Representatives of Maribor presented their current work on their Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategy during the Peer Review workshop organised by the Urban Development Network and hosted by the city of Ghent on 1-2 December 2016. The presentation was followed by peer discussions which have provided the bases for this report.
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PART 1 | UDN Peer Review Approach

The Peer review methodology

The UDN Peer review approach builds on the S3 Peer review methodology that has been developed by the S3 Platform of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission as a mutual learning tool for sharing, exploring and integrating policy knowledge in the context of regional and national Smart Specialisation Strategies. The S3 Peer review methodology has proven to be an effective tool in creating an open and trusted learning environment where practical and conceptual aspects of policy design and implementation can be discussed and explored through challenges and experiences of individual regions.

It has therefore been chosen to be experimentally applied at the city level to promote mutual learning and knowledge dissemination in the scope of the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies foreseen in article 7 of Regulation 1301/2013 on European Regional Development Funds (ERDF).

Objectives and expected outcomes

One objective of the Peer review is to allow participating cities to meet their peers, the European Commission staff, academic experts and others to discuss common issues and challenges related to their current work on Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies.

The second objective is to allow cities to get involved into first-hand evaluation experience and use the peer review outcomes to further improve their own strategies.

The third objective is to support the creation of a community of practice in an open and trusted learning environment by discussing practical ways to address common problems (lessons to take home).

About the Peer review workshop

The Peer review is based on a participative approach that encourages all participants to engage in a dynamic and creative discussion, which benefits both the cities under review and their peers.

The Peer review workshop involved different categories of actors:

*Participants from cities under peer review.* Three representatives from the city were invited (six in the case of the host city Ghent) to represent their city at the workshop to allow for simultaneous discussions (separate discussion tables). Three cities presented their strategies and were peer-reviewed: 1. Ghent; 2. Maribor and 3. Gothenburg.

*Critical friends.* All peers at the workshop had the role of a critical friend, providing critical (yet friendly) advice and sharing their different knowledge and experience. The city being reviewed in one session acted as a critical friend in the next session. Prior to the peer-review workshop, the European Commission provided all critical friends registered for the workshop with the background documents to allow them to prepare for the workshop.

*Invited experts.* The European Commission invited several experts to the Peer-review workshop for distinct purposes. One expert supported the three cities in their preparation of the peer review. Notably by
explaining the objectives and EU policy context, by helping in the drafting of questions and in reviewing the cities’ presentations and background documents.

*European Commission staff.* The UDN Peer review is the result of the collaboration between DG REGIO and JRC. Together with the host city, they were responsible for the organisation of the peer-review workshop. DG REGIO moderated the two days. Moderation and note taking of the workshop session was done jointly, where staff from JRC focussed on the correct implementation of the methodology of the peer review.

**Structure of the Peer review**

The Peer review workshop included three phases: preparation, workshop discussions, and workshop follow-up.

*Before the Peer review workshop - Preparation*

Prior to their workshop, each city under review had been working on: 1. Presentation on their existing Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategy; 2. Background document with relevant information on the city context and 3. Self-assessment questionnaire

The first two documents outline the main element of each ISUDS and specific questions to guide and focus further discussions. In addition, each reviewed city carried out a comprehensive self-assessment of its current work on ISUDS. This assessment covers eight principal areas: Integrated approach, Outward-looking dimension, Analytical work behind the development strategy, Shared vision, Action plan, Policy coordination an funding scheme, Stakeholder engagement, Framework for delivery: governance and monitoring system. This assessment exercise allows urban authorities to examine their strategy from the perspective of an external eye.

*During the Peer review workshop - Workshop discussions*

The Peer review workshops ran for one and half-days (on 1 and 2 December 2016). The agenda was structured with plenary and parallel sessions. In addition Day 1 contained a site-visit to The Ghent Old Docks. Plenary sessions aimed at providing general and technical information and to collect main outcomes of the Peer review workshop, both in Day 1 and Day 2.

Parallel sessions were devoted to peer reviews and organised in the following phases:

1. Presentation by the city under review and Question & Answer;
2. Table discussions around the questions/issues posed by the presenter;
3. Collection of results and closing comments by the city under review.

Each peer review session developed along the following logic:

In the presentation, the city under review was asked to identify three questions they thought were relevant to be discussed among their peers in three different discussion tables (two times three in the case of the host city Ghent).
Each table was asked to develop the proposed question in three iterations, which ensure that participants can: (1) work together to better understand the actual problem behind each issue; (2) provide policy advice and propose solutions to these problems by discussing what worked well (good practices) and what did not work; and (3) learn together how to deal with new policy issues in different contexts as relevant lessons to take home.

All peers were asked to join one of the discussion tables. At each table there were also: one of the invited experts as table moderator; a representative from the city under review to take a full advantage of the discussions and to answer any clarifying questions; a European Commission staff member. Once each table finished its discussion, the urban expert from each table presented the results of discussions to the others. At the end of each peer review session, the reviewed city was invited to reflect on the presented results of the discussions.

The parallel sessions were followed by plenaries where invited experts and cities under review were asked to exchange feedback and reflect on Lessons Learnt. At the closure of Day 2, an additional plenary session (Closure session) allowed the three cities under review to share impressions and main outcomes of the workshop, discuss follow-ups, and draw joint conclusions together with experts, peers and European Commission staff.

After the Peer review workshop - Follow-up

After the Peer review workshop, each city under peer-review was set to receive the specific Feedback Report that summarises results of table discussion and reflections, discusses any existing shortcomings in the reviewed strategy, and offers relevant recommendations. Moreover, experts and peers were asked to fill in additional questionnaires and an online survey that partially fed the content of this report.

The link to the peer review workshop's website including all the presentations and Feedback Reports is available here.
PART 2 | CURRENT WORK ON THE INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

ABOUT THE CITY IN BRIEF

Maribor is the second biggest city in Slovenia. It is located in the region of Styria, only 15 km away from the state border with Austria and 127 km from Slovenian capital, the city of Ljubljana. Maribor has per current statistical data (2016) 95,589 inhabitants that are living on 40,980 m². The breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 and subsequent collapse of heavy industry that was at the time the flagship of national and regional economy, resulted in heavy economic, social and infrastructural damage for the city of Maribor. There was a brief period of upturn at the turn of millennium but the economic crisis of 2009 further derailed development. Despite harsh times Maribor grew into metropolitan city and is one of cultural and economic centres of Slovenia.

Figure 2: Location of Maribor and the map of city districts

Maribor is also one of major education centres of Slovenia. Apart from numerous primary and secondary public and private schools, libraries and educational centres, it is also a city with the national university (University of Maribor), University library (UKM) and University Medical Centre (UKC).

In addition to rich historic heritage\(^{1}\) that is evident in numerous churches, monuments, museums and other sites, Maribor is also known for being the place of the world’s oldest vine. It has been growing for over 400 years on Lent, the riverbank of the Drava river.

Lent is also a major site for one of the biggest music and cultural festival in this part of Europe, namely the Lent Festival which contributes to diverse cultural life in the city. In short, Maribor is a lively European city and titles like Alpine city of the year 2000, European Capital of Culture (2012) and European Youth Capital (2013) support this ambition.

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\(^{1}\) Maribor received the city status in 1254.
However, Maribor faces several demographic, economic and environmental challenges. Maribor has the lowest share of under 14-year-olds and the highest share of 65+ year-olds among larger Slovenian municipalities. During the last 16 years its total number of residents fell approx. 1% annually. Maribor's unemployment rate is very high with 17.5% in 2015. It's historic city centre is in economic decline causing degradation of historical heritage. Many apartments and office buildings are energy inefficient and the dispersed building model of the city is responsible for costly management of utility infrastructure.

**KEY ELEMENTS PRESENTED BY THE CITY**

Maribor’s Sustainable Urban Development strategy is funded through an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) that is financed from the European Regional Development Fund. The city is independent in selection and submission of projects to the approval authority, which is the Association of Municipalities. Maribor needs to fulfil its part of Slovenia’s indicators for each field of implementation.

The strategy is based on existing local and national strategies such as the Cultural development strategy, Sustainable urban mobility plan, new spatial zoning plan, smart specialization strategy and the tourism development strategy. The strategy is coordinated with the Regional Development Agency. The drafting was done in close cooperation with the University of Maribor and with local NGOs (both of which were part of the Maribor delegation to the UDN).

The strategy is based on an extensive analytical process, including an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Maribor. In short Maribor is very well positioned geographically, with both other economic poles and natural assets in the vicinity. Besides Maribor is well endowed with good public services (e.g. University), knows little environmental stress and still has room to grow. The weaknesses were already mentioned. The main opportunities are that Maribor can develop its strengths by investing in degraded parts of town, walking and cycling infrastructure, its public buildings and reactivate its industrial infrastructure.

Maribor’s vision of the future is “The Opportunity for Maribor, building inclusive and circular community”. Its main goal is to create new and to use existing resources more efficiently, at the same time inviting all individuals and stakeholders to actively participate in shaping the urban space.

The strategy rests on 5 pillars:

1. Self-sufficient city
2. Sustainable mobility
3. New sustainable city management-with
4. Urban renewal
5. Activation of green spaces

These objectives are declined into 34 measures. If all measures are implemented Maribor expects as results: economic upturn, especially in the sector of tourism and services sector; urban regeneration of the historic city centre; positive impact on social activities in urban space; raising the level of environmental conservation and increased sustainable mobility; better connected and restored green urban areas.

Many of these activities have already been initiated by civil initiatives, business sector or NGOs, but there is a need to further develop these initiatives to increase their impact. In order to support the implementation of the action plan a Strategic Council for Implementation has been set up. The Strategic council will consist
of experts coming from the main stakeholder groups, such as city administration, university, NGOs and city council to ensure wide engagement. To further ensure a high level of public involvement additional projects that focus on citizen participation will be started. Measurable impact targets for each project are to be predefined, tracked and reported by the Strategic council.

The action plan is a list of potential projects that could be funded through the ITI. This map shows the main priority areas for Maribor. The idea is that a project covers several of the 34 measures from one or more predefined pillars and is based in a specific impact area / location. Priority will be given to projects that create permanent new employment in the business sector, raise the quality of natural and urban living environment and projects that improve Maribor’s business environment.

These are projects such as renewal of key buildings in the historic city centre, construction of Park & Bike facilities, completing the cycling-paths network, renewal of the river bank area, the oldest square and the oldest street. An important project, but not funded through the ITI, is the WCYCLE project that aims to include the local utilities into the circular economy. The degraded areas that are the focus of the strategy form approximately 8% of the urban area.
An implementation plan is being worked on. Prepared projects will be executed by following local authorities:

1. Projects dealing with urban regeneration and other proposed projects will be executed by the municipality’s **Project office**;
2. Sustainable mobility projects will be executed by the **Office for utility, transport and spatial planning**;
3. Projects for raising energy efficiency of public and publicly owned buildings will be executed by the public inter-municipal **Housing Fund Maribor**.

Public-private partnerships and cooperation with NGOs will be central elements. Current estimation is that 45 million Euro is needed for implementation. That is far more than the 18 million euro of the ITI. Therefore, Maribor is also considering other funding sources.

Participation in the design and implementation of the strategy is foremost done through NGOs. A pilot project on participation in the Old City revitalisation is ongoing. Another big project is about to be approved.

The SUD strategy includes predefined indicators that will be monitored and reported by the Strategic Board. Individual projects are advised to have additional indicators at project level.

Some weaknesses of the strategy the Maribor delegation identified are the limited cooperation with the private sector, the uncertain financial resources and its complexity.

The presentation of the city of Maribor is available [here](#).
PART 3 | INFORMAL FEEDBACK FROM SELECTED EXPERTS, PEERS AND UDN

This part refers to the informal feedback given by the peers, the experts and the Urban Development Network. In this context, it should be noted that:
- Informal evaluations of the respondents are based on their individual understanding of the elements presented by the city in the short time allowed by the peer-review exercise. A different degree of understanding may result in a variety of responses.
- We suggest focusing attention on questions/issues where there is a substantial discrepancy in the judgement expressed by the city and the one expressed by the pool of respondents.
- Dispersion of evaluations of respondents across a wide range of different judgements may reveal a difficulty in understanding how the underlying issue was communicated by the city.

DETAILED FEEDBACK

The city of Maribor, a city official, a professor and a NGO representative, filled in a self-assessment questionnaire prior to the workshop. Experts filled in a standardized assessment questionnaire afterwards. In addition, comments are included from participant evaluation forms.

Section 1 | INTEGRATED APPROACH

Not all experts and city delegates are convinced that a range of other agencies were involved in the process of designing the strategy. There is also a doubt whether higher levels of government are committed to the plan.

Additional comments given on the questionnaires

The strategy could further elaborate the links to national policy goals to ensure alignment. Stronger links between the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) should be sought to ensure there is a consistent strategy for the Functional Urban Area in Maribor. Can the ITI cover the FUA and include CLLD, rather than having a separate CLLD outside the ITI? The Hague is an example of a city where CLLD is used within an ITI. This means that the strategic objectives of the CLLD are aligned with that of the ITI strategy.

It is a quite public sector plan and Maribor acknowledges difficulties in engaging with the private sector. This seems to be a priority.

The strategy could further elaborate the links to national policy goals to ensure alignment.
Section 2 | THE OUTWARD LOOKING DIMENSION

On the outward looking dimension the city delegates are more critical than the external reviewers. Especially on the question of fostering strategic international cooperation. One expert thinks there is insufficient information about the efforts made to avoid duplication.

Section 3 | ANALYTICAL WORK BEHIND THE INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

On the analytical work behind the strategy everyone agrees that this was very solid. Only on the questions whether urban-rural linkages are considered one external reviewer disagrees and a city delegate is neutral.

Section 4 | SHARED VISION

There also is a consensus that the strategy provides a clear vision for the city that is overall realistic, targeted and well presented.

Section 5 | ACTION PLAN

The feedback on the action plan is positive overall: there are clear action lines, problem analysis and responsible bodies are identified. On the question whether option analysis is applied the experts either disagree I find there is insufficient information to judge. One external reviewer is not convinced that there is a good coherence between objectives, actions and indicators while another reviewer is neutral on this question.

Section 6 | POLICY COORDINATION AND FUNDING SCHEME

On this section the evaluation is different. On the policy coordination one expert rates this positively, another expert feels he lacks information. The city delegates rate these questions positively. Regarding funding the message is clear: external experts rate the financial commitment from the private sector badly, they are not convinced that adequate use of financial instruments is made is synergies between funds are not exploited. The city delegates tend to have the same opinion. Only one city delegate is more positive.

Additional comments given on the questionnaires

Engage stakeholders from the business community in the programming process. Related to this the strategy has no (financial) commitment from the private sector to be involved in the implementation process. This should be sought during the programming process.

Section 7 | STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In general, everyone agrees that stakeholder engagement was well developed. However, the external reviewers were not so sure this was equally well organised for the implementation phase. One city delegate agrees on this.

Additional comments given on the questionnaires
Maribor could look at ways to increase engagement with the business community through setting up a structure within the municipality administration that can provide continues support and facilitate information exchange.

**Section 8 | FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERY: GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING SYSTEM**

Regarding the framework for delivery the external reviewers rate this less positively. For several points they indicated a lack of information. The external reviewers agree with each other that the strategy does not include indicators to measure anticipated results and that no risk analysis is carried out. One of the external experts also has doubts about whether output and result indicators are properly identified, different groups are actively participating in the implementation and a sound governance and monitoring system is in place. Another external expert is not convinced the framework for delivery is clear. In general, the city delegates don't feel this lack of information and they are more positive. However, two out of three delegates share the view that the risk analysis is insufficient and on the indicators the city delegates disagree among each other.

**Additional comments given on the questionnaires**

Develop an approach to measuring the added value and results of the strategy as a whole (not just the contribution to the Programme indicators). The Brno strategy is an example of a strategy which includes a methodology to measure the results of the overall strategy.

Clarify the role of the Assembly of Municipalities and develop a framework for a critical assessment of projects. Clarify the role of the Strategic Council – what will they be consulted on? Do they assess the quality of projects and how does this relate to the role of the Assembly of Municipalities?
PART 4 | QUESTIONS AND PEER DISCUSSIONS

THE PEER REVIEW SESSION

The peer review session included around 20 participants from across Europe. For the discussions, the participants self-organized into three separate tables, all with representatives from different cities. The presentation from Maribor was given by Igor Kos, Andrej Žižek and Andrej Naterer.

QUESTIONS UNDER REVIEW

During its preparation for the Peer Review workshop, the city was asked to prepare 3 questions to be later discussed with peers. The representatives of Maribor formulated the following questions:

1 “How to engage the business sector in the implementation of the strategy?

2 “How to develop good projects that fit the strategy?”

3 “How to effectively involve utility companies in the ISUD to ensure long term sustainable operation of the city?”

DISCUSSIONS 1 ON ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BUSINESS SECTOR

ORIGINAL QUESTION 1: HOW TO ENGAGE THE BUSINESS SECTOR IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY?

Maribor is looking for ways to engage the business sector. For example, on infrastructure and urban regeneration projects. This to activate use of public urban space from the business side, generating jobs and revenue.

RETHINKING THE QUESTION

The city of Maribor faces difficulties in involving private enterprises in the decision-making process. This seems to be particularly true for small companies, which are often in a difficult economic position. Nonetheless they are important stakeholders for urban regeneration projects because they often own buildings that need to be renovated (e.g. in the historic centre).

POLICY ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED AMONG THE CRITICAL FRIENDS

It is hard to expect from anyone to be fully engaged in the implementation of the strategy when his or her opinion was not asked when the strategy was drafted. This seem to be a bit the case with the business sector in Maribor. It would be good to develop the reflex to engage with the business sector in an early phase of development of the urban strategy. This can ensure more engagement and participation from the
business sector in the project implementation phase. Identify clearly when and where you need the input/participation of businesses. They will only get involved where they see a clear benefit.

The business sector should not be looked at as one homogeneous group. It might be worthwhile to focus efforts in a first time at dynamic businesses, promising entrepreneurs and start-ups.

It is important to build trust. This can be done by stick to what you promise in your participatory decision making process. Therefore, it is important to be sure that you can award what comes out of the participation process. Another way of building trust is by entering in regular contact with the business community, e.g. through business lunches.

A dedicated structure in the administration can be conducive for establishing a dialogue with business. Projects do not necessarily need to be financed through grants from public institutions. Consider public private partnerships and financial instruments to engage business also in funding.

**DISCUSSIONS 2 ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECTS**

**ORIGINAL QUESTION 2: HOW TO DEVELOP GOOD PROJECTS THAT FIT THE STRATEGY?**

Maribor is looking for ways to evaluate potential impact and set the right priorities. In the past similar big projects missed the goals set out in that time (i.e. EU Capital of Culture) and lessons were not learned from mistakes.

**RETHINKING THE QUESTION**

Maribor now has a strategy that enumerates almost 40 different issues. Developing projects that address multiple issues at once seem a daunting task. Which of the objectives are really the priority? Experience has shown that some very big projects did not have much effect after the project was over. Therefore, the question was reformulated into “How to achieve the delivery of priority projects that fit the strategy (in the timeframe)?”

**POLICY ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED AMONG THE CRITICAL FRIENDS**

The strategy of Maribor is very broad and somewhat abstract. An intermediary step is needed to link the strategy to concrete projects. This could be called an implementation, investment or action plan. A balance should be sought between visible quick-wins and more long-term projects, between projects that need grants and those that generate revenue. Such an implementation plan can also manage expectations from politicians.

The Old Docks project in Ghent shows that it is not needed to have one single project that addresses objectives such as housing, mobility and sustainability at once. A big project can be broken up in smaller projects such as the construction of a bridge, the setup of a local energy grid, etc. that are all part of the bigger strategy for The Old Docks. This makes projects manageable in time, for audit requirements, etc.

That a project is ready does not mean that it is a priority project for the strategy. In the case of brownfield development not all potential brownfields are equally important. Some score high on criterion such as level
of degradation, economic potential, accessibility to labour market, disadvantaged areas, etc. But some might be too expensive to develop and are better given another function. In the Liverpool case Ernst & Young did a detailed site review that made recommendations on which sites had the most potential for development. Ghent has developed its own sustainability tool that it applies on projects. On the other side of the coin best is the enemy of good. It is important that projects can be delivered on time.

DISCUSSIONS 3 ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF UTILITY COMPANIES

ORIGINAL QUESTION 3: HOW TO EFFECTIVELY INVOLVE THE UTILITY COMPANIES IN THE ISUD TO ENSURE LONG TERM SUSTAINABLE OPERATION OF THE CITY?

In Maribor utilities present a financial burden on the budget and on citizens, in the future we can anticipate energy cost and environmental challenges.

RETHINKING THE QUESTION

Under utilities we understand solid waste, electricity, water, etc. One important element in Maribor’s integrated sustainable urban development (ISUD) strategy is a switch towards a circular economy. Such a switch requires a different business model for utility companies, notably in the waste sector. In the current situation, the waste management company charges the municipality for the amount of waste it collects and dumps it in a landfill. Since the local landfill was closed in 2005 due to citizen pressure, the waste treatment company transports the municipal waste to neighbouring municipalities. The costs of this transport are invoiced to the city: a very expensive and inefficient system. A circular economy strives to reuse materials and create less waste. In the old business model less waste is less income.

Some utility companies resist to this necessary change in their business model. So, the real question is: “How to convince utility companies to change their business model in line with the ISUD objective of a circular economy?”

POLICY ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED AMONG THE CRITICAL FRIENDS

A city should be aware and use its own leverage. In the case of Maribor, Maribor can put new obligations in a next contract with the utility company. A city can set an example, including in the behaviour of city officials, that can be inspiring and set in motion a change in mindset among other partners. Cities also have a certain weight in the market and can therefore create an offer or a demand. A city could for example decide to invest in recharging points for electric vehicles or gradually change the city’s vehicle fleet towards electric vehicles. A point that needs attention is that solutions are inclusive. In case a city grants certain benefits to owners of electric vehicles, be aware that large parts of the population do not have the means to own an electric vehicle.

Powerful pressure groups for change can be the citizens themselves or their political representatives. If citizens are made aware of the benefits of a circular economy and the high costs of the current system, they may call for change. Awareness raising among children may have the longest lasting effect. Also, businesses themselves can influence behaviour of citizens. In Flanders, the water treatment companies are very active
in this respect. Law and regulation almost by definition follow developments on the ground.

For a circular economy, which requires a new way of thinking, several laws form barriers that need to be overcome. A case-in-point is the Old Docks’ local electricity grid that conflicts with the Flemish regulation that every citizen should be able to select its own electricity provider. The solution is a local exception or pilot. For this the city needs to discuss with higher tiers of government. This is also linked to technological progress; solutions that were 5 years ago too expensive or not possible at all, might now be feasible.

A lesson Ghent shares is that you need to keep advancing in steps and keep pushes the boundaries of the possible. If you wait till all conditions are right and all questions are resolved nothing will ever happen.
PART 5 | LESSONS LEARNED AND FOLLOW UP

CITY: SUMMARY OF LESSONS AND ACTIONS

What are the specific lessons for the city of Maribor from this peer review exercise? Below are the main lessons learnt and possible actions linked to these lessons.

**Lesson Learnt 1**  
There are important opportunities for temporary use of plots

**Linked Action 1**  
Make a proposal for a change in legislation to the Ministry for spatial use of Slovenia

This action will be undertaken by Igor Kos of the Maribor municipality in 2017.

**Lesson Learnt 2**  
The importance of having a long term strategic plan for Maribor (longer than one political mandate)

**Linked Action 2**  
Advocate for this change with politicians

This action will be undertaken by the Maribor municipality in 2017 and 2018.

**Lesson Learnt 3**  
The importance of a reality check of the strategy and projects.

**Linked Action 3**  
Advocacy of soundness of the strategy and projects

This is a recurring task for the Strategic board (for the strategy) and Project office (for projects).

**Lesson Learnt 4**  
The importance of understanding your autonomy

**Linked Action 4**  
Review previous steps and rethink future steps

This is a personal action for Andrej Naterer.

**Lesson Learnt 5**  
There are creative ways to bind commercial and private sector in urban renewal
projects.

**Linked Action 5** Plan actions in specific stages of project implementation that target commercial and private partners.

This action will be undertaken by Maribor’s project management office in the second half of 2017.

**Lesson Learnt 6** There is an important organisation behind the strategic development of the Ghent Municipality

**Linked Action 6** Promote necessary capacity building of Maribor's municipal experts.

This is a task for the Head office of Maribor’s municipal administration for the years 2017 and 2018.

**UDNs FURTHER SUGGESTIONS**

Maribor presented a very solid integrated urban development strategy. Even though Maribor considers itself a sort of novice in this area. It is clear Maribor is rather innovative in several ways. The WCYCLE project in which Maribor makes strides to transform its urban economy into a circular economy, is one example. Another case in point was Maribor’s delegation to the UDN; comprised of a city official, a professor involved in the drafting of the strategy and a NGO representative. Maribor’s delegation seemed very eager to learn from the experience from others, resulting in many very concrete action points to work at home. Maribor already participated in several URBACT networks. Participation in one of the Urban Agenda partnerships might further enhance Maribor’s possibilities to learn from and share experiences with other European cities, countries and European institutions.

A point that came back in different discussions and which was equally mentioned by the external reviewers was the public sector centric development of the strategy. Ghent showed the quadruple helix approach in their presentation. It appeared as if Maribor is still missing one out of these four helixes: the private sector.

Many suggestions were given by experts and peers on how this could be improved. Also, the recently
started URBACT implementation network INT-HERIT provides some interesting examples on how heritage can be used in an innovative way to stimulate the local economy.

And although Maribor already participates with projects in various European programmes (URBACT and Interreg) still more sources for funding could be tapped (European Social Fund?) and more financial instruments such as public-private partnerships could be considered to get projects implemented. Bundling this kind of expertise at municipal level into a Funding Office might be worth considering.