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ECOCORE QUARTERLY REPORT



Credit: Luminous Media - Photo and video production

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Introduction

Welcome to the first quarterly report of the URBACT funded EcoCore network!

The focus of work for these nine small European cities, all located in strategic transport corridors is to learn together and from each other, how best to accelerate the green transition in the industrial areas of their cities.

Led by Fingal County Council, Dublin the consortium also includes Dubrovnik, Ormož, Alba Iulia, Kekava, Santo Tirso, Pärnu Linnavalitsus, Villena and Tuusula.

EcoCore aims to build the capacity of small cities to address the major challenge of climate change by pursuing a green economy agenda, helping local stakeholders, particularly enterprises to transition to low-carbon economic activities, especially in their choices of energy sources for transportation, heating and electricity.

Network activities will create significant momentum for a green energy transition, especially in the work environments of the industrial areas of the partner cities



Thematic Focus

The network has identified five main transition drivers or areas where the network partners can facilitate, enable and promote the green transition in their cities, namely:

- 1** Planning & Development for Green Industrial Transition
- 2** Developing and nurturing the Innovation Ecosystem in support of the Green Transition
- 3** The Municipality as Green Transition leader
- 4** Supporting the Green Transition skills pipeline
- 5** Branding and Marketing

Thematic Focus

The following diagram showcases some transition driver practical examples that were identified in the partner cities. A more extensive list or ‘menu’ of transition drivers in each partner city is included in the appendix.



Figure 1: EcoCore Green Industrial Transition Drivers Locally

These five transition drivers represent the key themes of our network. A Core Network meeting will be held in each of the partner cities. These meetings will provide an opportunity to reflect on these topics and showcase inspiring local initiatives within these overarching themes.

EcoCore Network Highlights



CSRD Masterclass

with Tiago Ferreira



Having reached the key milestones of the activation phase, the first three months of the planning actions phase (January – March 2024) got off to a flying start.

Following the approval of the Baseline Study in early January, network activities kicked off with an online masterclass on 23rd January on the topic of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and what it means for businesses and cities.

Ad hoc expert Tiago Ferreira, shared an overview of the Directive, the related mandatory reporting requirements and provided some musings on the potential impact on businesses and cities.

As CSRD targets mainly larger companies with more than 250 employees or in excess of €40 million net turnover, smaller cities with a strong SME base might wonder what it has to do with them. While CSRD does target mainly larger companies, requiring them to disclose the impacts they may have on climate and society, it will have an impact right across the value chain. This means that while smaller companies are not directly within the scope of the directive, they may need to provide information to larger companies in due course if they are part of the value chain.

Partners reflected on what role their own cities could play in supporting companies to navigate and adapt to the CSRD era. Some cities recognised a need to provide training and capacity building for companies around CSRD and its likely impacts on business.

Reporting standards are divided into three categories, known as Scope 1, 2 and 3. It is estimated that around 80% of GHG emissions can be found in scope 3. Looking at both the upstream and downstream associated activities within this category, there is clear scope for cities to gain a green economy competitive advantage by focussing their strategic planning and investment activities in these areas. At the same time, since the CSRD framework should be used on public companies, then it could be a useful framework to support a city’s sustainable management and transparency.

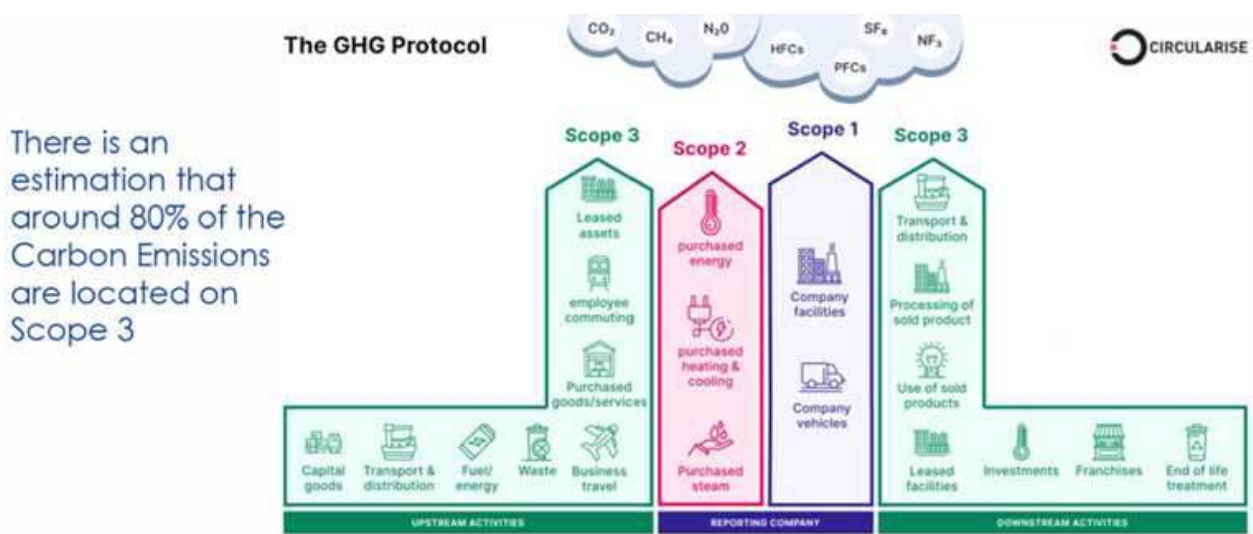


Figure 2: Carbon Footprint Scope 1, 2 and 3

Research shows that up to half of investors are looking to increase their investments in companies with strong ESG (environmental, social, governance) performance within the next three years. As companies look to establish new businesses or to relocate, it makes sense that they will choose locations which can enable them carry out their business as sustainably as possible and CSRD reporting requirements will provide a key benchmark in this regard.

Regarding opportunities that CSRD presents for cities in relation to driving green economic development, partners concluded that opportunities existed for cities to promote sustainable procurement procedures by choosing suppliers with better ESG rankings.

EcoCore CSRD Takeaways

ESG performance is becoming critical for companies in terms of ease of access to financial sources like bank loans or EU Grants. Good ESG locations will be a competitive advantage to attract investments and entrepreneurs to the city. Cities can strategically capitalise on the opportunities provided by CSR to gain competitive advantage in the era of green industrial transition. The top three takeaways for partners from this session were as follows:

1

Greening ESG related services = Economic Competitive Advantage for Cities

The ESG quality of scope 1, 2 and 3 related services in cities, will affect a company's ESG performance (e.g. % of renewable energy, % of staff using sustainable transport modes). Thus a city's ESG performance in terms of the services they provide will reflect its attractiveness and competitiveness as location for business development and relocation.

2

High Performing ESG Economy = Skills & Talent Attraction & Retention

Better ESG performance within the local economy, means a better working environment and competitiveness in terms of retaining and attracting talent.

3

Driving change by improving ESG indicators = Better Cities

A high performing ESG economy means a better environment, better social security and ultimately better quality of life and better cities overall!

While CSRD may first appear to be something that only large companies need to concern themselves with, it is in fact something all companies need to be aware of.

For those cities who want to take a proactive role and become a location of choice for green business then it is a pivotal piece of legislation which will drive change in both public and private strategic planning and operations.

[Check out Tiago's short summary video here.](#)

Facilitative Leadership Skills

with Louise O'Meara



February brought further EcoCore action, with the network turning its focus to capacity building for ULG coordinators and partners.

Two, four-hour online workshops took place on 16th and 23rd February, focussed on developing facilitation skills. The workshops were designed and delivered by Dr. Louise O'Meara, Programme Director at the Clinton Leadership Institute at Queens University Belfast.

Participants explored strategies and skills for designing and facilitating meeting processes so that alignment and consensus is built with stakeholders holding disparate points of view and needs.

Workshops included a mix of theory and practical exercises and sought to support ULG coordinators with the complex task of facilitating the participative action planning process.

Participants learned how to:

- Undertake a stakeholder mapping and analysis
- Develop and decide on a decision making process
- Develop an operational agenda for multi-stakeholder meetings
- How to build agreement in a discussion
- How to draft desired outcome statements

Introducing Test Actions

with Eileen Crowley



A further online session took place on 27th February focussed on introducing partners to URBACT test actions. The intended outcome of the session was to ensure that participants had a clear understanding of the purpose of test actions and know how to use some tools to aid in the co-creation process, so that they can proceed with co-designing test actions with their ULGs.

The session introduced test actions, their purpose and usefulness and provided some practical examples of test actions previously carried out by other cities. Some tools were also introduced to aid in the co-creation process including the brainstorming board, attractiveness map and action table (see the Facilitator's toolbox). Eileen also explained the ideation process and provided some tips and guidance for navigating and facilitating this process.

'DREAM BIG, START SMALL, BUT MOST OF ALL, START'

Simon Sinek

Core Network Meeting

Santo Tirso



Credit: Luminous Media - Photo & video production

For the first time since meeting in Balbriggan, Co.Dublin in November 2023, network partners gathered in Santo Tirso for their first core network meeting of the action planning phase on 12th and 13th March.

Taking advantage of the warm spring sunshine, partners were treated to a fun and energising icebreaker of social bingo by Aliados consulting. The icebreaker session took place outdoors in the riverside courtyard of the recently renovated Fábrica Santo Tirso, a former spinning mill and textile factory (more information on the Fábrica can be found in the case study on page 14.)



Credit: Luminous Media - Photo & video production

Credit: Luminous Media - Photo and video production

Today, the partly renovated (43,000m²) factory symbolises a new industrial vision for the city, one that is not driven solely by economic gain but which can benefit the city's social and environmental fabric too. Innovation and collaboration is key to making this a success and today the Fábrica acts as a multi-functional hub supporting collaboration and creativity across sectors.

The factory which is being renovated on phased basis, is home to and managed by Invest Santo Tirso, which was created in 2015 to act as a one stop shop for potential investors in the area and to support economic development in the city. It provides a modern work and business space, an educational, experimentation and innovation space, as well as a cultural, events and leisure space for the city and it was here that partners congregated for the second EcoCore core network meeting.



Credit: Luminous Media - Photo & video production

CASE STUDY

FÁBRICA

SANTO TIRSO

A cultural & creative hotspot shaping industrial renaissance in the city



Background

The former textile factory, Fábrica Santo Tirso, founded in 1898, has undergone redevelopment into a multifunctional space, revitalizing the city's cultural and creative quarter. This transformation is part of a broader regeneration effort and economic development strategy aimed at leveraging the opportunities of the green industrial transition. Despite ceasing activity in 1990, the factory remains a significant landmark in Santo Tirso's history, symbolising the region's industrial development.

While the textile industry brought economic prosperity, it also caused environmental degradation, particularly to the Rio Ave (river). The renovated factory symbolizes a new industrial vision focused not only on economic gain but also on social and environmental benefits. Collaboration and innovation are central to its success, with Fábrica Santo Tirso serving as a multi-functional hub supporting creativity and collaboration across various sectors.

Managed by the municipality through INVEST Santo Tirso, the factory offers workspaces, educational facilities, and cultural and leisure amenities including:

- Fashion and Design Incubator (IMoD)
- Business & Innovation Centre synergising with IMoD
- Cultural & Art Centre & event space
- Textile, fashion and civil construction professional training centres
- Higher Technical Professional Courses with Polytechnic of Porto
- Textile Industry Interpretive Centre
- Centre for the Development of Digital Skills
- Communal services and amenities
- Urban Gardens.

The EcoCore Project

Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

THIS PHASED RENOVATION OF THE 43,000 M2 INDUSTRIAL SPACE REFLECTS A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN THE MUNICIPALITY



Timeline & Funding

- 2008 - Santo Thyrso Foundation establishes the Business and Innovation Centre. Funding for rehabilitation of €1,755,000 was received from the Regional Operational Programme (ERDF).
- 2012 - Cultural Hall & Interpretive Centre opened thanks to an investment of €2.2 million, co-financed by the National Strategic Reference Framework.
- 2013 - Opening of Fashion and Design Incubator (IMOD) with an investment of around €4 million co-finance from the Regional Operational Programme (ERDF).
- 2024 - Refurbishment of the spaces dedicated to CESAE Centre for Development of Digital Skills will begin.

Results to date

- 150 events per year between January 2023 and December 2023 (an average of 150 events per year).
- 200 students per year enrolled in educational courses since 2017.
- More than 30 businesses incubated.

Future Plans

10,000 metres² of the factory has yet to be rehabilitated. The final design plan is yet to be determined. It is envisaged that training spaces equipped with workshops (both theoretical and practical training) will be created in order to contribute to the local and regional industry.

Vera Araújo

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URBACT



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the European Union
Interreg



Credit: Luminous Media - Photo and video production

One of the key aims of the meeting was to reflect and share experiences on ensuring an integrated approach to action planning. Following the icebreaker Ms. Irina Rotaru, Project Officer from the URBACT secretariat reminded partners of the key aspects and importance of ensuring an integrated approach in action planning. She also reminded partners of the importance of the URBACT cross cutting themes of digitalisation, gender and diversity and the green transition.

Following this partners were invited to form six small working groups and to come together in their working groups around breakout tables equipped with markers, sticky notes and an integration grid (see toolbox for more details). Partners were asked to work together on completing the grid. Afterwards participants were asked to feedback to the wider group.



Credit: Luminous Media - Photo and video production

Participants found the grid a helpful tool and said that they would likely use it locally with their own teams and ULG to identify ways in which they could improve on their current approach to integration.

Participants commented on the importance of ensuring that all aspects of the integrated approach were tackled locally to ensure sustainable development.

From an EcoCore perspective however it was commented that the vertical and territorial aspects were vital in driving the strategic change required by EcoCore partners.

Finally participants reflected on the common challenge of maintaining stakeholder engagement in a process where impacts often do not become visible in the short term and may sometimes not be felt for a period of ten years or more.



Summary of Network Progress

Moving on, lead expert Eileen Crowley presented a short summary of partner progress with data gathered from a survey previously circulated to and completed by partners.

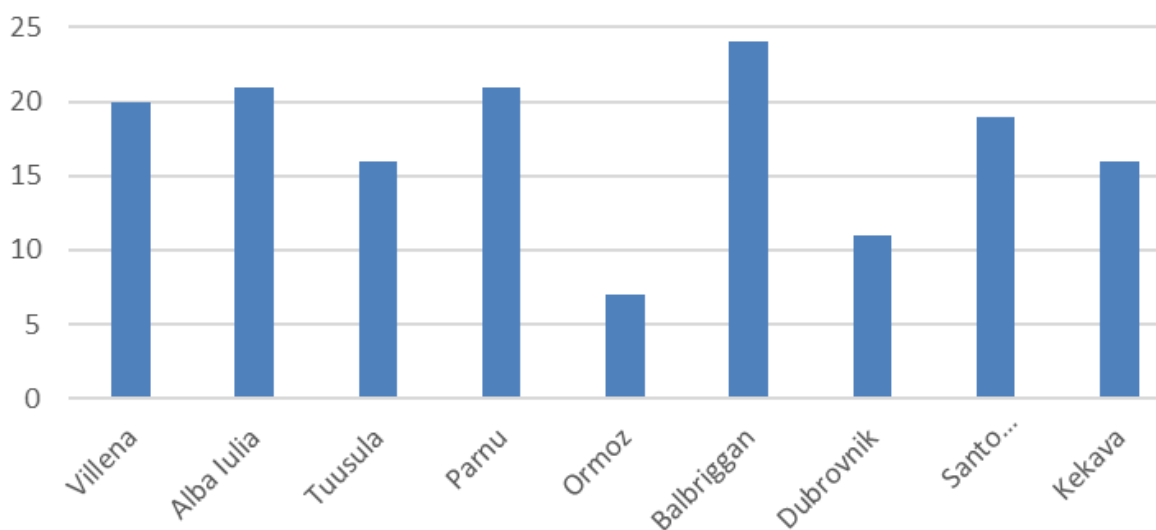


Figure 3: Number of ULG members per partner

Bearing in mind that ULG membership will be fluid throughout the action planning process the approximate ULG membership numbers varies between partners from seven in Ormoz to 24 in Balbriggan.

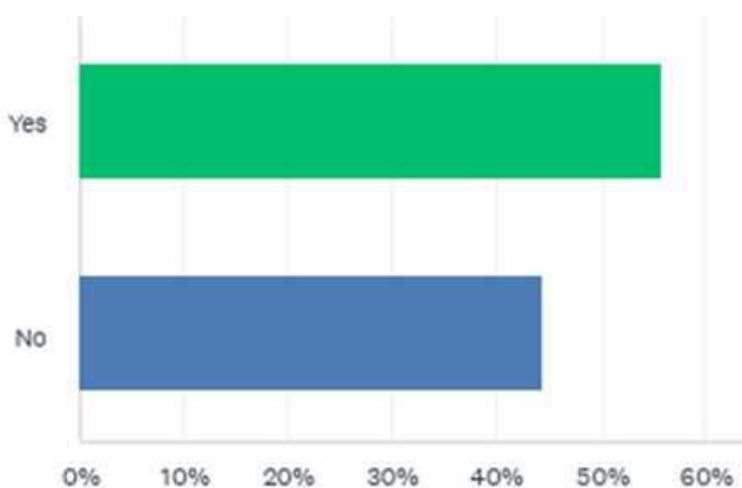
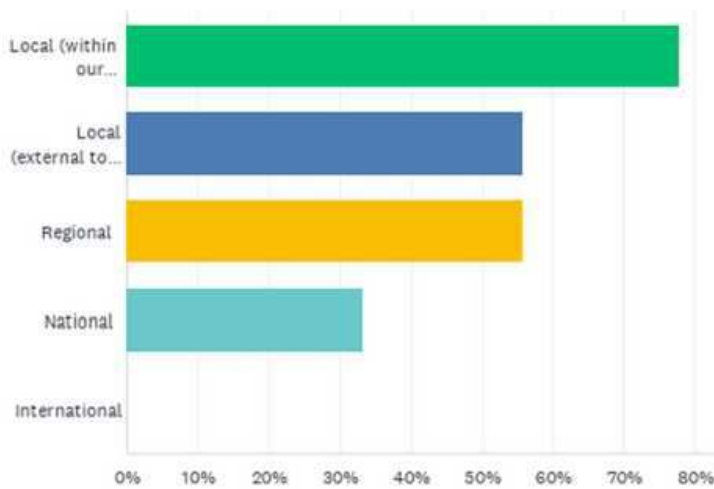


Figure 4: Has the partner made changes to the ULG membership in this quarter?

More than half (55%) of the partners have made changes to their ULG membership during this first quarter.

Such changes included:

- Adding additional members
- Changes due to a change in project staff
- Inclusion of neighbouring county members
- Members change according to ULG meeting topic



In terms of territorial representation within the ULG, more than half of partners (55%) have regional representatives as members of their ULG, while one third of them have national representatives participating in ULG activities.

Figure 5: Which of the following territorial levels are represented by your ULG members

One third of partners said they were experiencing difficulties engaging the necessary stakeholders. Over 20% said they found it challenging to ensure balanced contributions from stakeholders, while one partner said they found it difficult to keep meetings focussed and on track. Just under half of respondents (or four partners) said they had no challenges to report with regard to their ULG.

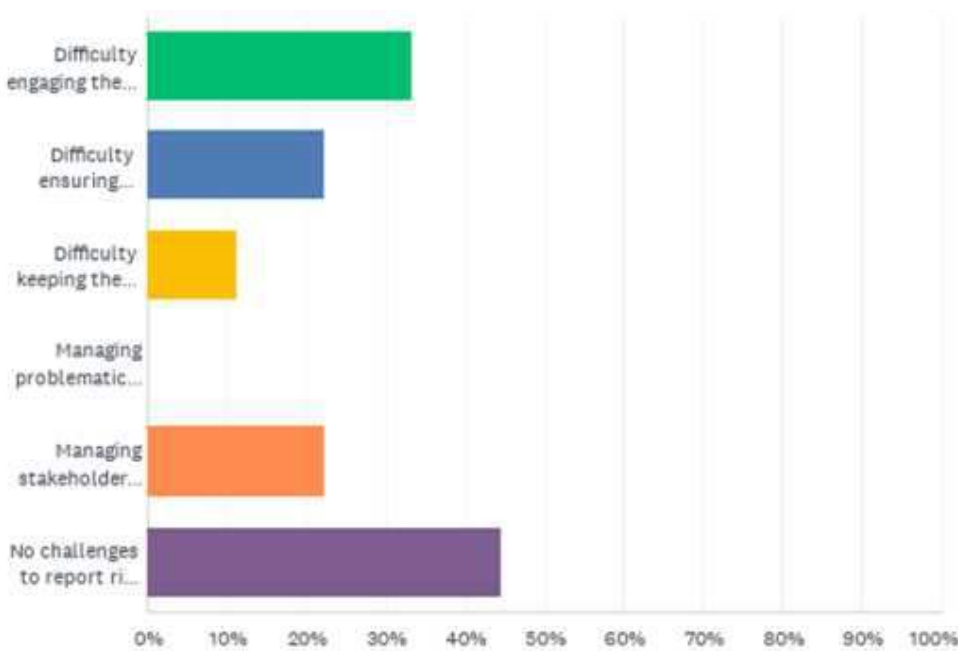


Figure 6: What challenges, if any, are you experiencing in your ULG?

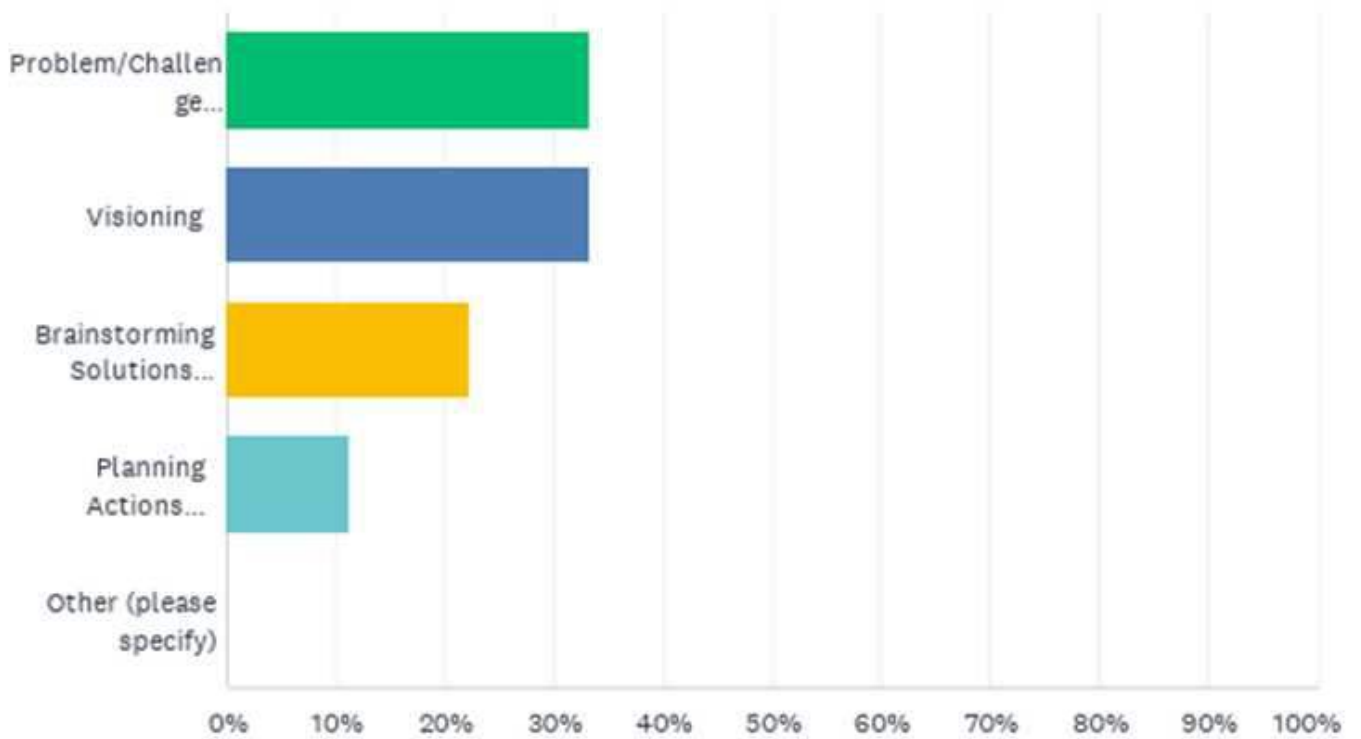


Figure 7: What stage are you at in the action planning process?

In terms of action planning progress, one third of partners cite themselves as being at the challenge identification and analysis stage, while another third say they are at the visioning stage of the action planning process.

Two partners say they are brainstorming solutions while one partner has entered the action planning stage.



Almost all partners plan to undertake at least one test action during the course of the project. Two partners plan to undertake more than one test action. One partner doesn't yet have a test action idea and cannot yet confirm whether or not they will proceed with a test action.

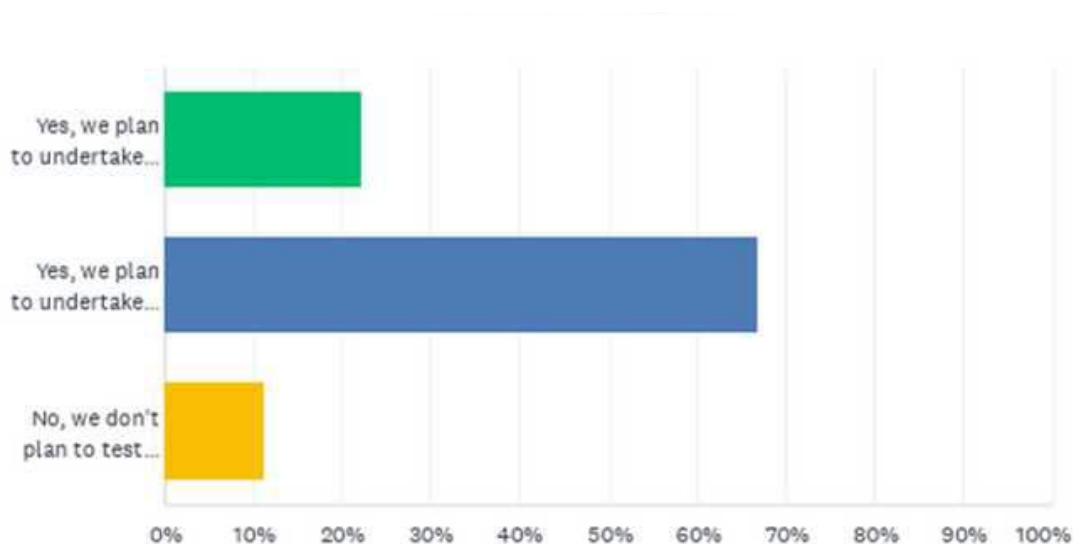


Figure 8: Will you undertake a test action in your city?

The following are some early test action ideas cited by partners:

- Creating a virtual model of a large scale project in 2025 to increase understanding and dialogue with citizens and other stakeholders – Tuusula
- Test Estonia-Latvia economic development coordination conference for municipalities (Not capital cities) who are located next to Via Baltica highway and Rail Baltica transport corridor. -Parnu (centre of the corridor)
- Testing a bike ride between the business zone and the city to promote footfall & sustainable modes. Test how many people from the business zone would use these (hired) bicycles and for what purpose. – Ormoz
- Small mobility point – Kekava

More on partner activities and progress at the local level can be found in the following section.

Moving on, lead expert Eileen Crowley presented a short summary of partner progress with data gathered from a survey previously circulated to and completed by partners. She reminded partners of the importance of the ULG as a vehicle for ensuring progress in the action planning process. More on partner activities and progress at the local level can be found in the following section.

Following the coffee break Vera Araújo from Invest Santo Tirso, supported by Aliados Consulting, treated participants to a fun and interactive presentation via Mentimeter, summarising industrial development and the innovation ecosystem in Santo Tirso.

Invest Santo Tirso provides acts as a one stop shop for potential investors and offers them a suite of support services including:

- Information, support and ongoing monitoring of investment projects in the municipality relating to industry, commerce, tourism and rural development;
- Promoting business parks and rural development;
- Processing requests from potential investors, to obtain the status of “Project of Municipal Interest” (see case study on the following pages for more details);
- Information on Incentive Systems available within the framework of Portugal 2020;
- Promotional activities in the areas of tourism and cultural and creative industries;
- Promoting the assets and initiatives that make up Fábrica de Santo Thyrso, a hub for Fashion and Cultural and Creative Activities and Industries.

This was followed by a visit to the Interpretive Centre in Fábrica Santo Tirso where partners were provided with a tour and a summary of the history of the space, the importance of the textile industry in the economic development of the region and it’s rebirth into the Fábrica Santo Tirso that is evolving today.



CASE STUDY PROJECTS OF MUNICIPAL PRIORITY

Fast Tracking Industrial Development
in Santo Tirso



Background

Santo Tirso, in northern Portugal, is a region famed for its industrial magnetism. This fame is not a result of luck, but of the strategic, proactive and evidence based approach taken by the municipality to investor attraction.

The process of fast tracking of industrial development licencing for projects deemed of strategic importance, developed in 2015, is one part of this approach.

Investors looking to establish industry in the area may apply for the 'municipal interest project' status which is awarded after a quick analysis of the value of the investment, particularly in terms of value creation and employment.

Assessment Criteria

- Amount of investment to be made
- Number of net direct jobs to be created
- Project implementation deadline
- Location of the promoter's headquarters in the municipality of Santo Tirso
- Manifestation of environmental interest (10%)
- Strong export vocation (> 50% of revenue directed to external markets)
- Special interest of the project for the territory's economy and its integration into the social development model

Benefits of the Status to Investors

- Fast tracking of all administrative procedures related to the development including industrial and environmental licencing, approval of the design etc.
- Tax reduction or exemption
- Reduction or exemption from development levies

The EcoCore Project

Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

'ENTREPRENEURS GREATLY APPRECIATE OUR COMMITMENT AND ROLE AS A VITAL LINK BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR'

Invest Santo Tirso Team



Process

- The investor's first contact is with the INVEST Santo Tirso technician, where they present their investment project and the physical requirements (space) they need.
- INVEST consults its database of available properties as well as known land owners, whose space allows for the installation of the investment (compatibility with the land and the activity).
- INVEST compiles this information and forwards it to the investor, allowing them to choose the space that best suits their business idea.
- From the initial contact onward, the investor is accompanied at all times.

Results to date

- 119 projects approved with a total investment value of €548,944,711
- 2,261 jobs to be created (projection based on investment)
- 50% reduction in municipal fees to businesses to a value of €2,478,380
- Total tax benefits to companies from 2015-2023 amounted to €8,875,534

Resources Required

Invest Santo Tirso with a staff of 8 people are responsible for the operation of the mechanism.

Future Plans

Through EcoCore the municipality together with stakeholders aim to revise the fast tracking criteria to better align with CSRD and ESG criteria.

Following the lunch break, Mr. Rui Barros Garcia from the industrial development company García García, introduced participants to his role in developing industrial zones in Santo Tirso. The development company García García, promote Santo Tirso (among other Portuguese cities) to potential investors looking to develop industrial spaces or locate their business in Portugal.

Once a suitable site is identified and all licensing requirements fulfilled, García García provide a design and build service to the investor.

They also play a role in the management of industrial parks and Rui highlighted the importance of data collection since one can't manage what they don't measure. He provided some interesting practical examples including for example the role of data collection and analysis in convincing the LIDL distribution centre to relocate to Santo Tirso from a nearby city.



In this instance, a simple calculation of distance and fuel used getting to/from key transport corridors was critical in showcasing the Co2 footprint reduction enabled by the relocation. Rui reminded participants that the ability to provide practical examples of how a company's Co2 footprint can be reduced based on a particular location's attributes, will play an increasingly important role in attracting new businesses to a particular city.

Following the presentation by Rui participants took a bus to La Hermida business zone, one of the newest industrial parks in the city. There, participants visited the WEG facility, where motors and drives are manufactured for the global market. A presentation was delivered focussed on the company's sustainability strategy and with a focus on how the company is driving the green transition. While the company is taking multiple actions to tackle it's internal carbon footprint it has not yet embarked on promoting a reduction in the carbon emissions of its value chain. This will be the next step in its sustainability strategy.

The company's real time motion fleet management system was also showcased, highlighting the role of digitalisation in driving the green transition with industry. The software enables a proactive rather than a reactive approach to the maintenance and management of their machinery and assets. This means increased efficiency and the possibility to identify and rectify faults before they happen, saving the business operational losses and lengthening the lifespan of operating machinery.

A key reflection arising from the visit was the fact that while businesses are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint internally there is a lot of untapped potential to drive carbon footprint reduction through facilitating matchmaking and collaboration between businesses. Partner cities can reflect on what role they could play in this regard. The network will seek to gather good practices on this topic during the workshop on green and smart business parks planned for the core network meeting in Villena in November.



Santo Tirso CNM

Reflections

The morning of the second day of the core network meeting provided time for participants to reflect on the learnings and key messages from the previous day. Participants noted the following takeaways and reflections.

1

The Integrated Approach to Action Planning

All five overarching aspects of the integrated approach, are critical to ensuring sustainable action planning and development. Vertical and territorial integration are of key strategic importance to this network.

2

Harnessing the potential of industrial heritage in the green transition

Fábrica Santo Tirso - a good example of reimagining industrial heritage to become a hub for innovation, collaboration, creativity and economic development better aligned with the green and just transitions.

3

Driving change by improving ESG indicators = Better Cities

A high performing ESG economy means a better environment, better social security and ultimately better quality of life and better cities overall!

4

Public Private Partnerships are critical in driving impact

The PPP Garcia Garcia & Invest Santo Tirso is driving industrial development and competitive advantage in Santo Tirso, supported by fast tracking development licencing through the projects of municipal importance

5

People, relationships and building trust are key

Trust, relationship building, speedy communication and municipality staff with an entrepreneurial mindset are key to attracting investment.

6**Municipality role in leading change**

The municipality can provide a valuable communication channel between businesses and the national department responsible for enterprise development. The Mayor can play a key leadership role here.

7**Municipality role in facilitating connectivity and innovation**

While businesses are taking steps to reduce their carbon footprint internally there is a lot of untapped potential to drive carbon footprint reduction through facilitating matchmaking and collaboration BETWEEN businesses. What role for municipalities here?

8**Data collection and analysis - prerequisites for driving change**

You can't manage what you don't measure. Data collection and analysis is an essential pre-requisite for driving green transition e.g. promoting car-pooling within industrial zones, modal analysis to develop sustainable mobility plans, analysis of material flows to promote industrial symbiosis. The municipality (and academia) can play a role here.

9**Sell your location's ability to enable carbon footprint reduction**

Providing practical examples of how you can reduce a company's Co2 footprint will play an increasingly important role in attracting new businesses to your city. Santo Tirso convinced LIDL distribution centre to relocate there from a nearby city through this method based on a simple calculation of distance and fuel used getting to/from key transport corridors.



Invest Santo Tirso's Branding & Marketing Strategy

Following the morning reflection, Vera Araújo presented the branding & marketing strategy that promotes Santo Tirso as a location for industrial investment.

Key points of the strategy in Santo Tirso are as follows:

- Identifying the strengths that differentiate Santo Tirso from other municipalities
- Developing a name and brand that is easily recognisable (Invest Santo Tirso)
- Identifying marketing channels (fairs, social media, press and advertising campaigns) and adopting strategies to promote Santo Tirso as a destination for industrial investment
- Developing partnerships with cross sectoral stakeholders that can help promote Santo Tirso as an attractive location for industrial investment.

[You can find Invest Santo Tirso's promotional video here](#)

[You can find a promotional video on the Fábrica Santo Tirso here](#)



Sustainable Mobility & Transport

Before the coffee break, Vera Araújo and Rafael Silva presented on sustainable mobility & transport initiatives in Santo Tirso and the wider metropolitan area.

They reflected on the importance of taking an integrated approach and in the case of Santo Tirso the need to gather data on the transport needs and habits of the metropolitan population and to use identify opportunities to build critical mass and build the business case for alternative transport modes and public transport routes and schedules.

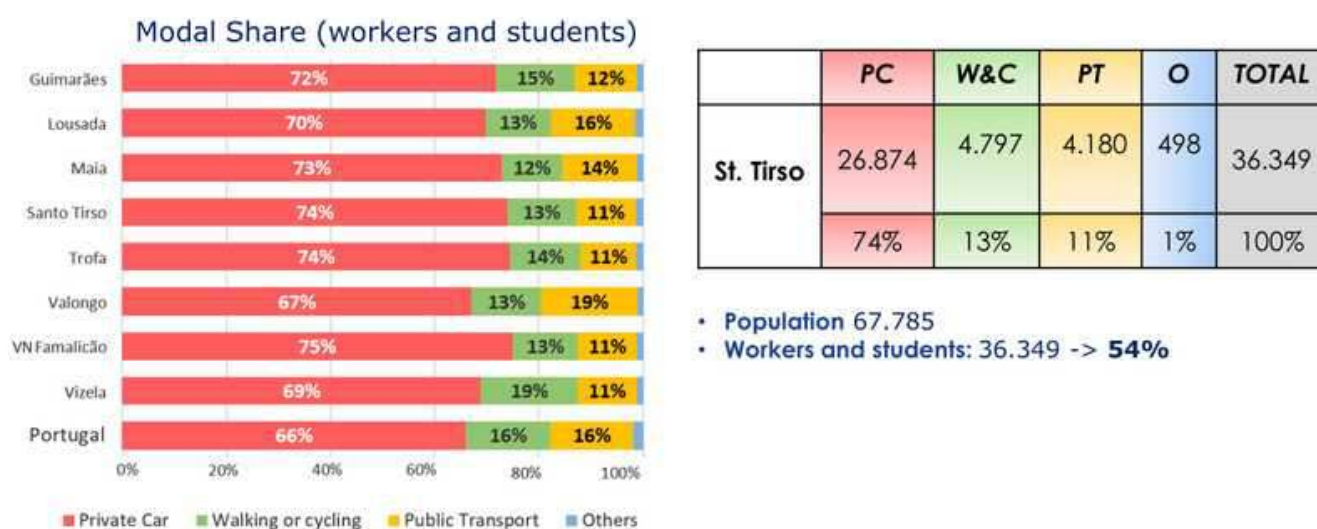


Figure 9: Modal Share in Santo Tirso

While the private car is by far the preferred and dominant mode of transport in Santo Tirso and the wider metropolitan area, the city, in partnership with neighbouring municipalities and public transport providers, is developing an integrated ticketing system to be rolled out across the metropolitan area in an effort to increase the use of public transport modes.

The city is also investing over €8 million in cycling infrastructure and providing a city bike sharing scheme. A dry port or commercial rail freight terminal is planned for development in the neighbouring city of Vila Nova de Famalicão, when developed it will be the largest private rail freight operator on the Iberian Peninsula.

Gender & Diversity in the Green Transition

Following the coffee break, the meeting turned its attention to the URBACT cross cutting theme of gender and diversity.

The session kicked off with a presentation by Ms. Inês Santos Silva, Co-founder and Chief Activist at Portuguese Women in Tech, a community focused on attracting more women to tech and supporting those already working in the industry. Inês reflected on the importance of promoting gender equality and diversity in the workforce noting that it is in the interest of business. She also shared some data to back up this assertion.

McKinsey & Company's Global Institute report found that narrowing the gender gap could add between \$12 and \$28 trillion to the global GDP. According to Harvard Business Review, diverse management teams are 70% more likely to capture new markets. In addition gender diversity can increase profitability by 5-20%. This provided food for thought for all of the participants, which included ULG members from Santo Tirso, to consider what role they could play in promoting greater gender equality and diversity in the drive towards the green transition



IT'S GOOD FOR COMPANIES...

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT DIVERSE COMPANIES MAKE MORE MONEY, AND THEIR EMPLOYEES, BOTH MEN, AND WOMEN, ARE MORE INNOVATIVE, DILIGENT, AND CREATIVE.





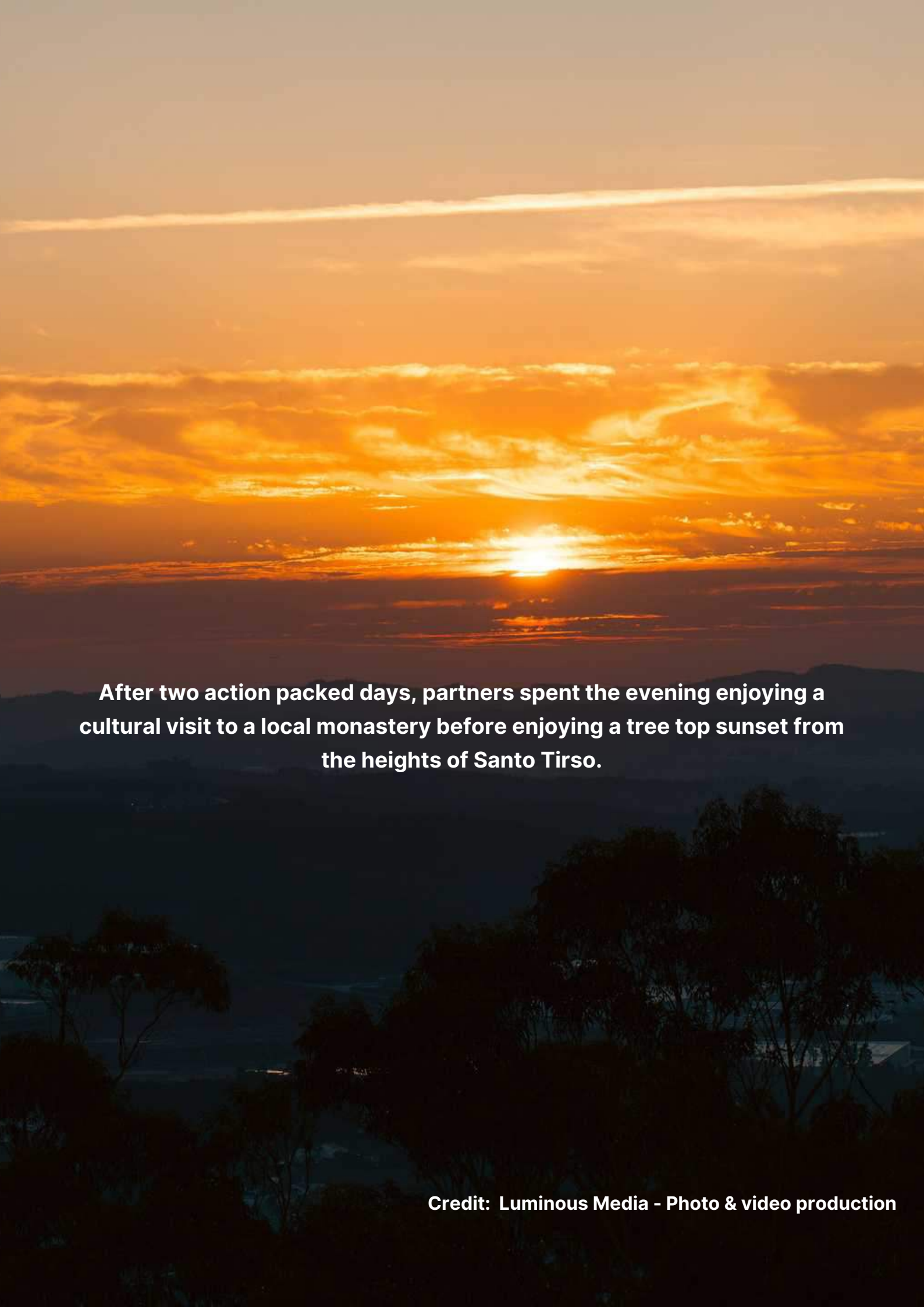
Start, Stop, Continue

Santo Tirso

The meeting broke for lunch before regrouping in the afternoon to undertake the Start, Stop, Continue exercise.

During this activity participants worked in small groups to reflect on what had been shared about Santo Tirso throughout the meeting. Acting in the role of 'critical friend' they were asked to provide feedback to their Santo Tirso peers to be categorised within the areas of 'start', 'stop' and things they should 'continue' doing by writing them on sticky notes before reporting back a summary to the group



A photograph of a sunset over a mountain range. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a bright orange glow across the sky. The sky is filled with wispy clouds, some of which are illuminated by the setting sun. In the foreground, the silhouettes of trees are visible against the darkening landscape. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

After two action packed days, partners spent the evening enjoying a cultural visit to a local monastery before enjoying a tree top sunset from the heights of Santo Tirso.

Credit: Luminous Media - Photo & video production

Partner Snapshots

The following section summarises some of the local activities in each of the partner cities and reflects on local progress in relation to the action planning process.



Balbriggan



Urban Area Dubrovnik



Ormož



Alba Iulia



Çekava



Santo Tirso



Pärnu




Villena



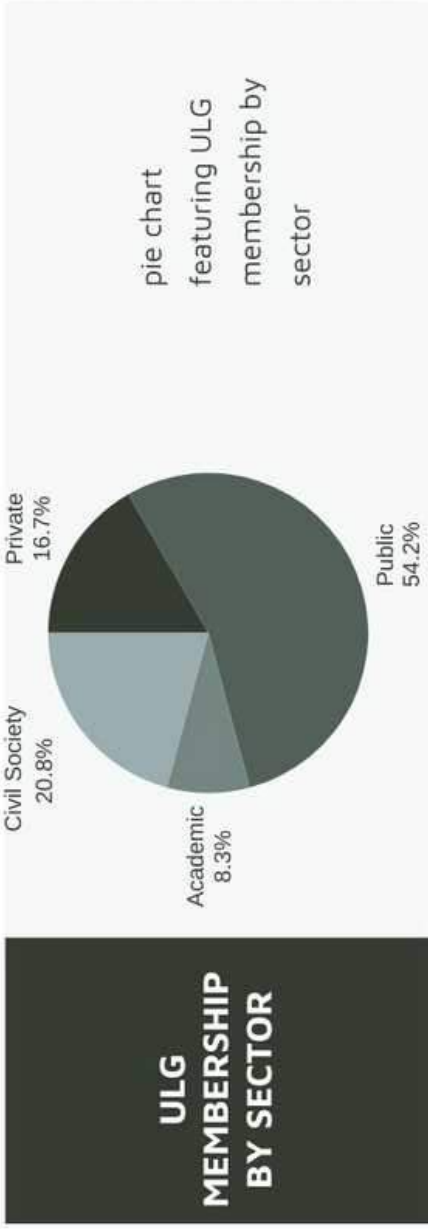
Tuusula

BALBRIGGAN ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT

24



No. of ULG members



2



No. of ULG meetings undertaken and/or planned in Q1

Action Planning Stage

>1



No. of test actions planned




Problem/Challenge Identification & Analysis

URBAN AREA DUBROVNIK ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT

11

No. of ULG members




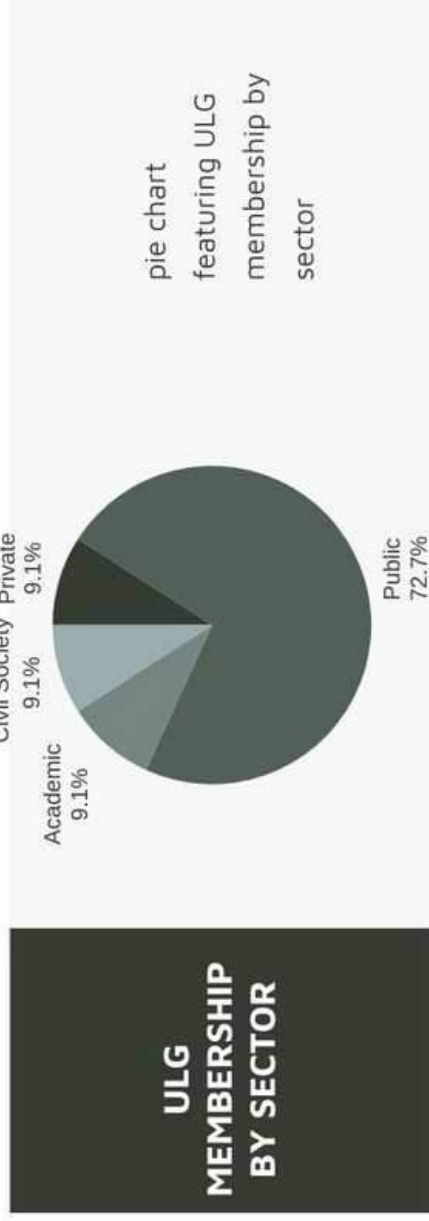
2

No. of ULG meetings undertaken and/or planned in Q1



1

No. of test actions planned

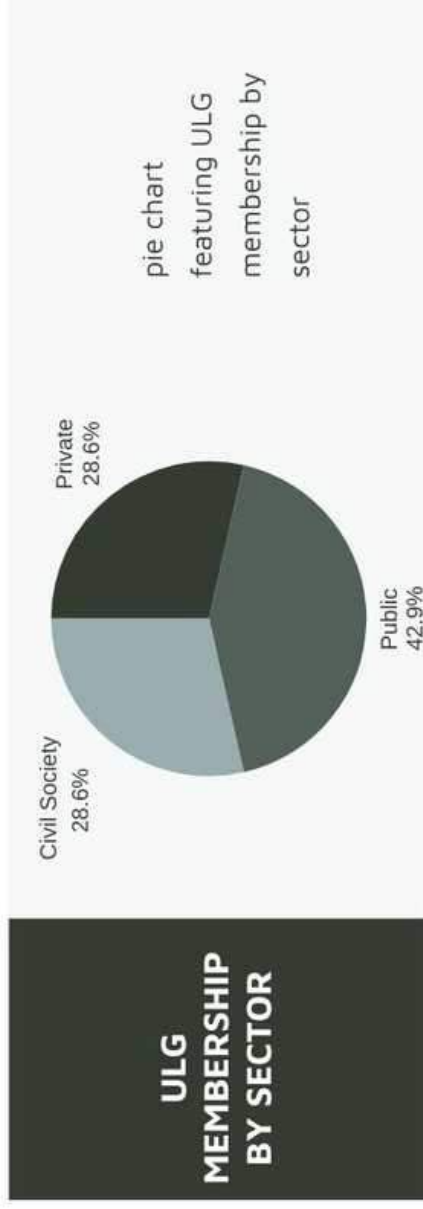
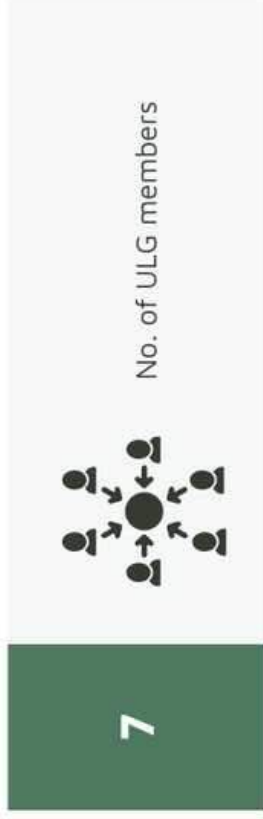



Action Planning Stage



Visioning

ORMOŽ ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT



Action Planning Stage

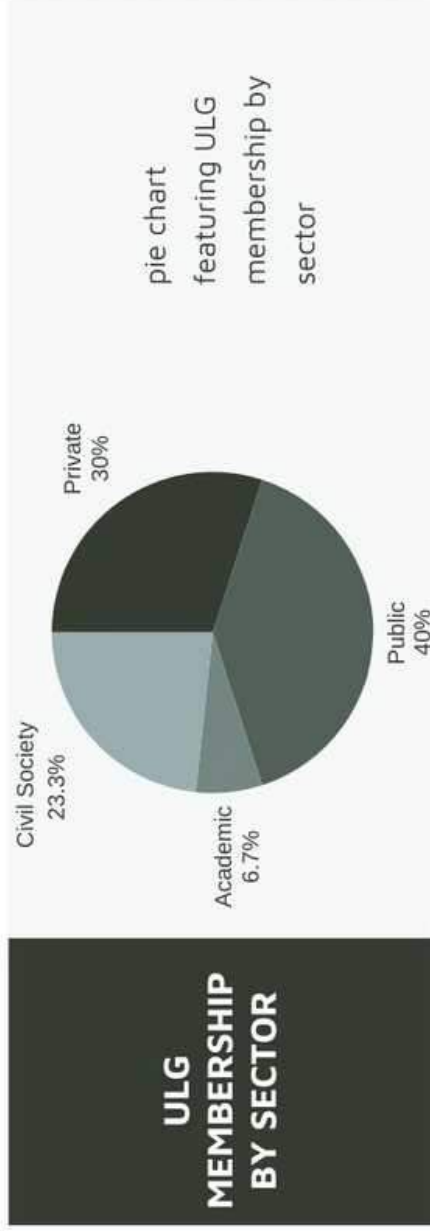



Problem/Challenge Identification & Analysis

ALBA IULIA ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT

21

No. of ULG members



2

No. of ULG meetings undertaken and/or planned in Q1



Action Planning Stage

1


No. of test actions planned



Visioning

KEKAVA ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT

16



No. of ULG members

2

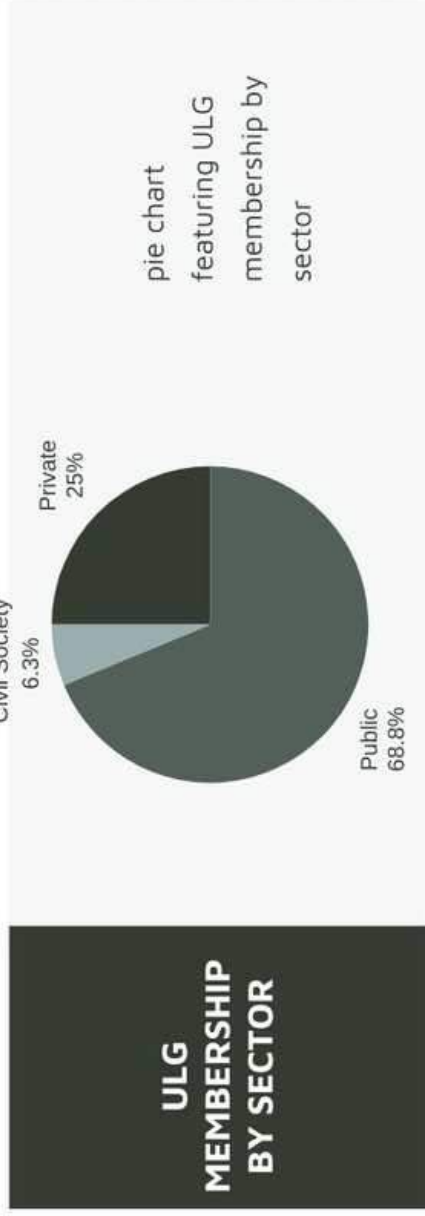


No. of ULG meetings undertaken and/or planned in Q1

1



No. of test actions planned

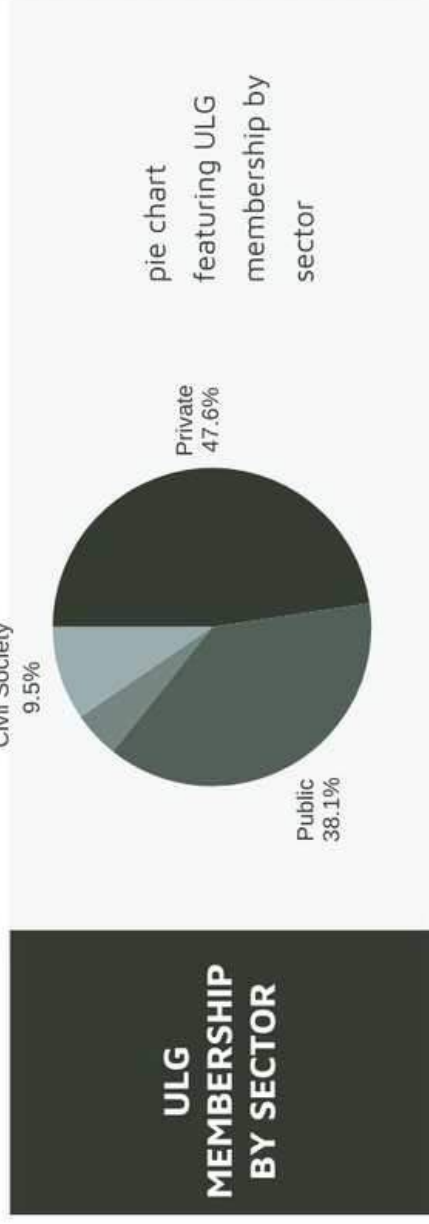
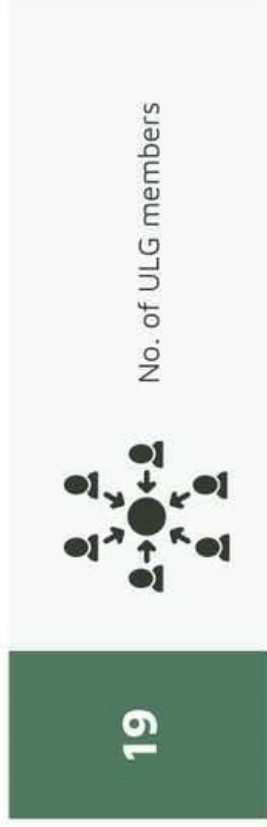


Action Planning Stage



Brainstorming Solutions

SANTO TIRSO ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT



Action Planning Stage

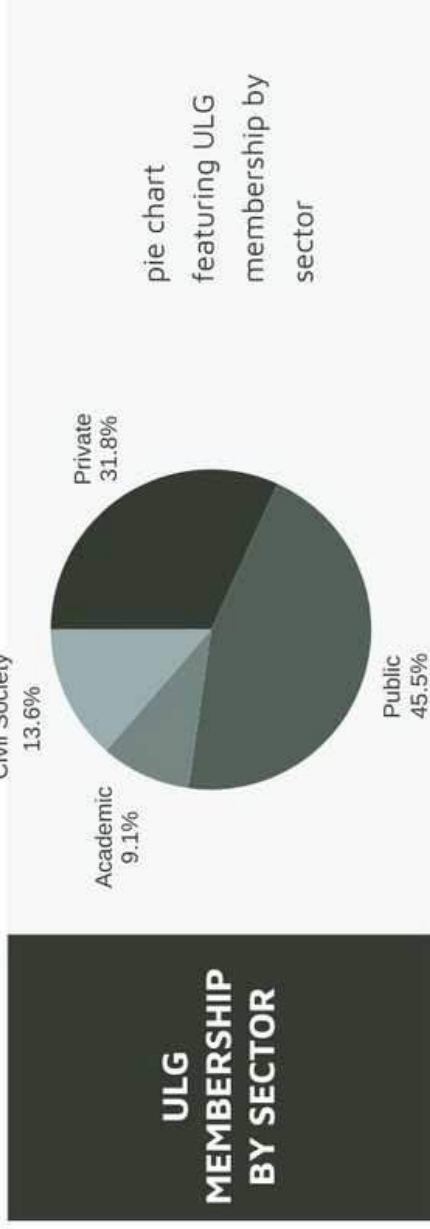



Problem/Challenge Identification & Analysis

PÄRNU ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT

21

No. of ULG members



2

No. of ULG meetings undertaken and/or planned in Q1



Action Planning Stage

1


No. of test actions planned



Planning Actions

VILLENA ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT

20



No. of ULG members

2

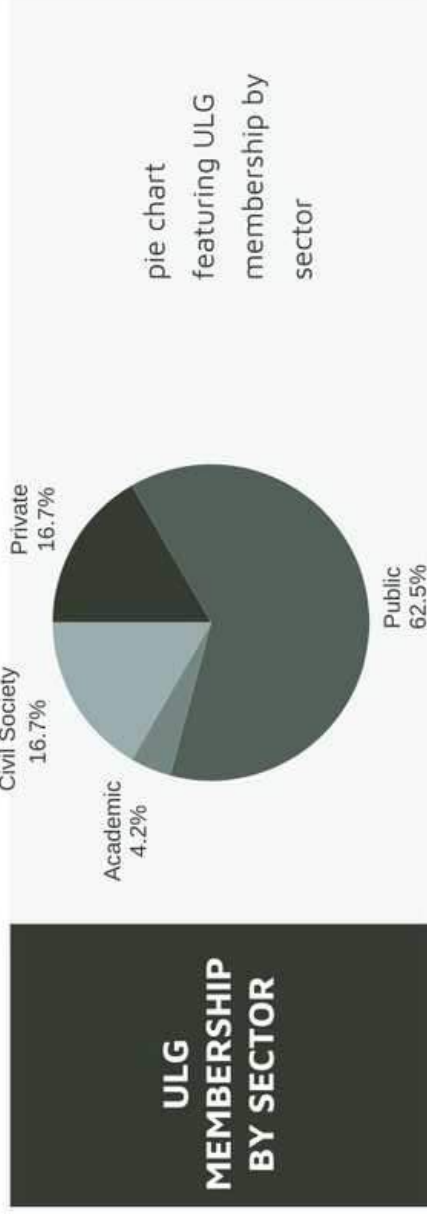


No. of ULG meetings undertaken and/or planned in Q1

>1



No. of test actions planned

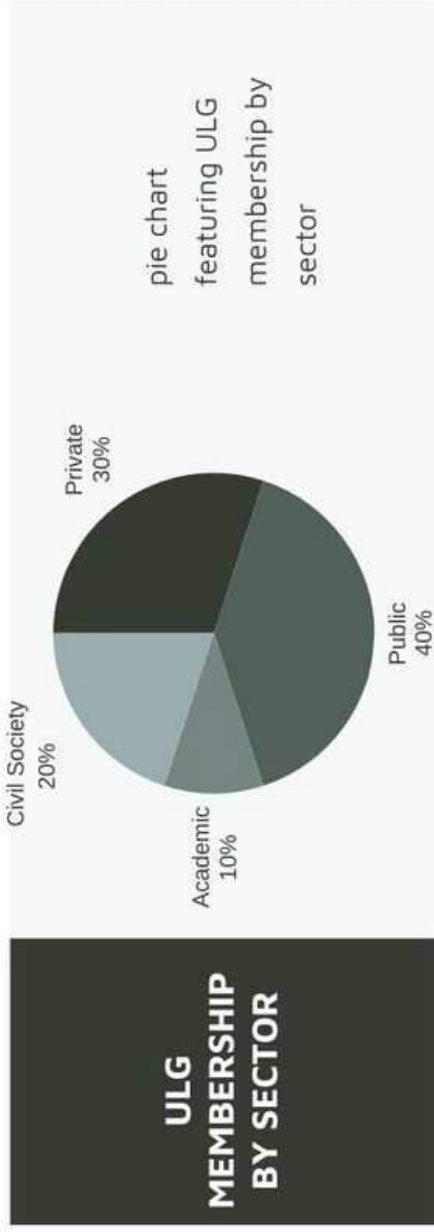
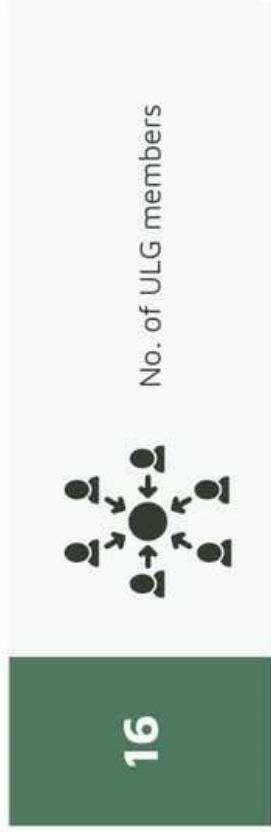


Action Planning Stage

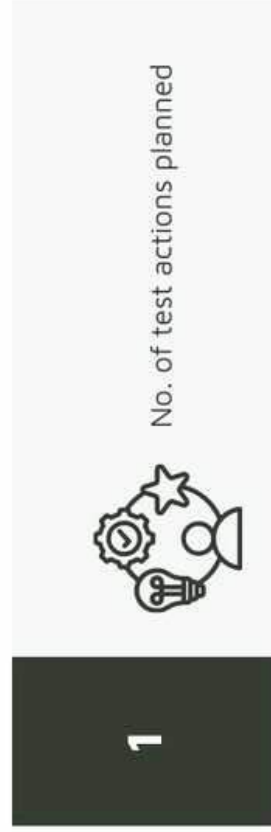


Brainstorming Solutions

TUUSULA ACTION PLANNING SNAPSHOT



Action Planning Stage



Visioning


Facilitator's Toolbox

A number of tools and methods were introduced and used by the network in recent months to aid the participation and co-creation in the action planning process. Some of these tools and methods are shared here below.

The City Canvas

City Name and Photo	Main Challenges to be addressed	Expected Changes
	Focus of the IAP	Related local, regional, national strategies/plans
		Local, regional, national funding streams to explore

The EcoCore Project
Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

URBACT  Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

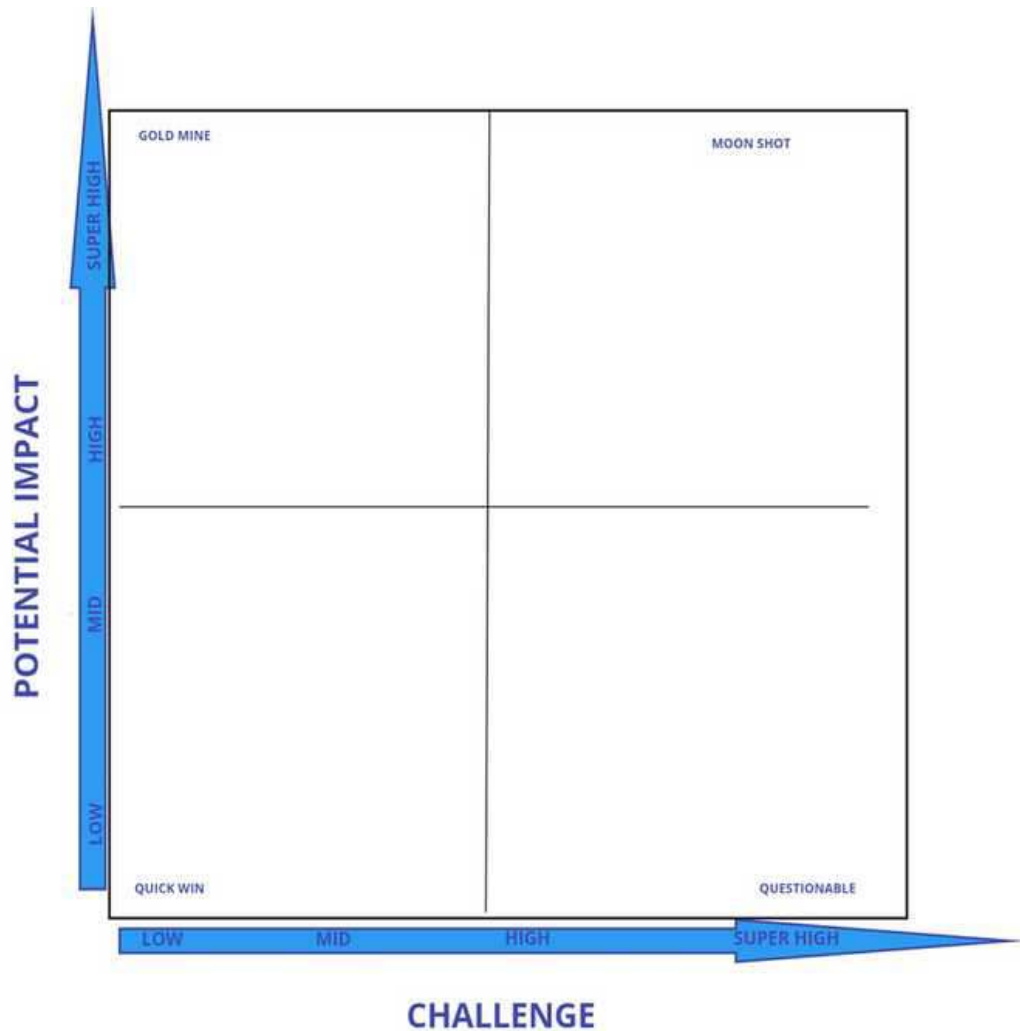
What is it?

A strategic planning template, designed by the EcoCore LE. Provides a n easily adaptable, visual chart to summarise and showcase the key strategic aims and elements steering the integrated action planning process locally.

How did we use it?

Each EcoCore partner city completed the canvas by adding sticky notes and/or The completed canvas was presented by each partner during a series of speed pitches at the first EcoCore Core Network Meeting in Balbriggan in November 2023.

The Attractiveness Map



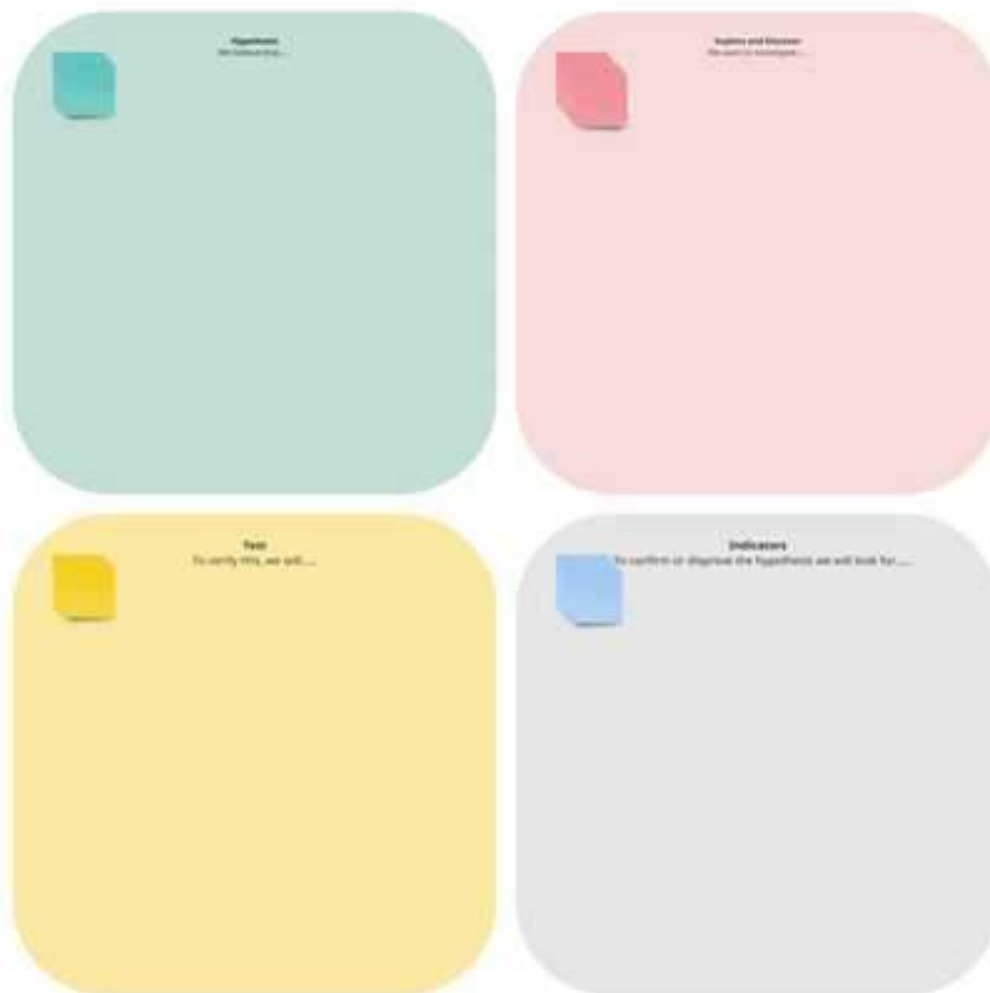
What is it?

A axis based tool to support the analysis and categorisation of ideas based on impact potential and the degree to which they might be challenging to implement. The tool helps with the prioritisation of ideas and aids users to decide on which ideas to progress and when.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during the online session on test actions. Partners will use this tool to map and analyse action ideas with their teams and ULG members locally.

The Brainstorming Board



What is it?

A tool (based on the test card developed [Strategyzer](#)) to aid the co-design of test actions by helping users to focus and flesh out key critical elements such as their assumptions, what exactly they will test and how they will measure success.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during the online session on test actions. Working in city teams, participants were asked to try out the tool on Miro by fleshing out their test action idea. Partners will use this tool to co-create test actions with their ULG members locally.

The Integrated Action Planning Grid

EcoCore Integrated Action Planning Grid

Type of Integration	Why is it important?	What are you currently doing to ensure this aspect in your action planning process?	What challenges are you experiencing with this aspect?	Things you plan to do in the future to improve on this aspect
Policy/Sector: Integrating social, economic & environmental challenges in order to join up solutions & minimize effects of negative externalities				
Horizontal: Developing partnerships locally, bringing together all the main actors relating to a specific challenge (public, private, academia, civil society)				
Vertical: Multi-level governance - aligning policies, interventions & funding upwards through the vertical chain of governance				
Territorial: Ensuring cooperation takes place between adjacent municipalities to ensure negative externalities are not passed on				
Hard & Soft Investments: Integrating hard (physical) & soft investments - often expressed as integrating ERDF & ESF funds in projects				

The EcoCore Project
Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors

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What is it?

A grid based tool to support participants to reflect on the key elements of the integrated approach to action planning, to share approaches, discuss common challenges and identify and share areas and ideas for improvement.

How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during CNM 2 in Santo Tirso. Participants worked in small mixed city groups of 4-6 people. They filled in the grid, which aided discussion and promoted exchange and before reporting back key learnings and reflections to the group at the end.

Start, Stop, Continue, Improve



What is it?

A tool to promote structured reflection on a process. It aims to empower teams and individuals to continuously and proactively improve their work and processes. It can be used for self-reflection or as a peer review tool.

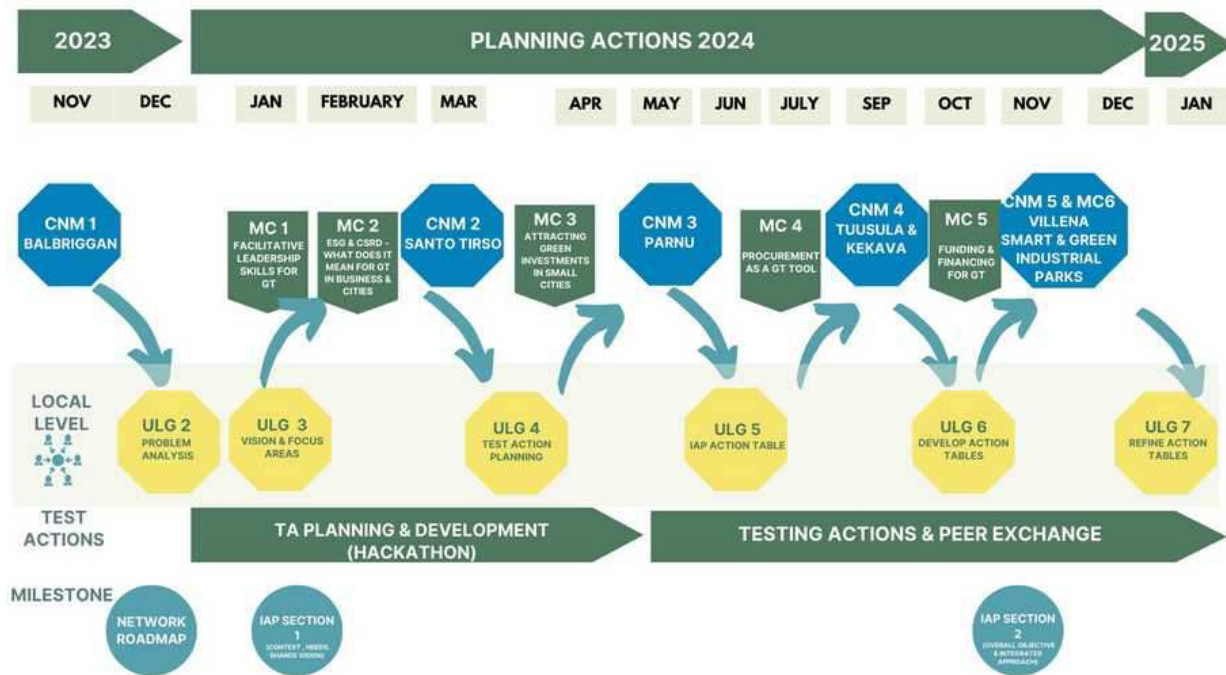
How did we use it?

The tool was introduced during CNM1 in Balbriggan. At the end of the 2 day meeting, participants working in small groups agreed on peer feedback to be provided to the host city under the four headings - start, stop, continue, improve. Each group summarised their feedback to the host city at the end. EcoCore undertakes this activity at each CNM.

Next Steps

Coming up in quarter two of 2024, an online masterclass on ‘Attracting Green Investments in Small Cities’ will take place at the end of April, delivered by ad hoc expert Tiago Ferreira.

In May, partners will come together once again, this time for a core network meeting hosted by the city of Pärnu. Partners will have an opportunity to peer review the first section of the EcoCore Integrated Action plans and will work on further developing their test action ideas. One to one support sessions will also be planned between partners and the lead expert.



Appendix 1: Menu of Transition Drivers

	1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
Balbriggan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Corridor Strategy (Governance Model) Digital solutions driving green transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women in business network Creative Innovation Hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Balbriggan Rejuvenation Strategy - Public engagement and community led local development Reducing car dependency, promoting behavioural change for sustainable transport measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enterprise & Training Centre Skills strategy Facilitating engagement between industry and education providers 	

	1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
Pärnu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metsa Plywood Manufacturing - digital transition supporting efficiency Biofuel and Hydrogenvalley Pärnu city general planning Off-shore wind farm development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-residency, entrepreneurship supports Local infrastructure round table Developing an innovation ecosystem (incl. clubs, tubes & biobooster hackathons) Co-working & incubator spaces Women's business network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green urban development (car dependency reduction measures, housing construction policy, cycle way/roads policy, parks, biogas buses, methane extraction from landfill etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating engagement between industry and education providers, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local DMO (Destination Management Organisation) Green Destination Visit Estonia Green Key

Tuusula

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition

- Scoping study: What businesses to target for the Circular industrial area
- Regulations & incentives to enhance circular economy activities
- Involving other strategic groups not directly involved in ULG
- Logistics company seeking to become net zero
- Facilitating heated discussions (campfire) in the planning of industrial spaces

2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT

- Citizen & stakeholder participation methods: Participatory budgeting, hackathons
- Logistics industry of 100 companies, business network with 440 companies
- Several nationally significant logistics companies

3: Municipality as GT Leader

- Calculating carbon emissions of municipality purchases; adopting new procurement criteria, with incentives for tenderers to lower emissions.
- How to plan for district heating from the outset, example of redistribution of datacentre heat to local houses selling excess heat to network
- Investing in education, playgrounds, housing fair, quality of life

4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline

- Education possibilities locally about responsible leadership, circular economy, and green transition
- Using organic and locally sourced food

5: Branding & Marketing

- Supporting tourism businesses to become carbon neutral & achieve Sustainable Travel Finland certification.
- Joint commercial marketing campaign with 10 municipalities: Helsinki Ring of Industry
- Co-operation with airport network and airport logistics
- Taking care of well-being and nature brand despite strong industrial development

Kekava

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition

- Green Renaissance of old Industrial Spaces - museum railway on a former peat extraction bog
- Showcasing progress towards more sustainable business using the case study: Kekava Poultry Plant

2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT

- Showcasing Riga Tech Girls (Encouraging women's participation in STEAM)

3: Municipality as GT Leader

- Kekava – A cycle friendly city
- Lessons from URBACT APN Agents of Co-Existence (social innovation & inclusion in local government)
- Culture & creativity as economic drivers (forest gallery)
- Public utility company using more sustainable energy sources for heat (e.g. wood chips, solar.)

4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline

5: Branding & Marketing

	1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
Santo Tirso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast tracking and incentivising industrial development Fábrica Santo Thyroso Support for mobility plans in industrial zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incubation and matchmaking programme in Fábrica ST Presence and operation of textile cluster Culture of efficient collaboration between public, private and academic sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipality walking the talk (local food sourced for canteen, local market promotion etc) Sustainable mobility initiatives (intermodal ticketing, e-bikes, cycleways, collaboration with rail company and other municipalities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest Santo Tirso employee allocation and reallocation programme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International marketing of the city to industry

	1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
Alba Iulia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solar PV powering industrial zone 40% of industrial land must be constructed (not e.g. car park) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Climathon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy poverty mapping Sustainable and additional mobility initiatives Renewable Energy solutions for the swimming pool Digitisation of the planning system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping HR needs & machinery needs of companies for next 5 years Dual Education campus project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City branding

	1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition	2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT	3: Municipality as GT Leader	4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline	5: Branding & Marketing
Villena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning of the logistics dry port through multi-level governance collaboration Solar farm development & biodiversity side by side 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car dependency reduction measures Cycle lane network EU projects supporting local policy objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills forward planning & integration of logistics in local educational offering 	

Ormož

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition

- Green Renaissance of old Industrial Spaces - creating space for nature, citizen awareness & ecological tourism
- Green infrastructure development in new business zone
- Planning the transformation of a disused claypit to new green industrial zone
- Managing industrial development near Natura 2000 sites

2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT

- Business incubator - multi-level support for young entrepreneurs, both in terms of know how and the possibility of using offices for business development.
- Municipal funding calls for tenders to help start-ups, sole traders, employment and various investments in equipment
- Municipal scholarships for students

3: Municipality as GT Leader

- Circular Repair Café & employment of people far from the labour market
- Slovenia's most bee friendly municipality
- Migrant Integration Programmes (Ormož People's University)

4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline

- Mapping the needs of entrepreneurs, companies and future entrepreneurs to support the green transition skills

5: Branding & Marketing

- Sustainable Tourism Certification

Dubrovnik

1: Planning & Development For Green Industrial Transition

- Green Port infrastructure (LEDs & remote app., e-cars & bikes, recycling, e-infrastructure installation)
- Green Renaissance of old Industrial Spaces - creating space for citizen participation: TUP
- Park'n' Ride & Multi-Modal Integration as tools to relieve traffic
- Green Infrastructure: Parks development & upgrade contribute to the city's green vision

2: Developing & Nurturing the innovation ecosystem in support of GT

- Port collaboration with university, air quality dashboard, seabed impacts etc.
- City grants to support women entrepreneurs
- RemoteIT APN

3: Municipality as GT Leader

- Digital mobility solutions e.g., parking app
- Respect the City
- Plastic Smart Cities - Action plan: The City of Dubrovnik as the first Croatian Plastic Smart City (from 2020) ; Action Plan to reduce plastic pollution in the city of Dubrovnik

4: Supporting the GT skills pipeline

- Plastic Smart City Dubrovnik: Green hospitality workshop - focused on ways of environmentally responsible action in the hospitality sector, with an emphasis on composting and reduction of single-use plastics; Aimed at catering and hospitality students

5: Branding & Marketing

- Plastic Smart City

Acknowledgements

With thanks to all the EcoCore partners, who contributed to this report through responding to the survey and through their participation in various masterclasses and core network meetings. Thanks also to our ad hoc experts.

URBACT



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