extensive participation among experts from various disciplines.** These were incorporated into the drafting process of the PDU with the aim of formulating a comprehensive document. This approach ensured that the urban planning guideline was developed through a consensus-driven process, incorporating diverse perspectives. For instance, themed working groups were convened on topics including landscape, sustainability, mobility, innovation, competitiveness, and quality of life.
- **Participatory debates and workshops serve as effective formats for discussions and collecting feedback.** According to the official website, these debates covered a wide range of subjects, including participation practices and thematic topics within the PDU, such as economy, sustainability, and mobility. Additionally, discussions involved presenting the draft version of the PDU. These debates were organised in collaboration with professional associations, research institutes, urban services providers, local entities, and citizens.
- **Exhibitions serve as valuable tools for generating public interest.** In the context of developing the PDU, exhibitions were specifically tailored to highlight topics such as open spaces, green infrastructure, major metropolitan areas, the history of the metropolitan area, metropolitan mobility, the transformation of road infrastructure, and solutions for future infrastructures.
- **Publications form the backbone of the technical aspects.** For instance, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area has developed 17 documents within the 'Quaderns PDU' collection covering various subjects to facilitate knowledge generation.
- **A dedicated website ensures transparency and facilitates dialogue throughout the drafting process and beyond.** The PDU has its own platform, serving as both a communication hub and a co-design tool. It features three sections that document the process and encourage participation. Moreover, the PDU platform includes an interactive section presenting the plan in an easily accessible and engaging format.

What were the outcomes?

Co-developing and co-designing a strategic plan. The dedicated website reports that the collaborative drafting of the plan involved 305 actions, 105 lectures/presentations, 13 exhibitions, 21 publications, 500 experts, and 14,900 participants. These efforts resulted in the collection of solutions, documentation of workshops via audio and video materials, and the creation of several resources, including the "Quaderns PDU metropolità" collection and the "Barcelona Metròpolis de ciutades" catalogue.

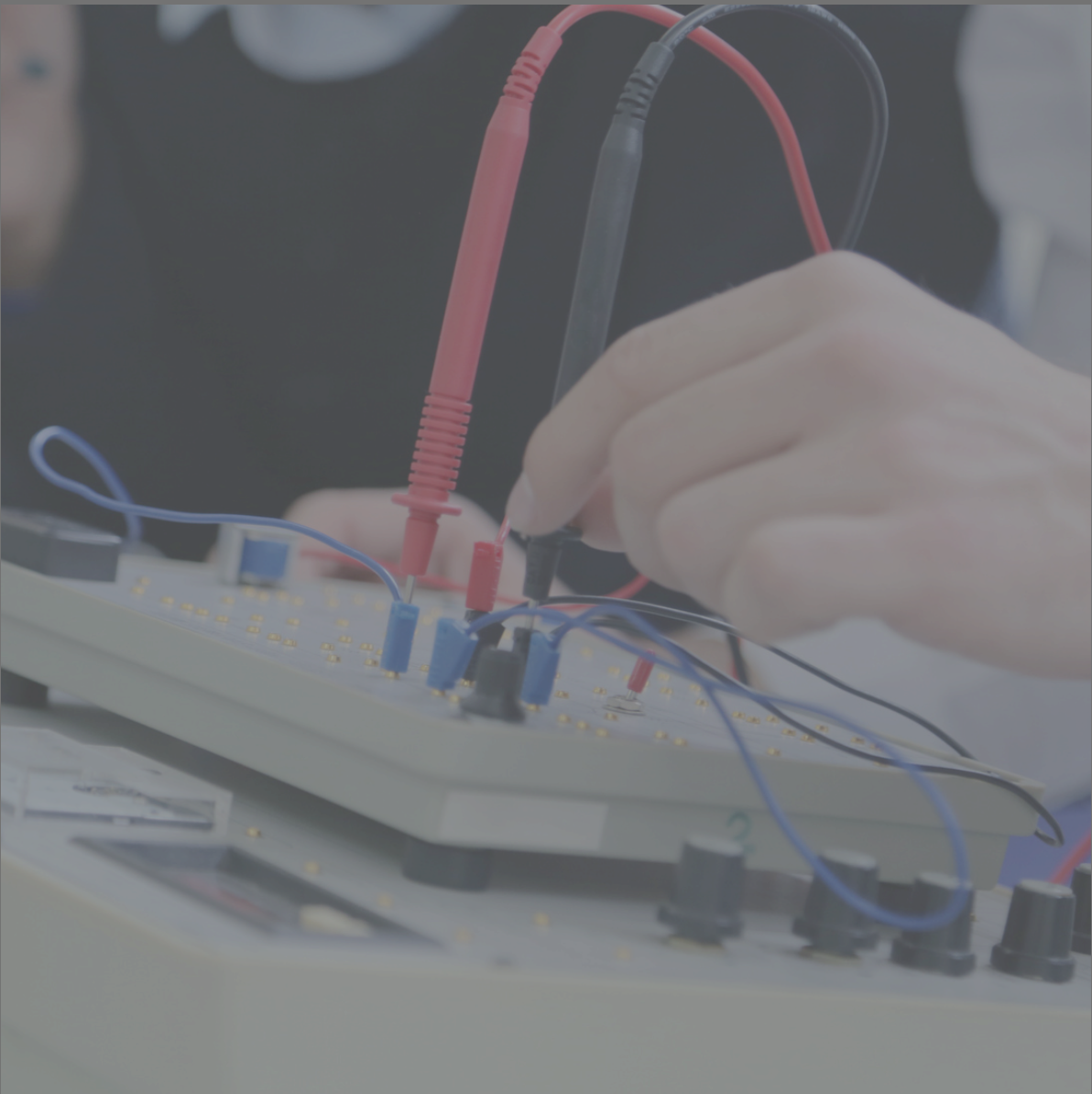
What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **A public contract with a local university to delineate the metropolitan area based on data.** In 2013, a research team from the Brno Masaryk University carried out an analysis regarding functional linkages between the core city and its surrounding localities. The paper analysed different functional linkages to delineate the metropolitan area, including commuting patterns for work and school, migration trends, and the accessibility of public transportation.
- **Local data to establish and operationalise collaboration at the metropolitan level in the absence of a specific legislative framework.** The data provided by the analysis was used by the metropolitan area to establish the metropolitan strategy and highlight the importance of integrated approaches. Moreover, the delineation led to the formalisation of the metropolitan territory for the purpose of ITI management, headed by the ITI Steering Committee, currently known as the Steering Committee of Brno Metropolitan area, acting as an informal management board. In 2014, all the progress obtained in 2013 resulted in the signing of Memoranda of Cooperation between Brno, the South Moravian Region, and five municipalities. Furthermore, in 2020, the sixth municipality signed the Memorandum.
- **Partnerships with academia to support strategic projects for the metropolitan area .** For example, the 'Institutionalisation of Metropolitan Cooperation as a Factor of Increasing the Motivation of Municipalities to Cooperate in Metropolitan Areas' (TAČR METROSPOL), led by the Faculty of Economics and Administration of Masaryk University, exemplifies this ongoing partnership with Brno Metropolitan Area. As one of the application guarantors, the Brno Metropolitan Area has engaged in this initiative, aimed to institutionalise metropolitan cooperation. The project ran from 2020-2022 and it was funded by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic.

What were the outcomes?

Started the cooperation at metropolitan level to enhance integrated and functional approaches. The partnership with academia has yielded significant benefits for the Brno Metropolitan Area. Research-derived data enabled voluntary cooperation among neighbouring localities, as evidenced by the development of an integrated development strategy at the metropolitan level for the 2014-2020 period. Building on this success, the metropolitan area continues to collaborate with academia to further address current and future challenges.

Enhancing the need for coordinated actions and initiating further initiatives to improve integrated strategic planning at metropolitan level. For the current programming period, 2021-2027, Brno Metropolitan Area mapped fragmentation as a challenge. As a result, the Czech Ministry for Local Development initiated a new territorial delineation process. This led to the inclusion of additional municipalities within the metropolitan area, increasing the total from 167 to 184. Consequently, there was a recognition of the need for coordinated action at metropolitan level, prompting appropriate measures to be taken.



Source: A general picture created by Mirzavis from Getty Images

BANSKA BYSTRICA REGION, SLOVAKIA

In order to enhance Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Slovakia's Banská Bystrica region, a pilot project was conceived and executed as part of the Catching-up Regions Initiative, following Slovakia's selection to participate in the program. The initiative aimed to provide assistance to less developed regions across the country. This case exemplifies the effectiveness of engaging all relevant stakeholders in shaping future investments, highlighting an advanced model of partnership focused on enhancing the local economy through collaborative service creation at the supra-local level.

What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **Interviews and focus groups to conduct an employer study.** Interviews and focus groups were used to gather data on the public sector's perspective on the gap in skills in the region, the standard of VET schools and their former students, as well as suggestions to optimise the educational system.
- **Interviews, web-based questionnaire and data-capture sheet to elaborate a VET school study.** To evaluate the VET system, interviews, web-based questionnaires and data capture sheets were employed. This approach provided insights into the challenges schools encounter in addressing the skill gap within the region and identifies areas requiring improvement to align with employers' requests. The data-capture sheet was used to collect administrative data about students, teachers and schools, enabling the other two instruments to focus on gathering more in depth information. This included the school's comprehension of regional market needs, evaluating curricula, examining internship opportunities, or exploring collaborations with other schools.
- **Partnerships to develop integrated investment packages.** Building on the analysis phase (including employer and VET school studies presented above), participants were selected and partnerships were established, involving representatives of the VET schools, authorities, and private sector to enhance the standard of vocational education in the Banská Bystrica Region. Co-developed measures and solutions (investment packages) included collaborative curriculum design, integrating workplace-like equipment in VET colleges, and establishing improved communication channels among stakeholders. These measures were designed to enhance the quality of vocational education and serve as a blueprint for coordinated endeavours aimed at fostering local economic development.

What were the outcomes?

Coordinated efforts for fostering economic development. As a result of this partnership, 8 comprehensive investment packages were crafted to meet the needs of educational institutions and businesses alike. These packages encompassed infrastructure enhancements and capacity-building initiatives for VET schools.

A mechanism of cooperation to innovate and improve VET education. This project offers a replicable model, providing a development framework that incorporates VET quality standards and accepted recommendations in the European region. The approach not only includes innovative solutions such as improvement networks, industry partnerships, and an enabling environment for quality assurance but also emphasizes an innovative mindset towards education. This involves seeking best practices nationally, regionally, and globally, and cultivating a culture that embraces change, even when it doesn't proceed as expected.



Source: Cluj-Napoca City Hall

CLUJ METROPOLITAN AREA, ROMANIA

In 2017, the local authority in Cluj-Napoca introduced the umbrella concept of CIIC – Civic Imagination and Innovation Center to enhance stakeholder engagement in the decision-making process. CIIC serves as a concept and a secure environment for fostering dialogue among citizens, civil society, experts, and representatives of the public administration. Over time, this concept was utilised for the consultation phase of the metropolitan-level Integrated Urban Development Strategy (IUDS), addressing topics extending beyond the city's boundaries, such as blue-green corridors and sustainable mobility.

The Centre is coordinated by a Board comprising community representatives from academia, the private and public sectors, and NGOs. Additionally, it has integrated a subdivision focused on urban innovation to enhance collaborative and innovative projects with stakeholders and further promote participatory governance.

What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **Public debates and participatory governance to activate the local community.** CIIC reinforces the local civic community and facilitates both online and offline participation through its hybrid events, enabling public debates and a participatory governance at city and metropolitan level.
- **Cooperation with academia and the private sector to co-design solutions.** The Centre encourages and enables collaboration with experts from academia and the private sector to analyse and debate development directions, challenges and solutions.
- **International cooperations to exchange best practices and form partnerships.** CIIC focuses on developing cooperation mechanisms with international cities to exchange ideas and best practices or jointly apply to EU calls.
- **International competitions for city project solutions to generate diverse and innovative proposals.** The local authority, in collaboration with the Order of Architects of Romania, is organising international design competitions for public projects through CIIC. This approach is founded on a validated framework and a selection criteria that meet European standards.
- **Co-designed climate neutrality initiatives to achieve strategic targets.** Under the European Commission's Mission "100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030", CIIC facilitates jointly developed projects to support the achievement of climate neutrality objectives.
- **Activities to align investment programs and projects with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** CIIC oversees the local implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in investment programs and projects by supporting the implementation of green projects and initiatives.
- **Provide support for youth involvement and address their needs.** The Centre supports the involvement of youth and implements the youth plan which comprises multiple projects at city and metropolitan level.

What were the outcomes?

Various forms of collaboration among community members to improve local development and an instrument that is extended at metropolitan level. Under the CIIC umbrella, 49 events were developed at local and metropolitan level. Some of the main success factors of this initiative was the fact that events were organised in a consistent manner, and they were well promoted, transforming the constantly used location of the events (a former casino building in the city's central park) into a centre for the community to gather and discuss common issues.



Source: Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy - Central Unit For Private-Public Partnership

KRAKOW METROPOLITAN AREA, POLAND

The Road Administration of the City of Krakow, acting on behalf of the municipality, entered into a Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement with a consortium of private companies. This partnership aims to finance, design, construct, and maintain the Krakowski Fast Tram. Through this PPP initiative, the city will introduce a new segment to its tram network, establishing a corridor that links existing tram network components while ensuring optimal communication speeds.

What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **Private-public partnership to improve public services.** Through a PPP agreement, the local administration enabled the construction of a double-track tram line, traction network, stops, and associated technical infrastructure including substations, traffic control, and information systems. To this end, the PPP agreement was signed in December 2021 and the contract spans 24 years.
- **Clear attributes are established for the public partner.** The Road Administration of Krakow main involvement was to identify and prepare the investment, while finding a private partner. Since June 2017, advisors from the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy's Central Unit for Private-Public Partnership (MFiPR) have been assisting in selecting a private partner, offering legal, financial, and technical expertise.
- **Additional support and expertise is provided by delegating roles to technical experts.** Advisors specialising in legal matters, technical issues, and financial matters were engaged before conducting the cost-benefit analysis. These advisors then participated in every stage of the bidding process, starting from announcing the contract and receiving applications to selecting potential partners, holding discussions, inviting offers, signing the PPP agreement, and completing the financial arrangements.
- **The process of implementing the project is taken over by the private partner.** Following the agreement, the private partner started the design work while also covering the financing responsibilities for investment and maintenance of the Krakowski Fast Tram.

What were the outcomes?

Enhanced infrastructure to improve accessibility to public transport options. The project aims to enhance the proportion of eco-friendly public transportation options available to residents while enhancing transport accessibility. This will be achieved by expanding tram line coverage and optimising traffic flow to reduce travel times.

Roles are defined, resources are pooled, and both partners assume shared risks through agreements. The public partner, represented by the Municipality of Krakow via the Road Administration of the City of Krakow, faces risks related to changes in laws, legal status of real estate, and alterations in taxes. Conversely, the private partner, comprising a consortium of companies led by PPP Solutions Polska Sp. z o. o. and Gulermak AGir Sanayi Insaat ve Taahhut AS as a partner, identifies risks including non-compliance with construction standards, cost escalation during investment and maintenance phases, availability uncertainties, improper maintenance/management risks, and potential difficulties in securing or losing financing. These risks were publicly disclosed on the official platform of the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy – Central Unit for Private-Public Partnership (PPP), as part of the case study of the Construction of the KST Tram Line project.



Source: Portico

WEST ATHENS, GREECE

The city of Egaleo, part of West Athens, applied for funding through a joint application to improve housing conditions and affordability as well as social dynamics (known as 'Rock the Block' project). The application was submitted and received funding under the first call of the European Urban Initiative (EUI) – Innovation Action (IA) program. This project was developed and applied for funding through a consortium, with the municipality as the lead partner.

The project aims to improve housing condition, provide affordable housing and cultivate a stronger community. As such, it covers actions to enhance appearance and visual appeal, and energy efficiency of multi-residence buildings, as well as actions to ensure affordability and improve social dynamics to foster social interaction.

What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **Drafting a joint application for funding to improve housing conditions and affordability as well as social dynamics.** The application foresees three levels of actions to reach its goals. The first level covers measures for infrastructure, technological and aesthetically improvements of the multi-residence blocks, which are aligned with the new 'Multi-residence blocks Action Plans'. This multi-residence buildings are mixed-used buildings comprising both residents and businesses. The second layer aims to secure affordable apartments by establishing a one-stop-shop delivering residents tenure safeguards and providing housing to citizens. Finally, to cultivate a stronger community, the projects foresees the development of a Co-living Hub for providing skill-building and educational activities, leading to a community that supports its members and takes collective responsibilities.
- **The consortium involved in the drafting and implementing phases of the project comprises the city, research institutions, universities, NGOs, and other relevant entities.** Specifically, the partners are the Municipality of Egaleo (Coordinator), the National Center for Natural Sciences Research "Demokritos", the Structural and Building Physics Laboratory of the Department of Civil Engineering of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Regional Development Institute of Panteion University, the civil company and cultural development Symbolo O.E., the office of Architectural research and practice AREA, the civil society organizations Urbana Lab, InCommON (Innovative Communities Inwards), Organosis Gi and AMKE Noi Paizame (UrbanDig Project).

What were the outcomes?

Accessed funding to pilote the project from the first call of the European Urban Initiative (EUI) – Innovation Action (IA) program. The project is one of the fourteen receivers of funding, amounting €3,280,920.00. This was the first EUI-IA Call For proposals and it received 99 applications from 21 EU member states.

Innovative urban housing policy that can be transferred at local, regional, and national levels by adapting its outcomes into guiding principles. The project is a tool for improving neighbourhood housing strategies because it offers a clear structure, establishes two new entities, and provides a financial tool. Overall, its structure comprises the following stages: launching a public call, evaluating the received submissions, establishing agreements of partnerships, organising consultations, and establish a mechanism to finance the project.

Fostering community engagement to combat isolation and provide affordable housing. The establishment of two new entities, the Co-living hub and Housing office, ensures that the member of the community interact and take collective responsibilities to support measures for housing affordability, respectively institutional measures are taken to safeguard tenants and guidance is provided to residents regarding housing aspects.



Source: Engaged Jiu Valley

JIU VALLEY FUNCTIONAL AREA, ROMANIA

The Engaged Jiu Valley Coalition, formed in 2019, unites NGOs across sectors for regional growth and development. Its actions are aligned with local, national and European strategic goals, contributing to sustainable development and transition to climate neutrality. For example, members of the coalition were involved in developing key strategies such as the Jiu Valley Strategy for Transition from Coal and the County Plan for Just Transition, and provided inputs for national and European documents. They collaborate with European NGOs, participate in Just Transition Working Groups, and are part of the entity that coordinates the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) instrument in the Jiu Valley.

What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **The civil society as a partner for local authorities.** The Engaged Jiu Valley Coalition stands out as an active and cohesive alliance of NGOs. This collaborative effort marks a significant milestone as the first initiative of its kind at the functional area level, fostering a culture of partnership among diverse stakeholders. Motivated by the aim of enhancing the region's quality of life and embracing global trends, the NGOs have united to translate their shared vision into comprehensive strategic objectives through collective action and resource pooling.

What were the outcomes?

Coordinated efforts to improve the local economy. The collaboration between the local authorities and the NGOs within the coalition led to the establishment of the Invest in Jiu Valley initiative, together with www.investinjiuvalley.com platform, to attract investors to the region.

Multi-level governance to support the region's transition towards an inclusive and sustainable economy. Four NGOs affiliated to the Engaged Jiu Valley Coalition are among the founding members of the Association for Integrated Territorial Development of the Jiu Valley, along with the local authorities, representatives of the private sector and the local academic institution. This association coordinates the implementation of the Jiu Valley Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) tool, which coordinates the region's strategy for transitioning towards an inclusive and sustainable economy.

The region's strategy was drafted through a collaborative process. Addressing historical economic challenges, brain-drain phenomena, and untapped potential, the coalition has emerged as a proactive advocate for the region's interests, leading to an engagement throughout the process of elaborating its strategy.

Improved collaborations at regional, national and EU level to foster innovation and knowledge exchange. The coalition has extended the area's reach through collaborations at regional, national, and European levels, fostering partnerships with international NGOs and participation in EU working groups (e.g., Just Transition Working Groups).

Increased cultural vitality and enhanced urban regeneration. Civil society initiatives have revitalised former mining sites through cultural events and street art interventions, such as the Vibrant Jiu Valley, the Jiu Valley Robotic Festival and Planeta Petrila, contributing to the region's rebranding efforts.

The community actively advocates for its needs at national and EU levels. The coalition has organised advocacy campaigns aimed at advancing the community's needs through active civic engagement (e.g., public letters or petitions).



Source: A general picture made by Björn Buxbaum-Conradi from Getty Images

ZAGREB URBAN AGGLOMERATION, CROATIA

The core city of Zagreb Urban Agglomeration applied for non-refundable funds under the NetZeroCities initiative, which is part of the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme in support of European Union's Green Deal. Aligned with the Net Zero Cities' goals, the project aims to increase green spaces within the courtyards of private residential buildings and to pilote and enhance a cooperation structure for future net zero projects.

To elaborate the project (known as the "Activating Green Courtyards for Carbon Neutrality" project) and apply for funding, a partnership was established between the City of Zagreb, the Faculty of Agriculture Zagreb, the Croatian Society of Landscape Architects, and the civil society organization Odraz. Additionally, another aspect of cooperation within this project involves engaging with local stakeholders, including citizens, students, NGOs, and business leaders.

What tools are highlighted by this case study?

- **Establishing a new cooperation structure for net zero interventions.** The project establishes the Climate-Neutral Greening Hub, a voluntary structure of cooperation. This project lays the ground for the hub by engaging with local stakeholders and developing the One-Stop-Shop for Climate-Neutral Greening Tactics platform.
- **The engagement process of local stakeholders.** The project envisions a process to map stakeholders, utilise offline and online communication channels, and develop monitoring, feedback, and evaluation tools. This approach fosters a long lasting partnership built on trust and facilitates two-way communication.
- **Training programs on climate neutrality for stakeholders.** Through this activity, the project advances work to increase knowledge regarding climate neutrality and other related subjects among local stakeholders. By doing so, it contributes to the development of a common level of understanding, which strengthens the cooperation structure.
- **Collaborative design workshop.** The workshop serves as an enabler to jointly develop solutions to transform private and semi-public outdoor spaces in green areas, as well as gathering knowledge for the one-stop-shop platform.
- **Brainstorming event with citizens and representatives of home owners' associations.** This format encourages citizens and representatives of home owners' associations to cooperate and elaborate cost-efficient interventions to insert greeneries within urban courtyards.
- **Collaboration with local schools and universities.** The project involves students in the process of generating solutions for this project. This collaboration provides innovative ideas as well as fosters their involvement in shaping their city.
- **Entrepreneurial discovery workshops.** This tool supports the development of local businesses around the idea of green works and landscaping interventions, leading to local solutions for future interventions.

What were the outcomes?

The city joined the second cohort of the Pilot Cities Programme portfolio alongside other 25 European cities. Through this program, the city serves as an innovation hub, testing solutions for climate neutrality within the local ecosystem with its stakeholders .

It received non-refundable funds from the EU Horizon Europe program. The project received 600,000 euros to implement both hard and soft interventions, including the green elements and alterations to urban courtyards, as well as enhancing knowledge and solutions for climate neutrality, and developing a local system to support green start ups and businesses.

The cooperation structure for all local climate-neutral actions. The Climate-Neutral Greening Hub comprises various stakeholders and serves as the platform for all climate-neutral solutions.



What are the
EU financial resources?

EU financial resources allocated to improve governance at city or functional area level should be approached from two perspectives. First, it is imperative to prioritize capacity building as it serves as the foundation for effective governance and sustainable development. Capacity-building initiatives give local authorities and stakeholders the knowledge, skills and resources to tackle complex challenges, implement innovative solutions and make informed decisions. By investing in capacity building, cities can strengthen their institutional capacities, improve their policy development and implementation, and increase their resilience to future challenges.

Second, when discussing new projects, attention must be paid to consortia, emphasising the importance of staying united, identifying needs, proposing solutions together and jointly applying and implementing projects.

Listed below are several EU funding opportunities for capacity building and programs that support joint applications. While this list isn't exhaustive, it aims to highlight EU funds that align with these objectives, encouraging readers to stay updated and explore multiple funding sources.

EXAMPLES OF EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES THAT SUPPORTS CAPACITY-BUILDING

URBACT - is a programme that promotes transformation across Europe by fostering cooperation and idea exchange among cities through thematic networks. It enhances the capabilities of local stakeholders in designing and implementing integrated, participatory policies. Moreover, URBACT facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and best practices among cities, contributing to positive urban development outcomes and its platform empowers all local stakeholders to drive change within their communities. Recognizing the importance of inclusivity, URBACT offers tools and expertise to a diverse range of individuals, from decision-makers to residents. By equipping those at the forefront of sustainable and integrated urban development with the necessary skills and resources, URBACT enables them to effectively address the challenges and opportunities within their cities. Through collaboration and knowledge sharing, URBACT continues to facilitate positive transformation and empower local actors to shape the future of their communities.

More about tools and sources of funding opportunities you can find here: <https://urbact.eu>

EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE (EUI) - is dedicated to fostering collaborative and inclusive Sustainable Urban Development policies and practices across Europe. Through capacity building, knowledge sharing, and targeted activities, EUI aims to enhance the capabilities of cities in designing and executing sustainable strategies. Its offerings include City-to-City Exchanges, Peer Reviews, and capacity-building events, all aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of urban development initiatives. EUI's commitment to fostering collaboration and sharing best practices is exemplified in its ongoing efforts to strengthen urban development efforts throughout Europe.

More about open calls and other opportunities you can find on the official webpage of the programme: <https://www.urban-initiative.eu>

THE INTERREG EUROPE PROGRAMME - facilitates the exchange and transfer of experience, innovative approaches, and capacity building among public authorities and other relevant organizations throughout Europe. It aims to enhance regional development policy instruments, including programs aligned with the Investment for jobs and growth objectives.

More about open calls and other opportunities you can find on the official webpage of the programme: <https://www.interregeurope.eu>

JUST TRANSITION PLATFORM - JTP Groundwork offers extensive technical assistance services, providing customized capacity building and advisory support to JTF regions. The objective is to assist regions in fulfilling their Territorial Just Transition Plans' (TJTTPs) commitments and priorities effectively.

For more information please visit the funding opportunities page : https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform/opportunities_en.

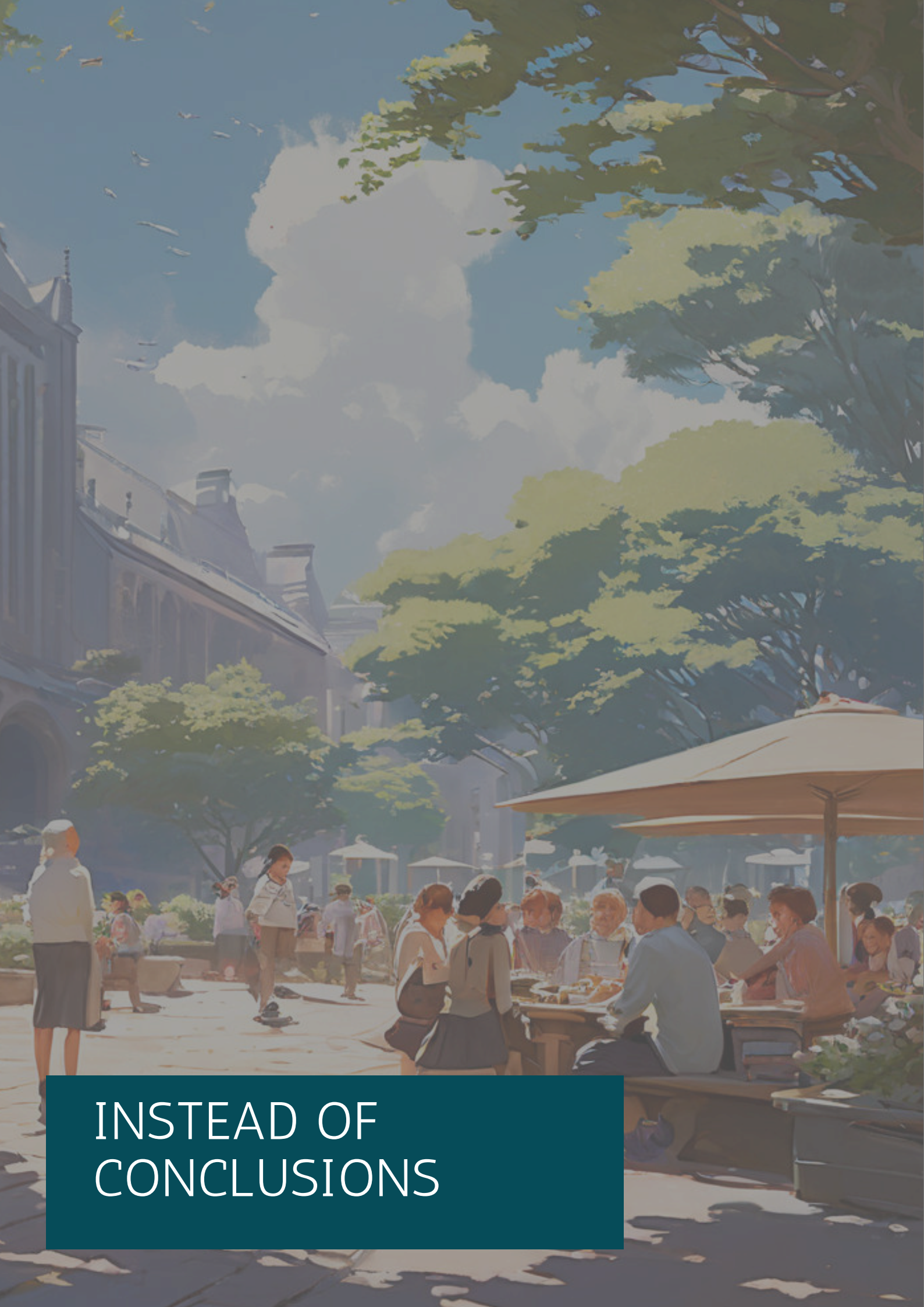
EXAMPLES OF EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES THAT FUND JOINT APPLICATION PROJECTS

HORIZON EUROPE PROGRAMME - finances research, innovation, and development projects across various fields, addressing societal challenges and promoting technological advancement and competitiveness.

LIFE PROGRAMME - finances projects aimed at promoting sustainability, circular economy, energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, climate resilience, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and innovative green initiatives.

THE INTERREG EUROPE PROGRAMME - finances projects aimed at enhancing research and innovation capacities, promoting sustainability, fostering social inclusion, improving connectivity, and advancing governance mechanisms across European regions.

However, the programmes above mentioned represent only a set of relevant examples of EU funding sources that generally support joint applications. For more European funding programs that might support projects implemented in partnerships between multiple actors, you can always access the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#).



INSTEAD OF
CONCLUSIONS

AIM FOR PARTNERSHIPS.

ALONE WE GO QUICK,
TOGETHER WE GO FAR!

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