



The Green City Dimension

Reconquering public spaces by interlinking design, inclusion, and sustainability

This article is part of a series of articles based on the 14 Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Structured around the three city dimensions of the New Leipzig Charter (the Productive, the Green, and the Just City), the articles link Partnerships' actions and activities with other relevant EU projects and initiatives supported by Cohesion Policy (including Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT, or Article 7 cities benefitting from ERDF). The articles demonstrate the key role of cities in the Urban Agenda for the EU, and focus on specific actions they have led and implemented. Overall, the articles aim at showcasing practices and experiences on how different tools and funding support can help cities face their challenges in a strategic way towards sustainable urban development.

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This article has been delivered under the Framework Contract 'Support to the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU through the provision of management, expertise, and administrative support to the Partnerships', signed between the European Commission (Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy) and Ecorys.

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Reconquering public spaces by interlinking design, inclusion, and sustainability

The way of living in urban spaces is changing, demand for accessible green areas is rising, and the quality of local environments and social inclusion has gained even more relevance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the EU and globally, there is a considerable amount of vacant and under used open spaces and buildings with the potential to provide a broad range of ecological, economic, and social benefits to urban and rural communities. Most under-used spaces and buildings have both physical and intangible cultural and natural heritage with a high recreational, aesthetic, therapeutic, social, and cultural interaction value. Hence, they have relevant impacts on residents' health, wellbeing, and access to services, particularly for the most vulnerable people. They also provide places for social and cultural interaction, community engagement, and participation in social and cultural events, contributing to 'reducing and preventing new forms of social, economic, environmental and territorial inequalities' in line with the principles of the [New Leipzig Charter](#).

Through the lens of the Green City Dimension of the New Leipzig Charter and the [New European Bauhaus](#) (NEB) framework, this article reviews a series of initiatives and projects implemented under the relevant Actions of the Sustainable Land Use, Circular Economy, and Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU).

The article first introduces the Green City dimension of the [New Leipzig Charter](#) and the [New European Bauhaus](#), and the [Urban Agenda Partnerships](#) and related [Actions](#). It then illustrates solutions implemented in cities involved in the selected actions, including Urban Innovative Actions and URBACT networks. Lastly, it explores the New European Bauhaus' related opportunities for future Urban Agenda Partnerships and other EU actions.

The Green City dimension of the New Leipzig Charter and the New European Bauhaus

The Green City Dimension of the [New Leipzig Charter](#) emphasises the transformative power of cities in addressing global warming and improving the environmental quality of air, water, soil, and land use. To this end, cities are called upon to protect and regenerate ecosystems using nature based solutions (NBS) to create well-designed, managed, and connected green and blue spaces. This implies changes in production and consumption modalities, redefining and ensuring sustainable use of resources, significantly reducing waste production and carbon emissions, investing in innovative and efficient technologies, and promoting a circular economy model which integrates all of these aspects.

On 15 September 2021, the European Commission adopted the [Communication on the New European Bauhaus](#). The **holistic approach** of the NEB is at the core of the EU's ambition to create beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive places, products, and ways of living by combining a place-based approach, citizen engagement, and co-creation, integration, and collaboration across different disciplines and sectors (e.g. culture, technology, innovation, design, engineering, arts, social and natural sciences). The four thematic axes of the NEB transformative path might represent an opportunity for the development of future Partnerships or other forms of coordination under the UAEU, amongst others. They include **reconnecting with nature; regaining a sense of belonging; prioritising the places and people that need it the most; and the need for long-term, life-cycle thinking in the industrial ecosystem.**

The NEB is notably a clear expression of rising awareness of the need to rethink the use – and reuse – of public spaces in urban and rural areas in order to make them more pleasant and sustainable, safer, and more accessible. Public administrations, communities, and a broad range of relevant actors are called upon to take a leading role in designing creative solutions and innovations to transform, regenerate, and create greener, more inclusive spaces and buildings through experimentation. Some of the examples below already provide grounds for reflecting on how this movement can be deployed, and how possible solutions and projects gather these different perspectives and values.

Sustainable Land Use, Circular Economy, and Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnerships' contributions through the Urban Agenda for the EU

As part of the UAEU, the Partnerships on **Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)** and **Circular Economy** are inextricably linked, as they include several synergic actions on and mutual benefits from reuse of abandoned or underused buildings and spaces. Action 3 of the Sustainable Use of Land and NBS Partnership, 'Identifying and managing under-used land', focuses on the exploration of methods for mapping under-used land and collecting good practices on how to manage and activate spaces in a collaborative public and private partnership. Comparatively, Action 9 of the Circular Economy Partnership, 'Manage the reuse of buildings and spaces in a circular economy', builds a comprehensive framework for cities and urban authorities to develop and implement solutions for circular reuse of spaces and buildings for better urban management and transition towards circular economy.

These Actions are interlinked and published in the joint [Handbook on Sustainable and Circular Reuse of Spaces and Buildings](#), a tool to help authorities develop strategies based on new models of urban reuse management and circular economy principles.

In parallel, the **Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership** (CCH) aims to promote culture, improve the management of the built environment, make heritage sites and buildings more resilient, promote cultural production to improve societal ties and inclusiveness, and engage citizens in the design and management of urban landscapes and spaces with cultural and historical value. The Partnership adopted a multidimensional perspective and an integrated approach encompassing ecological, economic, and social dimensions, and looking at both physical and intangible heritage, such as local knowledge and cultural identities.

Actions 2 and 3 of the Partnership, 'Street invasion' and 'Cultural hubs CHIME', aim to promote cultural and economic activities in public spaces and buildings, and to build a European platform to strengthen artistic production and innovation, improve working conditions, and foster participation and transparency in cultural management. Hence the Actions support job creation, local economic development, and social cohesion. Action 4 of the Partnership, 'Collaborative management to adapt and reuse buildings or spaces for social and/or cultural activities', deals with the innovative reuse of dismissed or abandoned open spaces or buildings for socio-cultural purposes through active participation (collaborative management), and is also very relevant. More details about it are included in [Article 8](#) of this series, entitled 'How under-used space and infrastructure can become testbeds for new cities'.

Based on the interlinkages created between previous UAEU Partnerships to Circular Economy and Sustainable Land Use and Nature-Based Solutions (thanks to the connection created between Prato and Bologna, who will be joining the implementation of this Action), Action 4 studied relevant legislative bottlenecks and difficulties, and proposed a **toolbox** to help local authorities foster collaborative management processes. The toolbox is intended to smooth implementation from a regulative point of view, not only by presenting case studies to take inspiration from, but also administrative acts and procedures that enable these types of projects on the ground.

Addressing societal, economic, and environmental challenges through sustainable reuse and heritage

It is essential to note that in most European regions, circular economy initiatives, and protection and management of natural and built environment cultural heritage, take place in areas where buildings are already present, in decommissioned industrial estates and construction sites, vacant public buildings, or under-used open spaces. These buildings and sites need renovation, retrofitting and regeneration in order to achieve carbon reduction targets, and appropriate management to ensure circular use of resources and waste. Lack of adequate regulatory tools, legislation, and knowledge, particularly at local authority level, can be an obstacle to effective, sustainable, and inclusive reuse of these areas. Local authorities sometimes struggle to integrate

strategic and circular economy interventions for the reuse and regeneration of buildings and spaces into traditional urban planning processes and tools. This challenge opens a debate on the need for new models of urban reuse management for the transition to new uses and regeneration processes. Given the general reduction in public investments they have experienced in recent years, local public authorities have opened the floor to innovative ways for activating citizens, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders, and for operating across social, economic, and physical environmental dimensions. Traditional urban tools often reveal the need for flexible land use approaches which aim to reduce urban sprawl and combat land take pressure and greenfield development.

The reuse of spaces and buildings for socio-cultural purposes through collaborative management presents several challenges for identifying appropriate management processes and procedures. Ensuring inclusion, fairness, and avoiding gentrification in reactivation and reuse requires effective approaches and tools for engaging relevant local actors, identifying local needs, and designing interventions based on local inputs and socio-cultural context. Additional barriers to the reuse and regeneration of areas with heritage relevance relate to respect of historical values and patina (for which some Member States have national law indicating protection modalities). In addition, the vulnerability and lack of dynamism of the private sector operating in the creative and cultural industries (e.g. theatre, cinema) together with economic and social factors, such as conflicting views and priorities amongst different age and social groups, can prevent the creation and operation of cultural and creative businesses.

Improving knowledge and regulation for sustainable land use, circular economy, and heritage

Urban revitalisation and redevelopment for sustainable land use and circular economy

According to Cristina Clotet Ollé, Action Leader of merged Actions 3 and 9 (mentioned above), addressing the three dimensions of the NEB and urban regeneration can be facilitated through laws or policy, and through programmes for reuse and management of spaces and buildings.

The Catalan Land Institute of the Government of Catalonia (INCASÓL) has three main modalities of intervention for identifying and managing under-used land and buildings in a circular economy:

1. Support to the design and implementation of an **Urban Redevelopment Programme** when an administration asks for the support of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainability in addressing a specific urban issue;

2. Management and implementation of large **regeneration projects** of vacant (or partially vacant) **industrial sites**, often with cultural and built heritage assets;
3. Punctual action on specific sites that need intervention and are mostly owned and managed by the Ministry of Planning and Sustainability.

The **Urban Redevelopment Programme**; the **Industrial Colonies**, and the **Fábrica de Cartón**, described below are emblematic of these three modalities of interventions.

Catalonia Urban Redevelopment Programme

In Catalonia, there is a long-standing Urban Redevelopment Programme under which INCASÒL (a NEB partner) is currently identifying municipalities with social and urban problems (e.g. due to high density development) to support them in redeveloping fully or partially publicly owned settlements and buildings. This may include relocation of some buildings and residents, or demolition activities, to provide adequate public and green spaces. The projects take **into account environmental sustainability and aesthetic standards**, and aim to **provide a social mix**, preventing exclusion and socio-economic disparities between neighbourhoods. The programme has been working in 19 neighbourhoods and the realisation of projects takes between 4 and 6 years. The regeneration projects mostly include establishing **new affordable housing for rent**, usually built on land owned by the municipality, and targeting residents with no access to social housing who are struggling to access the housing market. The Catalan programme therefore **links regeneration of public open spaces with realisation of new affordable residential areas**.

Revitalisation of Industrial Colonies - Colonia Sedó

INCASÒL also implemented regeneration projects in two **Industrial Colonies**, Colònia Güell and **Colonia Sedó**. These are under-used and abandoned former textile factories, regenerated for mixed uses including productive use, housing, and green infrastructure. Colonia Sedó (Figure 1 and 2) was built in the mid-19th century, and included housing and associated services and facilities for the working class (shops, schools, a church and social centre), and various types of infrastructure. INCASÒL acquired the residential part of the Colony in 2003, and it's now a 44% public and 56% private-owned site. INCASÒL, together with the City Council, aims to develop a strategy for the rehabilitation of the residential complex and conversion of the old Fonda's building for residential use. Colonia Sedó has significant historical-heritage value and natural surroundings with great potential. This allows **environmental and heritage related objectives** to be combined in the implementation of initiatives for renewable energies and sustainable use of water resources, including bringing urban agriculture into the open spaces of residential areas. The strategy enhances the connectivity between the existing urban fabric and

surrounding natural areas, and integrates conservative actions on heritage-listed assets and the realisation of new buildings and uses. The project is also part of the **EUROPAN¹ 16** thematic competition on Living Cities. It is one of the ‘**Reinventing Rurality and Productive Heritage**’ projects focused on finding new design approaches for heritage and rural related former productive sites.



Aerial Photo of Colonia Sedó
Source: *European Europe*

¹ EUROPAN is a tool for European cities and urban actors, a thematic competition of projects, and a platform for young professionals in urban, landscape, and architectural design to develop innovative strategies and design solutions. The website of the EUROPAN project is accessible at: <https://www.europan-europe.eu/en/> and the Colonia Sedó project at: <https://www.europan-europe.eu/en/session/europan-16/site/esparreguera-colonia-sedo-es>.



Photo of Bandone Industrial Colony in Sedó
Source: *European Europe*

Fábrica de Cartón

INCASÓL is the owner and managing authority for the regeneration process (including the preservation of heritage structures and realisation of new national social housing) of a large former industrial building, **Fábrica de Cartón**, located within the metropolitan area of Barcelona. A multidisciplinary team was tasked with the development of innovative architectural, environmental, cultural, economic, and social solutions for the use, construction, and rehabilitation of buildings and public spaces adapted to contemporary challenges, an asset for the project in widening collaboration around this innovative approach. The innovation exceeds the architectural dimension, including contemporary aspects such as construction of public spaces and facilities targeted to citizens' needs, urban recycling, mixed uses, energy efficiency, building management, and sustainable use of building materials.

The Action Leader highlighted that in all the projects, *“linking regeneration of public space with new buildings for affordable housing”* is crucial for addressing inclusion and sustainability in the design of new and attractive spaces. Participation in the Urban Agenda Partnership was reported to be an excellent opportunity to develop and share hands-on, innovative experiences and solutions with administrations across Europe. **This inspires and provides tools and guidance for local actions or policies, and can also feed into or inform coherent European strategies.**

The Action leader highlighted that **some issues**, such as nature-based solutions and climate change, **needed to be further explored**, as they were only partially integrated into projects. Ideally this aspect could be addressed by the UAEU in the future.

Governance and regulatory models for integrated heritage management

Sandra Gizdulich, one of the Coordinators at the Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership, and Action Leader for Action 4, highlighted that:

“Culture and cultural heritage is crucial to cohesion and identity, and it’s not only about museums, theatres, or protected structures, but also about the revitalisation, management, and activation of under-used areas.”

This is the theme of Actions 2, 3, and 4 of the Partnership. Action 4 is to highlight relevant regulations to foster collaborative shared management of places, while Actions 2 and 3 involve creation of a toolkit informed by practical experiences from implementation in the City of Murcia.

The **City of Murcia** is the Action Leader of both Actions 2 and 3. These worked on two possible scenarios. The first scenario is when a group of active citizens or a community group already has a strong interest in the management, and recognises the value, of specific spaces or buildings, and is potentially already using it informally. In this case, the local authority acknowledges the interest and commitment, and can assign (through a participatory process) management of the space to citizens, community groups, NGOs, or other non-profit organisations. In the second scenario, the local authority doesn’t have data or information on the location and conditions of under-used spaces, and needs to identify appropriate administrative tools to map them, and also build a participatory decision making process to reuse and regenerate them. In relation to these two scenarios, Actions 2 and 3 of the Partnership focused on two priorities: urban regulation for ‘urban commons’, and mapping under-used buildings and spaces.

Linking urban fabric, identity, and revitalisation of spaces and communities – Murcia

The Murcia City Council implemented the **Urban DNA initiative** for the economic and social revitalisation of three neighbourhoods: El Carmen, Sta. Eulalia, and La Paz. The initiative, part of the ‘City Strategy 2020’, aimed to revitalise and regenerate neighbourhoods based on their specific physical, social, and cultural peculiarities and identity.

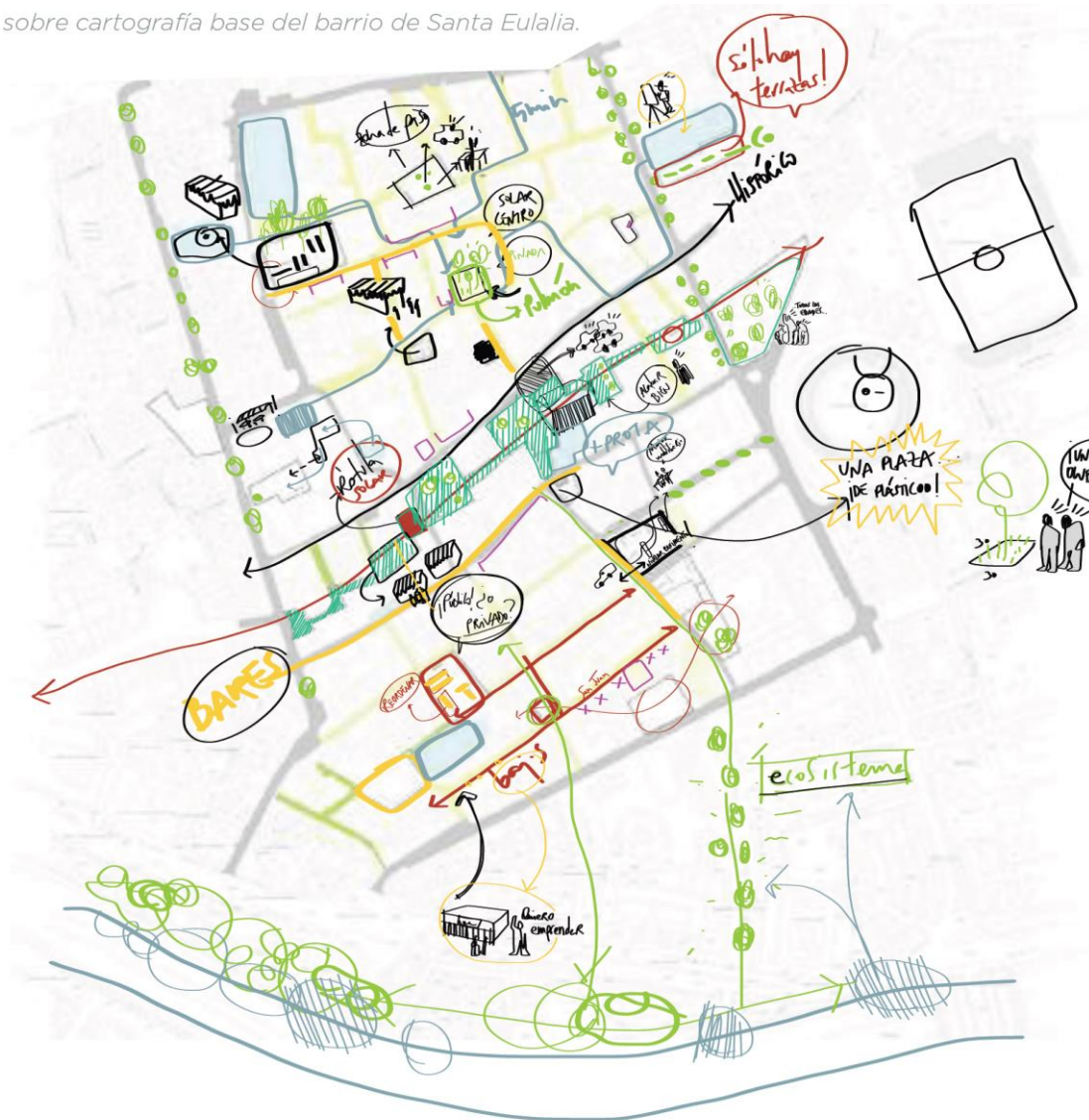
Urban DNA includes both **physical interventions** to improve the urban environment, and **social innovation actions** to design new services and improve social relations within neighbourhoods. Citizen engagement, involving collaboration between local administration and residents, was crucial for the design and implementation of these interventions. A broad range of actors, including almost all the departments of the Municipality of Murcia², universities, the private sector, local associations, community groups, and residents, were involved in a five-step process, which represents a **governance model** for the reuse of spaces and buildings.

Phase 1 aimed to understand the different contexts, and focused on multiple spatial and socio-analysis of the neighbourhoods resulting in a series of urban atlases.

Phases 2 and 3 of the co-design consisted of a participatory need assessment and community activation, respectively. Residents and community groups were first engaged in various analytical and discussion activities to integrate the analysis of Phase 1 with inputs, ideas, activities, and project proposals developed in Phase 2 (Figure 3). They were then supported by the local authority in the implementation of the proposed social, cultural, and urban interventions. In Phase 4, citizens, community groups, and relevant public bodies worked together to realise the interventions defined in the previous phases (e.g. planting trees or improvement of public spaces and urban infrastructure, such as lighting and playgrounds). In the last Phase, the Municipality attributed the management of the project and the space to a designated association and neighbourhood group, while the urban authority remains responsible for exceptional maintenance of the interventions.

² The departments involved are urban development, participation, public works, decentralisation, institutional relations, urban mobility, urban security, environment, health, economy, culture, and development of European projects.

sobre cartografía base del barrio de Santa Eulalia.



Map of participate proposal neighbourhood suggestions on-base cartography of the Santa Eulalia neighbourhood

Source: [ADN Murcia](#)

The Urban DNA initiatives provided opportunities to **raise awareness and enhance community knowledge and planning capacity** on urban regeneration and reuse of public spaces and buildings. The direct engagement and co-design with citizens, community groups, research and education institutions, and private sector actors created a virtuous process that helped to **attribute value to local, place-based, social, cultural, and economic** features, and generate opportunities for economic development, social innovation, and environmental sustainability.

The Partnership Coordinator highlighted that the experiences of the city of Murcia **demonstrate how to trigger virtuous processes through culture** (using radio, cinema, or cultural festivals, for example), regenerate and revitalise derelict and under-user public spaces (Action 2), **and to encourage reuse, circular economy, and sustainable land-use** (Action 3 CHIME). It also illustrates the **key role of public authorities and institutions** in addressing partnership's

challenges where the market has no interest in intervening. In addition, the Partnership and the leaders of Actions 2 and 3 operated under the assertion that culture is not only a driver for **urban regeneration**, but also for **social innovation**, as it creates new job opportunities and social cohesion.

The Partnership coordinator emphasised the key role of the regulation of ‘common goods’, such as civic pact or collaboration agreements, which have been created to delegate the management of buildings and/or spaces for social and cultural services to local associations of active citizens, NGOs, and the third sector in general. Common goods are dismissed or neglected places that are considered valuable for a given community and where practices of reuse through cultural services would enhance the identity – the *genius loci*, the *milieux*, the *baukulture* – of a given area. The firmly believed approach behind is that fostering the quality of spaces (landscape and built environment heritage) is not an objective in itself, but is a powerful tool which aims to achieve social, ecological, and economic impact. With this awareness comes understanding that a high quality of natural and built heritage contributes to more sustainable and inclusive societies, respectful of cultural diversity, social equity, cohesion, individual and community wellbeing and, last but not least, stronger economic performance and higher quality of life. **Innovative urban regulations for the development and reuse of public buildings and areas** have been implemented in the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, in Naples, Turin, and Salerno in Italy, which are the precursors of other experiences elsewhere. These cities have created local regulations (with some differences) that enable municipalities to delegate the management of places and services through direct assignment to the local interested community. Citizenship agreements, collaboration pacts, and other local regulations not reflected or linked to at regional or national level allow the management of spaces or buildings to be assigned to citizens or community groups. They follow a specific procedure that includes (among other things) the temporary use of the ‘common good’. The space management should have an objective in line with the public interest, and spaces and activities should be open to the public. For practical examples of practices and administrative acts, please refer to the final booklet of Action 4 of the Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership (expected to be published at the end of 2021).

The work of the Culture and Cultural Heritage Partnership is also linked to the **NEB principles** (sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics, including quality of experience), as in reaching local areas and communities for designing and managing underused spaces and buildings, it follows a **place-based approach** for reactivation and improvement of public spaces including open and green spaces. In addition, it places citizens’ engagement and co-creation at the core of Actions 2, 3, and 4 addressing the **inclusion and participation** dimension.

Integrating nature, design, circular economy, and culture through Urban Innovative Actions³

Urban Productive Parks for the development of NBS related technologies and services (UPPER) is a three-year project funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) implemented in the City of Latina in Italy. The project started in 2019, and integrates restoration of selected **public green urban and natural spaces** for improving sustainability and reducing environmental risk with the co-design, participatory activities, and development of three **Urban Productive Parks** for research and technological innovation on NBS with public and private stakeholders. Through the productive reuse and ecological restoration of public green spaces, the project also aims to **rediscover local cultural and historical values** in order to build joint initiatives and synergies among sectors and political actors for job creation, promotion and formation of social enterprises, green start-ups, and a market dedicated to Green Public Procurement.

Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are actively engaged in training on the management of green areas and provision of innovative nature-based services, such as growing and selling trees and plants; cleaning, maintenance, and restoration of gardens, parks, river banks, and playgrounds; collection of garden waste and recycling for agricultural or industrial use; outdoor social care services for elderly people and people with mental and physical health issues; and cultural initiatives. Private companies and citizens work together to design and manage diverse productive parks and build new experimental models of Public Private Partnership.

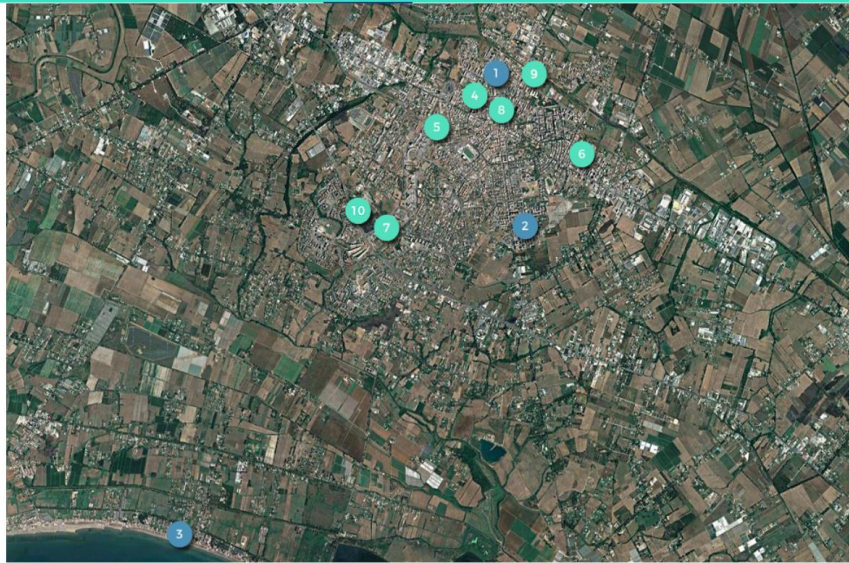
UPPER is the first project in Europe to implement self-produced NBS and expand the concept of NBS to socio-educational services.

³ The project website is accessible at: <https://www.upperlatina.eu/>. Information about the project is also available on the UIA website: <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/latina>.

MAPPA DEI LUOGHI DI UPPER

È prevista la rigenerazione di **10 aree verdi** incolte situate in quartieri periferici, che migliorerà la qualità, l'accessibilità e la fruibilità di questi spazi.

CLICCA SUL NUMERO DI UN'AREA PER SAPERNE DI PIÙ



Map of the areas selected for the three Productive Parks (blue circles) and green areas (green circle)

Source: **UPPER**

Integrating sustainable reuse or green spaces, inclusion, and wellbeing

Health and Greenspace⁴ is an URBACT III Action Planning Network of 9 cities⁵ working to support and enhance the provision of quality green spaces and infrastructure in urban areas, integrating green infrastructure design and management with urban health policies and practices. Project interventions include both physical changes to the urban environment and promotion of community, cultural, educational, and physical activity programmes to improve social health and the quality of environments, and support the role of green spaces in strengthening communities and social groups and promoting inclusion awareness.

In 2017, Poznan in Poland initiated an **‘Open Gardens’ programme** to make the green spaces of public institutions more accessible to local communities in high-density historical neighbourhoods. Regulated access to ‘Kindergarten’ yards is one of the solutions adopted. For example, between March 2017 and June 2018, in a kindergarten in the Wilda district, the entire community (including the children, teachers, and parents) were involved in a participatory planning process with the local community, district council, and a landscape architect. After three workshops to discuss the needs and concerns of potential users, they designed a place where children can learn about nature, adults can relax, and local residents can go to do

⁴ Project information and documents are accessible on the project website at <https://urbact.eu/healthgreenspace>

⁵ The cities are Budapest (HU), Limerick (IE) Espoo (FL), Messina (IT), Breda (NL), Santa Pola (ES), Suceava (RO) and Tartu (EE) and Poznan (PL)

gardening in a designated area⁶. The participation process and the consequent redesign of the spaces for multiple uses responding to different social interests provided access to gated green spaces, improving the quality of the urban environment and creating opportunities for social interactions. The pandemic has increased demand for such changes in the use of green spaces, and additional kindergartens are planned to be opened for local communities in Poznan. The same action is set to be extended to allotment gardens and common spaces or community events under the same programme⁷.

Heritage as a driver for sustainable urban development, regeneration and reuse

KAIRÓS⁸ is an URBACT network of 7 cities started in 2019 and aimed at the regeneration of derelict spaces, enhancement of cultural heritage, and promotion of economic and social accessibility and inclusion. Its five dimensions (governance, space, economy, social cohesion, and attractiveness) are translated into an **integrated approach for heritage management**:

- Participatory approaches and regulatory frameworks for valorisation of towns and cities;
- Valorisation and adaptive reuse;
- Entrepreneurial itineraries;
- Business models and technologies for valorisation and **heritage-led urban development and regeneration**;
- Re-imagining the 'heritage city' from local identity to sustainable destination management;
- Addressing the accessibility and inclusiveness of historic quarters.

The UIA project '*Cultural Hidden Identities ReAppear through Networks of WaTer*' is emblematic of the application of the KAIRÓS integrated approach. It was launched in 2020 and implemented in the Municipality of Halandri, which is a member of the KAIRÓS Network within the Athens Metropolitan Area. The project aims to re-introduce the Roman Hadrian Aqueduct to urban life in order to raise local cultural and natural heritage awareness and contribute to citizens' wellbeing. It contributes to preserving and revitalising the local cultural capital, enhances walkability and access to quality green spaces, and strengthens the heritage of a peripheral area with low attractiveness compared to Athens. In line with the integrated approach for heritage management of KAIRÓS, the Hadrian Aqueduct is considered a heritage and water common as well as a community network, **broadening the concept and role of cultural heritage assets**. The

⁶ A section of the yard, accessible only for children, was also revitalized through greening and provision of play facilities. The 'open garden zone' for leisure was also equipped with beds, hammocks, a gazebo, seats, an insect hotel, and a composter.

⁷ A series of other initiatives and programmes have been implemented in the other cities also to address climate change as in the case of the forestation programme implemented in Messina, Italy. The experiences are relevant for the definition for of the new URBACT IV programme that will integrate even more the green transition as one of its cross-cutting elements.

⁸ Information and material about the project are accessible at: <https://urbact.eu/kairós>.

cultural heritage of the roman aqueduct fosters sustainable water use and endogenous urban development. Together with other initiatives in the same network, the case of Halandri illustrates how cross-sectoral cooperation through an integrated approach, as promoted in the [New Leipzig Charter](#) and in the NEB, is essential for effective reuse and regeneration of under-used spaces buildings, contributing sustainable land-use and social-cohesion.

Future prospects in relation to EU level actions

Further opportunities for co-design and implementation of Integrated Action Plans linked to common sustainable urban development challenges will be available with the launch of the URBACT IV programme. It emerged from the [URBACT city needs analysis](#) that ‘strengthening urban governance and co-creating strategies with citizens building on new perspectives and solutions’ and ‘physical interventions such as the creation of well-designed public or green spaces and urban renewal’ are considered the main means to tackle the challenges faced by cities. Hence, URBACT is envisaged as a key tool for addressing the needs of cities by interlinking inclusion and sustainability, as well as the promotion of green public spaces.

The NEB movement, with its four thematic areas (reconnecting with nature; regaining a sense of belonging; prioritising the places and people that need it the most; and the need for long-term, life-cycle thinking in the industrial ecosystem) and its focus on the local dimension and situation of groups and individuals who are the most vulnerable, can be an opportunity to integrate topics that are still under-explored when moving from the policy objective level to the realisation of actions on the ground. It also establishes dedicated initiatives and funding opportunities that help to link resources from different sources that could support further the work of the Urban Agenda partnerships and other actions.

As indicated in [Annex 2](#) of the NEB Communication, ‘Mobilising EU programmes’, the new Horizon Europe programme ‘**Pillar 2: Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness**’ includes **NEB dedicated Calls**⁹, with a pre-established amount allocated to the NEB projects creating opportunities to replicate scale-up and develop new initiatives and projects. The **ERDF Call for Technical Assistance and European Urban Initiatives** and the **LIFE Call for Environment Standard Action Projects** will also provide support for integrated and sustainable land-use of public spaces and buildings, heritage management, and urban development.

⁹ The list of call is include in [Annex 2 – Mobilising EU programmes](#) COM(2021) 573 final of the New European Bauhaus communication, accessible at: https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/system/files/2021-09/COM%282021%29_573_2_EN_annex.pdf.

Other calls will include the NEB as an element of context, for instance supporting projects on ‘Sustainable and resource-efficient solutions for an open, accessible, inclusive, resilient and low-emission cultural heritage’ and contributing to the NEB initiative by supporting the green and digital transitions in communities’ living environments through merging sustainability, inclusion and quality of experience. They include also small-scale pilots to explore innovative nature-based solutions covering both the sustainability and inclusion dimensions that are linked through design in the pilot project.

In addition, the **2021–2027 Cohesion Policy** provides for a minimum percentage of the ERDF resources of Member States that shall be allocated to sustainable urban development. That percentage has increased from 5% to 8%. The **Recovery and Resilience Facility** is also an opportunity to support Member States and local authorities in investing in green transition, with 37% of the expenditure for climate investments.

Although there are relevant achievements and innovative solutions in the Urban Agenda Partnerships and related Urban Innovative Actions and URBACT initiatives, further experimentation and new models and approaches are needed for the sustainable and circular reuse of spaces and for integrated heritage management. Most projects so far have focused on the reuse of public areas, while administrative and regulatory challenges persist and are greater in the reuse of fully or partially private spaces and buildings. Future projects and policies could explore innovative solutions and regulatory frameworks for enabling the reuse of private abandoned land and vacant buildings. This also includes exploring options for alternative regulations and funding opportunities, including combination of private and public funding, as well as procurement rules changes, not only at the national and local level, but also at the EU level.

Working in new transversal Partnerships is essential and can help to capitalise on the lessons learned and develop new networks for sharing experiences through a bottom-up approach in the re-definition of topics, actions, and partners that engage institutions at different levels.