



# Youth for Reviving *(stagnating)* EU territories



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## INTRODUCTION

Launched in January 2023, the Youth for reviving (stagnating) EU territories project was inspired by the [youth policy dialogue](#) conducted by the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, in September 2022. During the dialogue, several young people from around the EU highlighted the issues that they and their peers were facing in their regions of origin that were leading to increasing levels of youth emigration/out-migration.

The scope of the project was also shaped by the European Commission's [Communication on Harnessing Talent in Europe's Regions](#). Published in January 2023, the Communication alludes to the impact that the trends of youth emigration/out-migration and brain drain could have on territorial, social, and economic cohesion in the EU.

In this context, the **Youth for reviving (stagnating) EU territories** project aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the reasons that young Europeans have for leaving their regions of origin or staying there. The project also sought to identify policies that could attract young people who had left their regions of origin back home or encourage those who had not yet left to stay.

To do this, the project team focused on three main tasks:

1. desk research, including interviews with colleagues in the European Commission who deal with youth-related or regional issues,
2. a multilingual, EU-wide [questionnaire](#) addressed to young Europeans aged between 15 and 29, including its dissemination across the 27 EU Member States,
3. visits to different regions in the EU affected by the issues of youth emigration/out-migration and brain drain namely in the Netherlands and Greece, as well as virtual visits to regions in Germany and Poland.

These tasks and the results derived from them led to the production of the present toolkit.

## OVERALL PROJECT FINDINGS

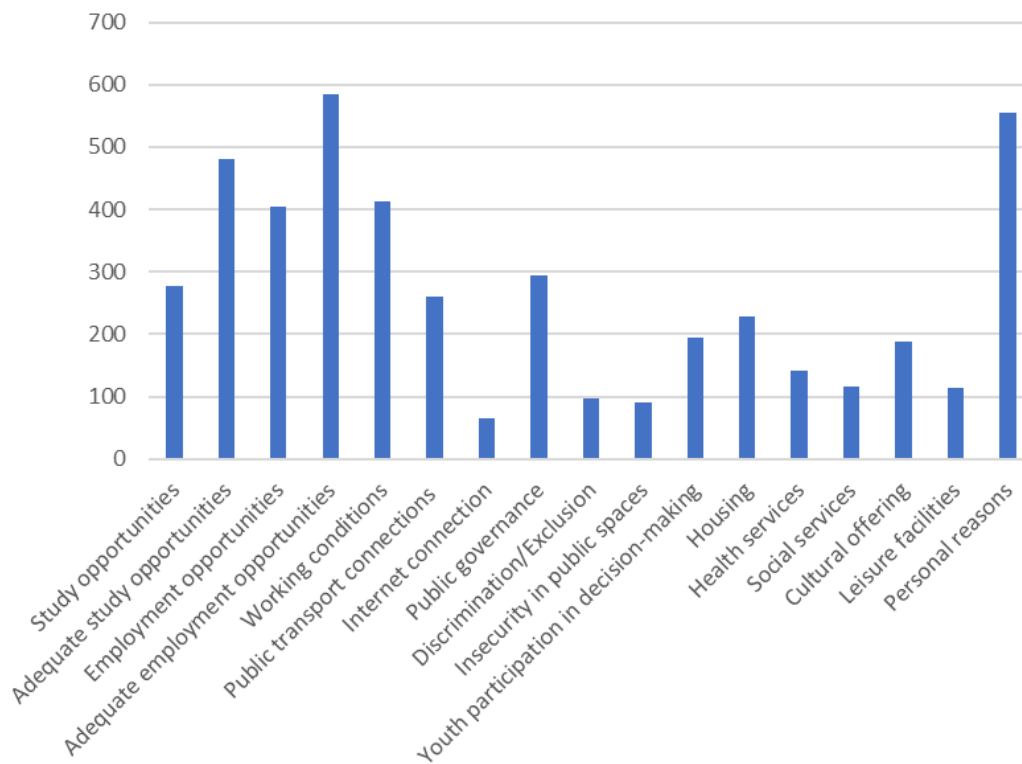
To complement the findings of their desk research, the project team carried out a multilingual, EU-wide questionnaire addressed to young Europeans aged between 15 and 29. The questionnaire was shaped around three main questions:

- Why do young people leave their 'home regions'?
- Why do young people stay in their 'home regions'?
- According to young people, what policies help boost the attractiveness of a region?

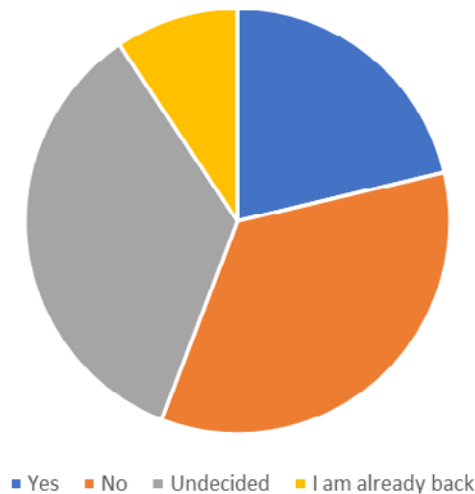
### Reasons for young people to leave

According to the questionnaire, the top three reasons that young people had for leaving their 'home regions' were: a lack of **adequate employment opportunities (49 %)**, **personal reasons (47 %)** and a lack of **adequate study opportunities (40 %)**.

When asked to expand on the personal reasons that influenced their decision to leave their 'home region', young people mentioned a sense of curiosity and a desire to explore the world. They saw leaving their 'home region' as a rite of passage and a way to further develop. Some young people highlighted that the feeling of exclusion in their 'home region' due to differing values with the rest of their local communities had an impact on their decision to leave. Others alluded to the fact that they left their 'home region' to follow their partner/loved one.



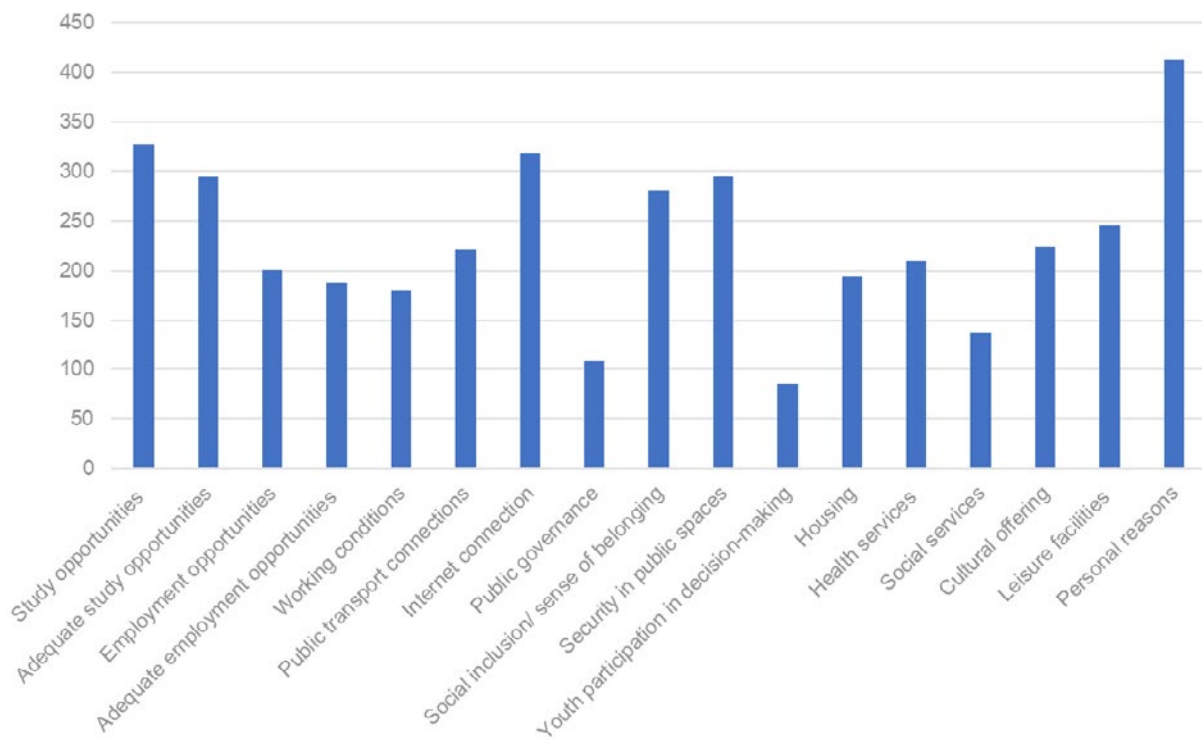
The questionnaire also included a question about whether those who had left their ‘home region’ would like to return home some day or not. The aim of this question was to understand whether there was any basis for devising policies that could attract young people back home. The answers to this question were rather inconclusive. An equal share of young people stated that they saw themselves returning home or that they were already back, that they didn’t see themselves returning home, or that they were undecided. This demonstrates that there are grounds for developing policies that aim to boost the attractiveness of a region to young people.



### Reasons for young people to stay

According to the questionnaire, the top three reasons why young people decided to stay in their ‘home regions’ were: **personal reasons** (49%), followed by the overall **study opportunities** (39%) and the **internet connection** (38%).

When asked to elaborate on the personal reasons, proximity to family and other relationships as well as financial considerations such as lack of financial independence, were the two decisive factors in young people’s decision to stay. A sense of belonging to/being committed to/and loving one’s region also featured highly among respondents’ elaborations.



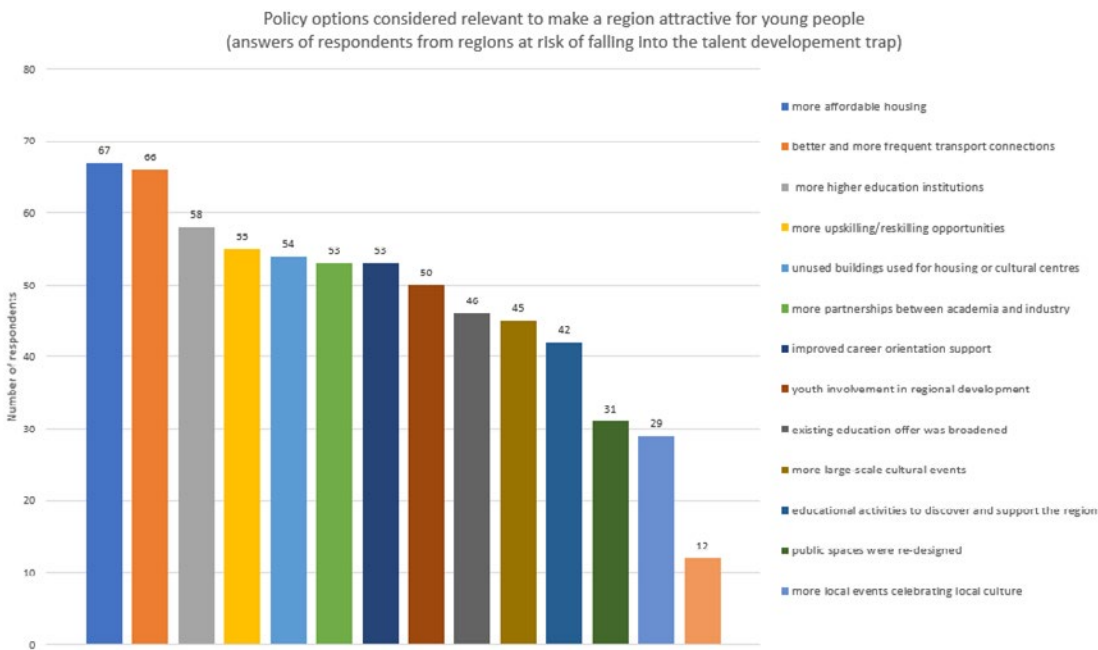
### Young people's preferred policy options

When it comes to concrete policy options that appeal to young people, the third section of the questionnaire looked into young people's opinions on 14 policy options, out of which they were invited to choose up to five that were most relevant to them insofar as boosting the attractiveness of a region is concerned.

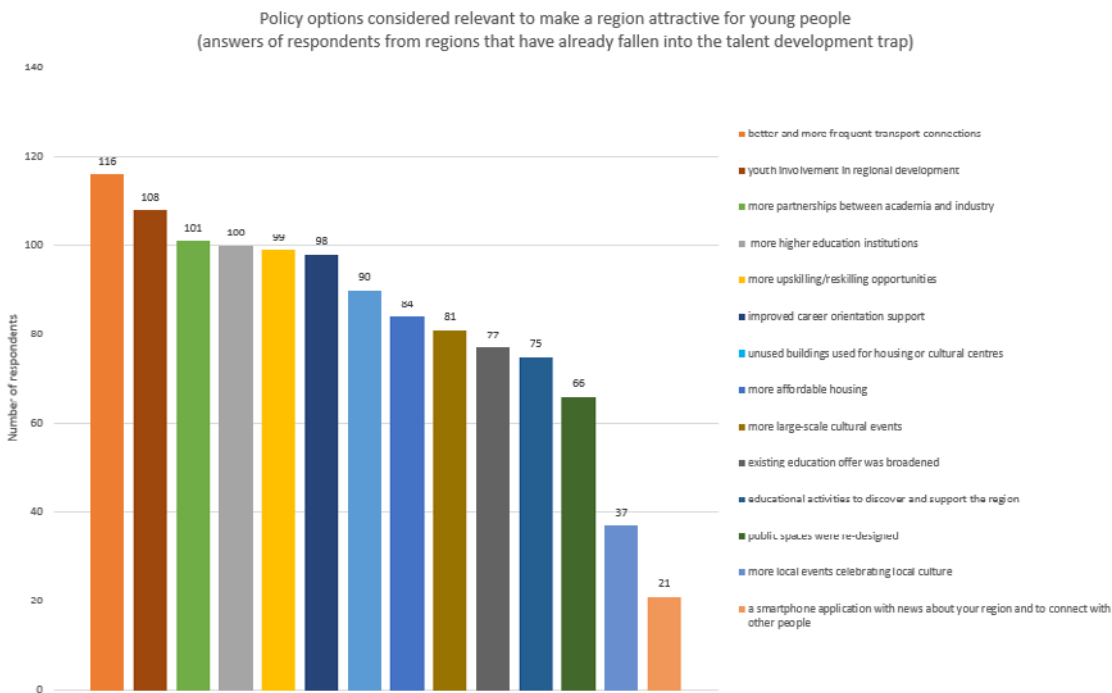
The replies to the questionnaire showed that young people consider policies on **affordable housing**, improved **transport connections** and increased possibilities to **participate in regional decision-making** as most relevant for them. When looking closer at young people's preferences in regions that are at risk of falling into a talent development trap, the overall findings are confirmed with affordable housing and transport connections scoring highest.

However, when having a look at regions that have already fallen into a talent development trap, the results are somewhat different. Good transport connections scored highest, followed by a wish for more possibilities for participation in regional decision-making. Affordable housing only ranks eighth, which could be an indicator for the fact that regions in a talent development trap are already faced with depopulation consequences, to the extent that housing is not scarce or expensive. At the same time, the results indicated that young people in those regions feel disconnected - as much in physical terms (lacking transport connections) but also in political terms (lacking participation possibilities).

In response to these findings, initiatives on housing, transport and political participation possibilities for young people are included in the present toolkit.



Ranking of policy options by respondents from regions that are at risk of falling into a talent development trap.



Ranking of policy options by respondents from regions that are already in a talent development trap.

To gain more concrete insights on young people’s priorities regarding regions they come from or currently live in, respondents’ replies to two open questions were analysed according to a keyword search.

The analysed questions were:

1. If you could change one thing about your ‘home region’ to make it a more attractive place for young people to live in, what would it be?
2. If you could highlight one thing in your new region that made it a particularly attractive choice for you, what would it be?

The keywords were chosen according to desk research findings and the feedback collected from young people throughout the missions.

The results show that job considerations are crucial for young people. The term 'job' was mentioned particularly often in the replies to both open questions. When asked of what young people would like to change in their home region, housing and public transport were mentioned particularly often. Also 'education' and 'university' were mentioned particularly often in the replies to the open questions. Interestingly, when asked what young people would highlight in the region they currently live in, the word 'cultural' was included in numerous replies, generally in connection with 'cultural offer', 'cultural activities' or 'cultural diversity'. While culture-related aspects are not mentioned often when it comes to calls for action and areas, where young people explicitly mention what they want to see change, the cultural offer of a region still seems to be something young people particularly value once it is available.

If you could change one thing about your 'home region' to make it a more attractive place for young people to live in, what would it be?	If you could highlight one thing in your new region that made it a particularly attractive choice for you, what would it be?
Job (107)*	Job (163)**
Housing (102)*	Cultural (89)**
Public transport (88)*	University (83)**
Education (37)*	Public transport (40)**

\* Number of mentions in a total of 812 replies.

\*\* Number of mentions in a total of 1 173 replies.

Taking account of these findings, the present toolkit includes initiatives linked to job and education opportunities as well as to cultural offers.

## Challenges encountered by local/regional stakeholders

To successfully tackle the issue of brain drain, solutions need to be based on cooperation. This is because the issue can have an impact on several (interconnected) actors (e.g. universities and employers.).

One of the most frequently highlighted challenges in tackling the issue that the project team witnessed during the year was the lack of cooperation among relevant stakeholders. This lack of cooperation had a tendency to hinder the effectiveness of potential solutions to the brain drain issue. An important form of cooperation, which was often found to be lacking in many cases was the cooperation between universities and local authorities or other local organisations.

Local authorities' lack of competence in certain policy areas, particularly in the field of education, was another challenge that the team picked up on throughout the year. Sometimes, matters related to the education programmes offered by education institutions (e.g. available places on courses) are decided on at national level. This prevents local authorities from tailoring the education offer in their regions to the needs of their markets.

Another challenge faced by certain regions, as seen by the project team, was the fact that their economies are sometimes under-prepared to welcome international talent. SMEs are the backbone of the EU's economy. However, due to their size, those enterprises often lack the necessary resources to integrate internationals. Therefore, support from local authorities in this regard is essential. However, local authorities themselves can also lack the resources required to offer such support, demonstrating the complexity of overcoming this challenge.

The challenges identified during the missions and desk research led the project team to establishing the golden rules in the toolkit.

## THE TOOLKIT

The 51 initiatives included in the toolkit have been whittled down from around 150 initiatives that the project team identified throughout the year. The initiatives presented in the toolkit have been selected due to their **pertinence to young people's expectations** for their regions, their **innovative nature**, and their **transferability** between regions. They correspond to the overall findings of the project and notably to the views and needs expressed by more than 2 000 young people from right across the EU who responded to the questionnaire mentioned above.

The toolkit's aim is to serve as a collection of best practices that could either be easily implemented by a variety of stakeholders around Europe (regional/local authorities, education institutions, civil society organisations, businesses etc.), or alternatively serve as a source of inspiration for all those interested in taking action against demographic challenges such as brain drain.

For each initiative in this toolkit, the main actors (implementers), as well as the target audience, have been identified to facilitate the replication of the initiatives. Where applicable, EU funding instruments that have been used to implement the initiatives are indicated.

**Empower young people:** In this category, the project team has gathered all initiatives which seek to give young people more agency, whether it is on a political level or with regard to their own personal and professional development. As a consequence, the initiatives are further clustered into three sub-categories.

- The first one is dedicated to initiatives related to governance and (political) decision-making, enabling young people's involvement in regional decision-making. This sub-category includes youth councils for example.
- A second sub-category covers initiatives dealing with professional and personal development providing guidance for young people. Initiatives in this category include, for example, projects on career guidance or initiatives targeted at young people who have dropped out of the education system.
- Finally, in the third sub-category, the project team has grouped initiatives which focus on the professional development of young people by providing encouragement and support to them. The initiatives in this sub-category mostly deal with entrepreneurship and equip young people with the necessary skills and network to build their own companies or set up their own projects and initiatives.

**Integrate newcomers and build communities:** The policies included in this section seek to facilitate the integration of newcomers in communities in a variety of ways. Some policies, for example, focus on expanding a community's cultural offering which provides opportunities for people, including newcomers, to socialise and meet new people. Other measures focus on providing newcomers with the necessary information that would help them settle in quickly. Certain initiatives are led by more than one stakeholder and highlight the value of cooperation when it comes to integrating newcomers in an area.

**Reinvest in regions:** The policies included in this section are focused on innovative and entrepreneurial ways to reinvest in regions. They include actions targeted at improving regions' transport systems, fostering innovation, and integrating talent, as well as investigating and fighting depopulation. Certain initiatives are led by universities in collaboration with local administration and highlight the value of cooperation.

**Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy:** In this category, the project team collected initiatives that focus on cooperation between different stakeholders. Successful initiatives are based on the combination of different experiences, which can then together create a targeted solution. The initiatives presented under this category provide for examples as to how to design strategies to frame cooperation, create opportunities for broad scope interaction between players, strengthen the supply of talent (coordinate with players in charge of higher education or of skills creation) and facilitate matching the demand and supply of talent.

**Cross-cutting initiatives:** The policies included in this section cover a range of areas that include facilitating the integration of newcomers in a region/city, reinvesting in a region's/city's infrastructure and improving a region's/city's cultural offering. In some cases, the policies aim to facilitate young people's entry into the local labour market or to empower young people in other ways by giving them a say in decision-making.



## GOLDEN RULES

Besides these concrete ideas for local and regional action, the project team identified some ‘golden rules’ for regional stakeholders to consider when launching an initiative to attract and retain young people in their regions. Particularly throughout their missions, the project team realised how crucial the following four elements are in addressing the problem of high youth emigration/out-migration rates in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

### 1. INVESTIGATE:

It is indispensable to have concrete and tangible knowledge of a problem in order to provide an informed, targeted and efficient solution. Only when knowing root causes of a problem can we tackle those instead of dealing with the symptoms only.

With regard to attracting and retaining young people in EU regions, this requires **gathering reliable information** on why young people leave, what exactly they are looking for and what could potentially encourage them to stay. The project team observed that policy makers sometimes fail to collect data and to engage with the target group of their policies. This is however crucial in order to adapt their policies to the target group and to involve the relevant people directly in the development of the policies. Data can be collected through questionnaires but also through other channels, such as focus groups or dialogues with youth councils or other youth representatives. Furthermore, engaging with schools or universities and enabling exchanges with youth organisations, can provide valuable input on what concrete action can be built.

Indeed, investigation is **not limited to simple data collection but goes beyond it**. It implies digging deeper into trends and opinions, giving people the chance to explain and develop their positions. Investigation also implies creating the possibility for young people to give feedback on initiatives and express their level of satisfaction with policies or projects directed towards them.

Throughout the process of investigating, it is important to keep in mind young people’s **heterogeneity**. The project team would recommend reaching out to young people through different channels and in various ways. Not all young people might be keen to speak up in a very formal setting, while others are precisely looking for a stage to share their views and suggestions. Also, while in some cases an *ad hoc* consultation might be the most efficient and adequate way to gather young people’s feedback, other cases require a more regular dialogue with young people. Regular dialogues can allow for the follow-up on ideas, the development of new ones and the tracking of progress over time.

Finally, investigation does not only refer to the phase before the project but also covers the duration of the project and its aftermath. Policy makers should make sure that they **measure the concrete impact** of their policies. This can be done by comparing the situation before (baseline) and after the project implementation. Concrete data on the project’s impact can, on the one hand, help to identify potential problems and allow for improvement in future projects. On the other hand, it also allows to promote the project and to encourage its replication where tangible results prove its success.

### 2. COOPERATE:

Cross-sectoral cooperation has proven extremely useful when designing and implementing projects for young people. A variety of stakeholders, including private and public actors, are involved in youth policies and bring different approaches and perspectives to the discussions. Therefore, policies that are designed and implemented alone risk being inefficient or even counterproductive.

Cooperation can take place at various levels. The most comprehensive way of cooperation is probably throughout the establishment of a **common strategy** which brings all relevant stakeholders together e.g., at the level of the municipality. Having clear procedures in place, assigning roles to different stakeholders and holding regular meetings to make common decisions, design road maps and action plans allows for a coordinated approach and coherent action.

Another possibility is to cooperate on a more **ad hoc basis**, with a restricted number of stakeholders to tackle a specific issue. This type of cooperation allows for more spontaneous and less bureaucratic cooperation and quicker action. For example, universities and businesses of a certain sector can cooperate on an *ad hoc* basis in order to launch a job fair or establish a traineeship programme without having many more stakeholders intervening.

Exchanges during the project team’s missions have shown that where people interested in youth policies worked closely together, the impact of their actions increased significantly.

### 3. COMMUNICATE:

Another crucial finding throughout the project was that young people were often not aware about actions and initiatives that were put in place for them. It is therefore indispensable to think about communication and outreach and to raise young people's awareness of the initiatives on offer to them.

Communication should be **included in the design and set-up of a policy or a project** and its target group(s) should be well defined from the very beginning. Only when an initiative reaches its beneficiaries and is spread among the relevant actors can it have a long-lasting and comprehensive effect.

Communication goes beyond simply providing information about offers and policies for young people. Making people stay in or move to a region can require a real marketing effort. Some regions have therefore started **branding campaigns**, highlighting some advantageous, typical features of their region and transforming them into a brand which they later 'sell' to inhabitants and to people visiting. This approach does not only allow for the attraction of (young) people who become aware of the region and its attractiveness, it also fosters the feeling of local identity, belonging and pride for the region, its traditions and places or landscapes.

### 4. DARE TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP:

Last but not least, whether you are about to set up a youth policy/project, or to organise an event for young people, or even to create your own youth organisation, all this requires the will and the courage to actually transform an idea into action.

Many of the initiatives that the project team came across during the project were the fruit of people's outstanding determination and courage to make their project come to life. The project team had the chance to talk to inspiring and highly dedicated people who managed to take the first step and set up initiatives that continue to grow.

It was therefore decided to include courage as a separate golden rule and the project team encourages you to get inspired by the following initiatives gathered in this toolkit to make your region an attractive and vibrant place for young people.

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## SECTION 1: EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE

### Governance and (political) decision-making/involvement

#### LARISSA YOUTH COUNCIL

**Location:** Thessaly (EL).

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Governance and (political) decision-making/involvement.

**Description:** The aim of the Municipal Youth Council of Larissa is for young participants to get familiarised with decision-making processes at the local level, and to participate in initiatives promoting social justice and solidarity. It is attached to the municipality of Larissa and is hence directly connected to the local policy making. However, the Larissa Youth Council has its own funding.

The young women and men that participate in the Council work towards organising and supporting local community initiatives and co-design – together with the local authority of Larissa – a framework for the city's Youth Strategy. One interesting practice to highlight is that the Council places great importance on the participation of vulnerable population groups. At least one representative from the refugee community participates in the Council. This practice strengthens social cohesion and allows to better take account of the heterogeneity of Larissa's youth. It is particularly relevant as the members of youth councils are often well-educated young people with a stable socio-economic background.

In preparation for the formation of the Council, over 100 young people participated in education workshops focusing on their familiarisation with local government operations. The Council is currently composed of 60 members, selected from a database from young people aged 17 to 30 years old.

For young people, the participation in the Municipal Youth Council is a possibility to shape local politics and get connected to the region. In some cases, a youth council represents the only possibility to reach out to the municipality and influence local politics. It further presents a valuable networking opportunity for young people. For the Municipality, the Youth Council has the advantage of keeping young people in the region, as (former) members of the Youth Council tend to stay in (or come back to) the region.

Youth Councils are a quite common policy to involve young people in regional decision-making. Similar initiatives exist for example in the French region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur where the *Parlement régional de jeunesse* (Regional Youth Parliament) makes young people's voice heard or in Mayotte, where the *Conseil départemental des jeunes* (Youth Departmental Council) brings together youth interested in participating in regional decision making. The transferability of this policy is therefore high. However, a region needs the necessary funding to establish such a council.

**Implementers:** Local authority.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Source:** <https://www.cnigreece.gr/en/best-practices/municipal-youth-council-larissa/>.



## YOUTH CENTRE OF IPEIROS

**Location:** Ipeiros (EL).

**Category:** Empower young people; Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** The Youth Centre of Ipeiros was set up in 2015 to meet the uncatered needs of young people living in the region. Back then, there were no similar youth organisations in the region where young people could get together, make friends, and learn new skills.

Located in the region's capital city, Ioannina, the Centre regularly organises cultural events and festivals that allow young people living in the region to mingle. On top of this, the Centre organises classes on topics such as IT and languages that help young people develop their skills. The Centre also operates in close cooperation with the Careers Office of the local university, allowing young people to understand the employment opportunities that exist in the region.

Through various programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the Centre also runs programmes where young people can participate in funded volunteering-related activities abroad. Not only does this offer young people the chance to gain new skills, these experiences can also allow young people to discover new cultures and satisfy their curiosity about life outside of their country.

The Centre has evolved a lot since its inception. Nowadays, in addition to its activities that are focused on the region's youth population, it also acts as a centre that supports the integration of asylum seekers in the region. This work is mainly carried out through projects related to accommodation, healthcare, education, and other support services.

**Implementers:** Civil society organisation.

**Target audience:** Young residents of the region and asylum seekers.

**Link:** <https://www.yce.gr/>.

## GO ALIVE

**Location:** West Macedonia (EL).

**EU Funding:** Yes, Erasmus+.

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Governance and (political) decision-making/involvement.

**Description:** The Youth Organisation GO Alive is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation based in Kozani and active in West and Central Macedonia.

Among the objectives of the organisation are the educational, professional, cultural, and spiritual empowerment and development of young people (especially those with reduced opportunities due to social, economic or geographical barriers). Go Alive further aims at the improvement of young people's skills and competences, facilitating their active citizenship, employability, and transition to the labour market. In this context, the organisation also supports mobility programmes for young volunteers, trainees, and workers. In 2023, more than 150 young people have participated in EU projects abroad. Providing the possibility of short-term mobility for young people has proven to be a successful approach to raise young people's awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of their own region. It encourages them to improve their region as well as to promote their region abroad.

One of GO Alive's core activities is the promotion of non-formal participatory education and non-formal learning. In doing so, the organisation does not only target young people but also pro-actively involves them in the activities. To give an example, in the Mindfulness Project, young people were first led to learn about and experience mindfulness themselves before being subsequently in the lead of creating their own social media awareness campaign on mindfulness. This campaign was set up by young people for young people. In the 'Green out of the box' programme, young people establish a dynamic and immersive educational platform to cultivate knowledge and develop skills to facilitate collective action with regard to environmental challenges. The programme's target group are secondary school students who participate in two-weeks-long challenges to tackle a pressing local environmental challenge. Once a challenge is conquered, the students become champions of sustainability in their school. They further choose the next green mission and challenge the next school to act upon an environmental challenge.

By applying this participatory approach and providing young people with the responsibility to lead their own projects and to approach societal issues through innovative methods such as gamification, the organisation strengthens young people's confidence. It also provides them with valuable soft skills in project management and communication.

**Implementers:** Civil society organisation.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Link:** <https://goalive.eu/go-alive-ngo/>.

## URBACT CHANGE! PROJECT

**Location:** Nagykanizsa (HU).

**EU Funding:** Yes, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Governance and (political) decision-making/involvement.

**Description:** The URBACT Change! project on rethinking urban public services looks at existing good practice in the field of social public services as well as at young people's attachment to their place of residence.

In the framework of the project, the Nagykanizsa City Council and the Urban Local Group (ULG), consisting of talented young people, NGOs and representatives of social institutions, developed a local anti-brain drain policy to retain and/or attract youth in the city. In a first step, the young people of the Urban Local Group highlighted the main difficulties faced by the city in responding to the needs of its diverse and highly skilled local community. As a result of this exercise, a lack of communication between the local authorities and young people was identified. The project hence carried out a thorough investigation of the underlying problem or youth emigration.

Throughout the project, an Integrated Action Plan for implementation at municipal level was elaborated which specifically focussed on young people. The plan includes the creation of:

the 'Base-Youth Community': here young people can develop initiatives and projects whilst receiving mentoring support from local businesses;

the 'Incubator Centre': here local enterprises and representatives of the local government provide young people with funds, mentoring and consultancy services to help them set up their business and/or facilitate their entry in the local labour market; and

the 'Benovative.com platform': this platform is an online local innovation hub where young people can contribute with their creativity to the design of the 'Base-Youth Community' as well as to the improvement of community and public services.

The project produced tangible results. The municipality adopted for the first time a municipality document, the mid-term youth policy (2018-2022), specifically targeted to and designed for young people. With the objective of mitigating the brain drain effects and fostering youth entrepreneurship in the region, the municipality further decided to provide young entrepreneurs with local tax allowances as incentives to open start-ups in Nagykanizsa. Overall, the project led to new cooperations between local authorities and the public and private sector, that address the issue of brain drain and youth policies together. The project also raised awareness on the importance of young people for the social and economic welfare of the city of Nagykanizsa.

The **transferability** of the CHANGE! Project to other regions is proven by the fact that it has been implemented by several cities already, namely Eindhoven (Netherlands), Gdansk (Poland), Forli (Italy) and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (Ireland).

**Implementers:** Local authority.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Source:** <http://www.urbact.hu/node/245>.



## TBI: YOUTH, CITY AND THE HERITAGE

**Location:** Idrija (SI).

**EU Funding:** Yes, European Fund for Rural Development.

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Governance and (political) decision-making/involvement.

**Description:** Formerly a mining city, the city of Idrija is going through a transformation process. The Idrija 2020 Association pursues the objective to form a vision of the city in the 21st century together with young people, local associations, and businesses.

One of the projects led by the association was the TBI: Youth, City and The Heritage project. Its aim was for the participants to create development ideas for three specific locations of industrial heritage in Idrija, combining ideas from architecture and urban planning with youth participation. The participants were 30 young people from Slovenia and abroad. The inclusion of young people from outside of the city/country was considered highly beneficial to the project as it encouraged the locals to look afresh at the city and raise questions that had not been asked before.

Building on a preparation and research phase, the project was launched in a warehouse in the city at an open meeting attended by decision makers and local residents. There, the project coordinators facilitated a workshop to identify the issues and to come up with suggestions for the development of the three locations in Idrija. The workshop's findings were then used to prepare a participative event during which courses were given, the locations were visited and interviews with local residents were held.

Subsequent to the event, the 30 young people worked in virtual teams to develop concrete proposals for each of the locations. Throughout this process they were supported by mentors from the local university. One innovative element of this project is that the project coordinators focused on using education to enable young people to improve the quality of their policy proposals through a better understanding of the local environment. This generated an increase in the depth and quality of ideas in policy terms, more than many other approaches to youth participation.

The project's final result consisted in one consolidated vision with 60 proposals of how the three locations could be transformed, taking account of the city's mercury mining heritage.

The project has produced tangible results: The proposals drafted in the framework of the project have significantly influenced the ongoing development and regeneration of the city of Idrija. As decision makers were engaged in the project from its inception, several concrete proposals have been put into place, including an open-air cinema, an open-air kitchen and the development of affordable housing for postgraduates (to help retain young people in the city). Furthermore, one of the project coordinators is now employed to help develop the municipality's urban strategy.

**Implementers:** Civil society organisation.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Link:** <http://www.tbi.si/>.

## Professional and personal development/guidance

### HIERBLEIBEN

**Location:** Magdeburg (DE).

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Professional and personal development/guidance.

**Description:** *Hierbleiben* is an initiative aimed at connecting job seekers and companies in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany, in a targeted, efficient, and equal manner so that companies can grow sustainably, and people are attracted to live and stay in the region.

The initiative began in 2011 with the launch of a job event *Hierbleiben* in Magdeburg. This event was supposed to raise awareness among young people, notably students and graduates, about the existing opportunities in the region. The initiators also wanted to provide small and medium sized companies in the region with a possibility to present and promote themselves. In addition to the yearly event, which has grown steadily over time, *Hierbleiben* also offers an online platform on which it presents the jobs and companies in Sachsen-Anhalt all year round. These offers are also promoted via social media.

The project has grown into a successful and well-known initiative in the region. Companies pay a contribution to participate in the job event, which allows for the initiative to finance its activities.

The event proposed by *Hierbleiben* is more than just a job fair as it provides for several activities during the event. They include music acts and sport activities and hence enable participants to connect in a less formal context. The job event further offers additional services to visitors, such as support with drafting applications or making appointments with specific companies beforehand.

**Implementers:** Local business.

**Target audience:** Young people and local businesses.

**Link:** <https://hierbleiben-jobs.de/ueber-uns>.

## JOVE OPORTUNITAT

**Location:** Valencia (ES).

**EU Funding:** Yes, European Social Fund + (2021-2027) – 60% co-financing.

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Professional and personal development/guidance.

**Description:** *Jove Oportunitat* (Young opportunity) is a program led by different local communities in Spain (Valencia, Alicante, Castellón) to activate young people who neither study nor work, and to help them build their own life project. The program is addressed to young people between 16 and 21 years old and works on their motivation and self-esteem through attitude coaching.

The coaching sessions are provided to groups of up to 15 participants. For a period of four or five months, every day from Monday to Friday, the participants meet to set up a general life and work project that they gradually build up through individual and group coaching sessions, classroom dynamics and teamwork.

Throughout the program, participants are prepared to return to studies. They further receive guidance on different vocational trainings and insights into various professions from a practical approach, e.g., by visiting companies. Around twenty visits are made to companies to illustrate possible career opportunities resulting from an educational branch. This allows the young participants to see the daily work that each qualification involves and helps them discover their own vocation and decide on which career path to follow.

In addition, cultural, sporting and social activities allow participants from different provinces in Spain to get to know each other, share their experiences and often become friends - all share the common need to turn their lives around.

In total, there are 75 of those actions spread over Valencia, Alicante and Castellón. The involvement of the town councils with their youth professionals, as well as the collaboration between the career guidance departments of each secondary school that refer students to the programme, are fundamental.

**Implementers:** Regional authority.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Link:** <https://www.joveoportunitat.es/es/joop-espanol/>; <https://ivaj.gva.es/es/joop>.

## DEVIENS CE QUE TU ES

**Location:** Martinique (FR).

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Professional and personal development/guidance.

**Description:** The *Revenu Emancipation Jeune Initiative* (Income Empowerment Youth Initiative), whose slogan is *Deviens ce que tu es* (Become what you are), aims to help young people to fulfil their potential and to find their professional orientation. Throughout one year, young people in precarious situations receive an income of between EUR 500 and EUR 685 to try out an economic, cultural, sporting or social activity.

This gives young people the chance to gain experiences, try out, fail, and follow and further shape their aspirations. In addition to the financial support, the beneficiaries receive support from a local adviser and have several periods of immersion in the economic, social, cultural, and sporting sectors, depending on their wishes and aspirations. The length of the immersion periods vary according to the young person's needs.

During and at the end of the activities, participants' skills are assessed. This helps them decide on a career and design the path they need to take to excel in their chosen artistic or sporting activity and/or future profession.

The objective of the program is, that young people at the end of the year are able to:

- join a training programme;
- sign an apprenticeship or professional training contract;
- sign a fixed-term or permanent contract; or
- start a business.

This initiative **stands out** for its flexibility and openness towards the young people's wishes and ideas. It allows for failure and accepts that young people might not always know their preferred career path but that they need to experience several options. Also, the project is not exclusively focused on professional development but also takes account of young people's passions and personal aspirations.

**Implementers:** Regional authority.

**Target audience:** Young people and unemployed.

**Source:** <https://www.martinique.franceantilles.fr/actualite/economie/avec-reji-deviens-ce-que-tu-es-929991.php>; <https://www.karibinfo.com/news/martinique-deviens-ce-que-tu-es-un-revenu-emancipation-jeunes-pour-sinserer-dans-la-societe/>.

## PLAN ACTION JEUNESSE

**Location:** Guadeloupe (FR).

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Professional and personal development/guidance.

**Description:** The *Plan Action Jeunesse* (Youth Action Plan) is an operational program, which was launched by the region of Guadeloupe in November 2019. It brings together a range of regional measures and partners with the aim of facilitating the employability of young people aged 16 to 35 through the deployment of local actions and the dissemination of information. The Youth Action Plan is the result of a wide-ranging consultation carried out in the region with young people and with relevant stakeholders. The Youth Action Plan, based on identified needs, defines clear public action.

Advisors who work for the Youth Action Plan reach out directly to young people in neighbourhoods, on university campuses and within associations. Young people are further reached through social media accounts, namely Facebook, Instagram and via WhatsApp. The advisors also approach young people at popular youth events to provide them with personalised support and networking opportunities with institutional, economic and community partners. One important element of the Youth Action Plan is also to inform young people about the multiple possibilities available to young people to receive financial support, for example, for entrepreneurial projects or for a paying for a driving license.

A particular aspect of the project is the way young people are proactively approached. They do not need to be part of any youth representation, participate in a project, or apply for support. Rather, they are directly approached by the advisors. Especially in regions where awareness of existing funding opportunities and available governmental support is lacking, this method opens new possibilities to young people and enables them to realise projects they might have already had in mind but were unable to finance.

Since its inception, the Region of Guadeloupe has invested nearly EUR 5 million in the Youth Action Plan and has achieved tangible results: in 2023, more than 2 500 young people have benefitted from personalised support under the Youth Action Plan. Further, a partnership was launched between the human resources departments of local authorities and public education institutions to assist master students in finding their compulsory end-of-study placements. In general, the programme is particularly well monitored, with concrete numbers of beneficiaries and an analysis of trends among young people's need for support. In 2023, more than half of the young people sought support to develop an economic activity, while around 20% needed assistance to enroll in a vocational training or apprenticeship. This data allows regional authorities to draw conclusions for future policy making.

**Implementers:** Regional authority.

**Target audience:** Young people and unemployed.

**Source:** <https://www.ewag.fr/2023/04/paj-guadeloupe/>.

## Professional development, encouragement, and support

### FOODOXYS

**Location:** Thessaly (EL).

**EU Funding:** Yes, European Regional Development Fund.

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Professional development, encouragement, and support.

**Description:** FoodOxys is a spin-off company of the University of Thessaly founded in 2019 by Dimitrios Kouretas, Professor of Animal Physiology-Toxicology, and his research team. Following the global trends in the fields of personalised medicine and nutritional intervention, the firm specialises in ensuring nutritional wellness at a personalised level and in testing the bioactivity of various natural or synthetic products. In broad terms, FoodOxys has developed a quality certification mark for the bioactivity of food products, beverages, and dietary supplements. It also has a patent for measuring antioxidants in human blood.

The particularity of this company consists in the fact, that it was set up at the initiative of a professor and graduates of the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology of the University of Thessaly. The project hence provided young researchers with the possibility to remain in their region and to continue working in their field of expertise. Under the scientific guidance of the Professor, FoodOxys scientists have published more than 240 papers in international peer-reviewed scientific journals. With FoodOxys the team builds upon its research findings and connects research with the market.

An important innovation of the company is that part of its shares have been distributed to the participating researchers. In this way, the young scientists are themselves owners of the company. This creates a strong link between the researchers and their region as they are encouraged to stay.

More recently, members of the FoodOxys team have set up another company, Olea, which develops a feed supplement for animal nutrition from by-products from oil production.

**Implementers:** University professor.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Link:** <https://www.foodoxys.com/en/>.

## KAINOTOMIA

**Location:** Thessaly (EL).

**EU Funding:** The projects are partly EU-funded.

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Professional development, encouragement, and support.

**Description:** The goal of Kainotomia is the implementation of continuous vocational training programs targeted at youth, unemployed people, educators of all education levels, students of higher education, employed/self-employed persons, and vulnerable social groups for the development of professional opportunities and their promotion and integration into the labour market and the society in general.

Kainotomia further engages in related activities such as the development of research, surveys, guides, and notes. It provides consultation services to people belonging to vulnerable social groups and promotes and supports employment for learners that complete the programs of professional training at Kainotomia. The training center hence supports the (re-)integration of (young) people into the labour market and allows them to reorientate their career paths.

Kainotomia supports young people by helping them to develop and upscale their skills and to improve their competitiveness in the labour market by meeting their educational needs.

**Implementers:** Local business.

**Target audience:** Young people, educators, and vulnerable groups.

**Link:** <https://kainotomia.com.gr/en/>.

## ENTREPRENEURIALITY INTO A BUSINESS WORLD

**Location:** Zasavje and Municipality of Zagorje ob Savi (SI).

**EU Funding:** Yes, European Social Fund (ESF).

**Category:** Empower young people.

**Sub-category:** Professional development, encouragement, and support.

**Description:** The region of Zasavje is a previous mining region facing multiple problems, including limited capacity for attracting investment, long-term unemployment, youth unemployment, and brain drain. Young people in Slovenia faced and continue to face challenges hindering them in securing appropriate employment. Their main difficulties consist in lack of work experience, an imbalance between educational supply and demand in the job market, a dominance of short-term or sporadic local employment offers and a shortage of new jobs. A survey distributed among young people revealed that their priorities for the region are the creation of jobs for the young and educated workforce, as well as support for emerging businesses in the region.

Building on these findings, the 'Entrepreneurially into the World of Business' project was designed by the Regional development Agency of Zasavje and supported by the municipality of Zagorje ob Savi, to address the high rate of unemployment among highly educated people under 35 years old. It aimed at enabling selected participants to identify and exploit a business opportunity and to become self-employed, start their own company or to find employment with another employer.

Participants received a salary for six months, provided through the Regional Development Agency. Throughout these months, the participants took part in an intensive training program on entrepreneurship, marketing, sales, accounting, and financial management, or received coaching and mentoring to develop a specific business idea. Throughout the duration of the project, participants were hired by the agency as public servants and received a monthly salary.

The project was piloted in the Zasavje region from 2009 to 2012. In that time, it produced tangible results: out of the 40 participants, ten created new businesses and ten other found paid employment. Given this outcome, the pilot project was subsequently scaled-up and implemented on the national level. This does not only demonstrate the project's transferability but also the added value for national policy makers in taking account of regional initiatives and envisaging their implementation on national level.

**Implementers:** Regional authority and national authority.

**Target audience:** Young people and unemployed.

**Source:** [Entrepreneurially Into the World of Business, Slovenia | Inclusive Business Creation : Good Practice Compendium | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#); [GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor \(gemconsortium.org\)](#); Cavallini, S., [Addressing brain drain: The local and regional dimension](#), (2018).



## SECTION 2: INTEGRATE NEWCOMERS AND BUILD COMMUNITIES

### DIGITALE DÖRFER

**Location:** Krakow am See (DE) and elsewhere in Germany.

**Category:** Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** The *Digitale Dörfer* project was launched in 2015 by the Fraunhofer IESE. The project began as a pop-up in a few small villages in the Rheinland-Pfalz region in Germany but has since expanded its scope and its outputs can be seen across the country. To date, the project has been run in different phases, all of which have aimed to strengthen the sense of unity within rural-based communities.

Among the initiatives run under the project are the DorfNews and DorfFunk tools. The tools have been implemented in several municipalities across Germany, including Krakow am See.

DorfNews is a local online portal. Its goal is to get information on local events and news to citizens quickly. Citizens can also consult the portal for details such as opening hours of offices and the local weather. This way, locals can be sure not to miss out on anything happening in the municipality.

DorfFunk is an app where citizens can offer their help, post requests, or simply chat with each other informally. DorfFunk also offers the opportunity for citizens to get in touch with their local authority in case they have any administrative questions.

**Implementers:** Civil society organisation in collaboration with local authorities.

**Target audience:** Residents of a city/region.

**Link:** <https://www.digitale-doerfer.de/mitfunken>.



## GRANADA CIUDAD DEL ROCK

**Location:** Granada (ES).

**Category:** Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Sub-category:** Improving the cultural offering and developing a brand.

**Description:** The Granada *Ciudad del Rock* project comprises several initiatives, all of which aim to forge Granada's identity as a city of rock music. The project was launched in 2016 and is the result of cooperation between the City Council of Granada and representatives of the local entertainment industry.

One of the most important aspects of the project were the roundtable discussions held between the City Council, the Regional Authority, and representatives of the local entertainment industry. These meetings offered the occasion to collectively make decisions related to the regulatory elements of events organised under the *Ciudad del Rock* brand, e.g., licensing and noise pollution limits. They therefore provided the basis for developing the *Ciudad del Rock* brand.

Among the project's many initiatives that aim to promote Granada as a music hotspot, is the Granada Calling exhibition. The initiative involves the organisation of the city's programme of musical events and has three main aims:

1. Providing emerging artists in the city with a chance to showcase their talents;
2. Supporting local venues with the regular holding of concerts;
3. Boosting the entertainment options on offer to the city's residents.

Under the project, the Granada *Ciudad del Rock* Tourist Route has been developed to promote the city's identity as a destination for rock-loving tourists.

By boosting the city's cultural offering, this initiative offers more opportunities for newcomers to socialise and better integrate into their new home. In the same way, the initiative can also strengthen the sense of community within the city.

**Implementers:** Local authorities in collaboration with local businesses.

**Target audience:** Residents of a city/region.

**Source:** <https://www.granadaporelmundo.com/granada-ciudad-del-rock>.

## INTERNATIONAL WELCOME SOLUTION

**Location:** Paris (FR).

**Category:** Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** Launched back in 2017, the International Welcome Solution of Paris-Saclay University aims to help international students land on their feet when they first arrive at the university. It consists of an online application where international students can access information tailored to their personal situation in a few clicks. Through a calendar, the application allows students to see exactly what administrative tasks they must complete before arriving in France and during their first few days in the country. Providing this tailor-made information in such a clear manner can alleviate some of the stress associated with moving to a new country for international students. The initiative allows the students to devote more time to focusing on other aspects related to their integration such as finding accommodation and developing connections with fellow students or residents of their new city.

To further facilitate the integration of international students in the university, Paris-Saclay developed a buddy system. In this system, international students are paired up with local students who can help them settle into their new university and city. Although the pair are free to meet up in whatever format they wish, the university also organises cultural, sports, and other activities to help them get to know each other.

**Implementers:** Higher education institution.

**Target audience:** International students.

**Source:** <https://www.universite-paris-saclay.fr/sites/default/files/media/2021-07/fiche-les-dispositifs-accueil-international.pdf>.

## DEBRECEN4U

**Location:** Debrecen (HU).

**Category:** Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** The website, Debrecen4U, was set up to act as a one-stop-shop for newcomers to the city, with a focus on those coming from outside of Hungary.

The website contains a wealth of information in different languages that can help newcomers find their way around as they settle into their new home. On the website, newcomers can find information about accommodation, healthcare, and education services in the city. Newcomers can also check out tips for ensuring their move to the city goes smoothly, with a section of the website dealing specifically with the first steps to take when moving to the city. There is also a section with information about events and festivals that take place in the city, providing newcomers with ideas of ways to meet their new fellow residents.

Debrecen4U also contains a section that provides newcomers with basic information on issues related to employment and entrepreneurship, facilitating their integration into the local labour market. Through the Debrecen Business Expat Club (BEC), Debrecen4U seeks to actively help non-Hungarian businesses connect with each other. BEC acts as a space where businesses can exchange on common issues and develop their contacts in the local market.

**Implementers:** Local authority.

**Target audience:** (International) newcomers.

**Link:** <https://debrecen4u.hu/>.

## INTERNATIONAL WELCOME CENTRE NORTH

**Location:** Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe (NL).

**Category:** Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** The International Welcome Centre North (IWCN) was launched with the aim of facilitating the settling-in of newcomers to the regions in the north of the Netherlands.

The IWCN exists as both an online platform in English and a physical space located in the city of Groningen. The Centre provides tips on the most frequent issues faced by newcomers upon their arrival such as opening a bank account and collecting a residence permit. The IWCN also offers information about services available in the region, including healthcare, education, and transport. In short, the Centre provides newcomers with all the information that is necessary to ensure they settle into their new home smoothly.

On top of acting as an information hub, the IWCN also runs initiatives to facilitate the integration of newcomers into the region. For example, through an initiative called My Local Friend, international newcomers in Groningen can be paired up with locals who help them practise their Dutch skills. By helping newcomers to improve their language skills, the goal of the initiative is to help newcomers develop social connections with long-term city residents and develop a more meaningful bond with the region.

The IWCN also facilitates the entry of non-EU residents into the regional labour market. On its website, the IWCN provides a detailed description on how businesses in the region can obtain a work permit for non-EU residents. This is another way of helping newcomers integrate into their new region and contributing to the economic development of the region.

**Implementers:** Civil society organisation in collaboration with local authorities.

**Target audience:** International newcomers.

**Link:** <http://www.iwcn.nl>.

## STUDY IN LUBLIN

**Location:** Lublin (PL).

**Category:** Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** The Study in Lublin initiative was established by Lublin's municipal authority in 2011 with the aim of overcoming a growing issue for the city: a declining working age population. In this context, the initiative primarily sets out to promote the city's higher education offer, particularly to international students.

One of its main functions is to act as a central information point, grouping all of the higher education courses on offer in Lublin together in one multilingual online platform to facilitate a student's choice of course and higher education institute.

The website also provides prospective students with information on aspects related to general life in Lublin, such as the city's cultural offering, advice on finding accommodation in the city, and information on scholarships.

To promote the education and employment opportunities the city offers, representatives from the Study in Lublin initiative participate in education fairs across the world. They also carry out promotional activities with the help of Polish embassies and consulates around the world and carry out promotional campaigns on various social media channels.

On top of this, the initiative also runs the Lublin Akademicki programme. This yearly programme, first launched in 2021, seeks to fund projects that contribute to the development of Lublin as an academic hub. Over 20 projects have received funding under the programme since its launch. Winning projects have focused, among others, on facilitating the integration of new students in the city and broadening knowledge on complex issues among those not currently attending a higher education institution.

**Implementers:** Local authority in collaboration with local higher education institution.

**Target audience:** (International) students.

**Link:** <https://student.lublin.eu/>.

## SECTION 3: REINVEST IN REGIONS

### INVEST IN THURINGIA

**Location:** Thuringen (DE).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Employment and entrepreneurship.

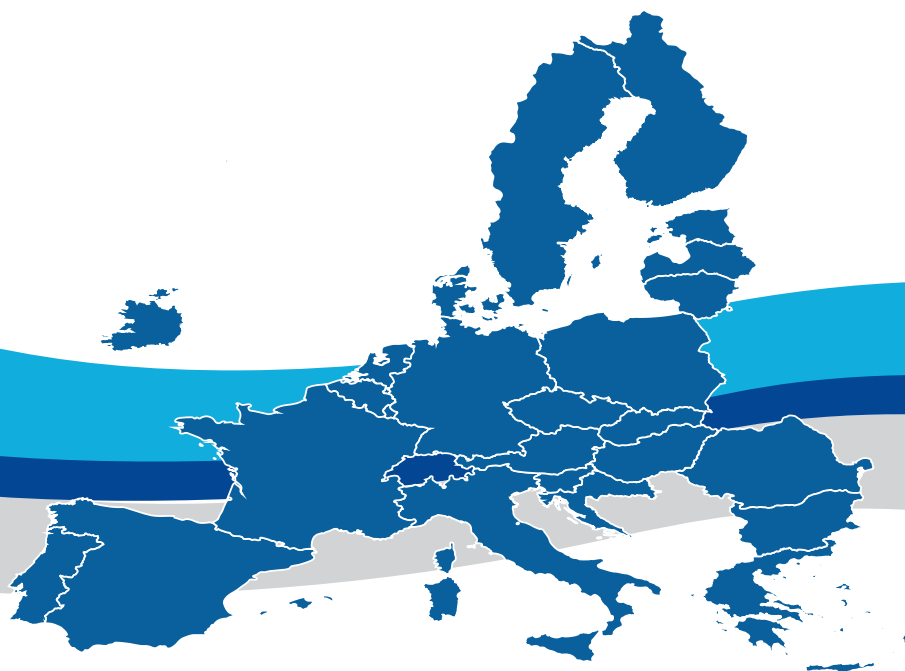
**Description:** Invest in Thuringia, is part of the regional authority to boost innovation and entrepreneurship in the region – State Development Corporation of Thuringia (LEG Thüringen) – and functions as a one-stop agency in all matters relating to the establishment and promotion of business in Thuringia. It provides tailored support to investment projects – from site search to project implementation and future expansions – leveraging the broad network of LEG Thüringen.

So far, the project has led to 1,800 new investment and expansion projects and has created of 86,500 new jobs.

**Implementers:** Regional authority.

**Target audience:** Businesses.

**Link:** <https://www.invest-in-thuringia.de/en/>.



## AGENTUR STADTWOHNEN – THE HOUSING AGENCY FOR SHRINKING CITIES

**Location:** Chemnitz (DE).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Infrastructure.

**Description:** The agency is a consulting service of the city of Chemnitz aimed at interested owners of dilapidated or vacant properties, future investors, and users with an interest in communal forms of living and creative ideas for the reuse of buildings.

It offers solutions to the problem of decaying historic apartment buildings abandoned after the 90s by bringing together the different stakeholders that are relevant for their revitalisation. The Agency is a public project funded by the city's public authorities and carried out by a private company.

The Agency offers a flexible and proactive approach to activate owners towards the development of their property, often by connecting them with potential investors and users that have the means and know-how to find sustainable solutions. The approach can be broken down into six key topics/steps:

1. Setting up a body/institution responsible to support the reactivation of vacant/derelict buildings and flats;
2. Inventory and monitoring of vacant/derelict buildings and flats;
3. Publication and marketing of vacant/derelict buildings and flats;
4. Contacting, activating and supporting owners;
5. Identifying, contacting and supporting potential buyers and investors;
6. Connecting and coordinating public and private stakeholders.

The project has helped overcome the negative image of some neighbourhoods and has also contributed to social cohesion by ensuring the availability of moderately priced and appropriately equipped housing for families, elderly people or marginalised population groups.

So far, more than 140 buildings have been monitored, for 50 a change of ownership has been organised and 40 are currently available for investment projects. It's still a work in progress but could be useful for other ex-industrial cities.

**Implementers:** Local business and local authority.

**Target audience:** Those interested in the reuse of buildings.

**Link:** <https://www.stadtwohnen-chemnitz.de/>.

## SMARTE DORFSHUTTLE

**Location:** Schleswig-Flensburg (DE).

**Category:** Reinvesting in regions.

**Sub-category:** Transport.

**Description:** *Smarte DorfSHUTTLE* is a transport on-demand service which operates as a ridesharing service. It is can be booked via a dedicated app or by phone, and where a second or third party wants to travel on the same or a similar route at the same time, the shuttle picks them up directly, thereby acting as a smart alternative to single trips. There are two vehicles (some of them electric) on the road and passengers can pay directly to the driver or via the app.

The service also follows the Smart City Strategy for rural areas of Amt Süderbrarup, which seeks to promote digital solutions for the development of smart cities harmonised with nature and the environment and which promote efficiency, competitiveness, and community.

It is implemented by the district of Schleswig-Flensburg, in collaboration with the local transport association, NAH.SH GmbH.

**Implementers:** Local authority and local transport association.

**Target audience:** Residents in a city/region.

**Link:** <https://smartes-dorfshuttle.de/>.

## AVANT

**Location:** Valencia (ES).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Infrastructure.

**Description:** The Valencian Anti-Population Agenda (Agenda AVANT) of the General Directorate of Local Administration, seeks to achieve a change in the depopulation trend in territories where this social and economic problem has a greater incidence among the Valencian community. By working in coordination with the different local administrations, it seeks to revitalise the economy, achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency of public resources, and improve the livelihood and quality of life of people in these areas.

This is achieved through a Municipal Cooperation Fund for the Fight against Depopulation, which provides Municipalities of the Valencian community at risk of depopulation with sufficient financial resources to respond to the need to promote the improvement of the provision of public services.

*Reviu*<sup>1</sup> is one of the programs funded. Its aim is to move families and individuals in a town or village through generational replacement opportunities, teleworking business opportunities, and job offers with the aim of increasing the population and directly fight against depopulation. It helps beneficiaries with settling in the rural territory.

**Implementers:** Local authority.

**Target audience:** Cities/regions suffering from depopulation.

**Link:** <https://avant.gva.es/es/avant>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://avant.gva.es/es/que-es-reviu> (last accessed on 8.1.2024)

## PLAZA.UMA

**Location:** Málaga (ES).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Investigating depopulation and cooperation between local administration and academic community.

**Description:** *PLAZA.UMA* of the University of Málaga seeks to put the University's knowledge at the service of society and to establish a dialogue in which the university helps to solve social and territorial needs.

In 2018, in response to a petition for support in addressing depopulation in the Valley from the Benadalid Town Council on behalf of the Genal Valley Alliance, *Plaza.UMA* organised a workshop named 'Depopulation in the Genal Valley: Challenges and proposals'. Participants in the workshop debated a range of issues including physical and digital infrastructures, the sense of belonging, the need of training, possibilities of financing, and the importance of local development agents.

The general objective of the initiative was to conduct research into the roots of rural depopulation in general, and to identify problems. Following the workshop, a group of experts from the University of Málaga drew up a work plan with various proposals, including for a study on the communication and marketing of the area's rich heritage. Meanwhile, a Master thesis at the Faculty of Architecture carried out a sociogram, as well as an analysis of the main strengths and threats of some municipalities in the valley in relation to rural development through their heritage.

**Implementers:** Higher education institution.

**Target audience:** Residents in a city/region.

**Link:** <https://www.uma.es/plazauma/>.

## CANTINE DU NUMÉRIQUE

**Location :** Nantes (FR).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Innovation and co-working.

**Description:** The *Cantine du Numérique* functions as a co-working space for entrepreneurs, start-ups, freelancers, students, researchers, and more. At the same time, it operates as a network of digital companies, facilitating knowledge sharing and supporting innovation. It organises almost 100 events a year including networking events, co-development workshops, and trainings, and offers dedicated services and entrepreneurship support programs. It also offers domiciliation services to companies and self-employed professionals that need a registered address for their business.

**Implementers:** National and regional partners in collaboration with local businesses.

**Target audience:** Entrepreneurs.

**Link:** <https://www.lacantine.co/>.



## LAVORARE DAL SUD – SOUTH WORKING

**Location:** Sud (IT).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Research and advocacy.

**Description:** South Working is a social promotion movement which seeks to stimulate and study the phenomenon of remote working from anywhere else than the main location of the employer, and in particular from Southern and inner Italy. It promotes collaboration and debate with stakeholders to bring change within institutions at the local, regional, and national level.

South Working also has an observatory which studies the phenomenon of remote and agile working and the impact of South Working on territories and communities, by engaging with academics and experts in the field.

South Working also aims to create a network for sustainable local development by facilitating dialogue among all stakeholders, workers, companies, associations, institutions, etc.

The project is implemented in collaboration with Fondazione CON IL SUD<sup>2</sup> and Global Shapers Palermo Hub<sup>3</sup>.

**Implementers:** Private organisations and grassroots network.

**Target audience:** Stakeholders interested in remote working.

**Link:** <https://www.southworking.org/en/>.

## PARMA CITTÀ UNIVERSITARIA

**Location:** Parma (IT).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Student Attraction and cooperation between local administration and academic community.

**Description:** *Parma Città Universitaria* is a collaboration between the University of Parma and the Municipality of Parma that seeks to make the city more student friendly. It is governed by a working group consisting of representatives from both sides and has engaged in various activities.

These include setting up an information point on activities related to the University in the city centre, creating videos on the story of the city, as well as concrete actions to boost Parma as a student-friendly city. These include taxation measures (tax breaks for property owners who rent to students), price reductions for student season transport tickets (also for Erasmus students), the activation of night-time lines and the expansion of services to other areas of interest to students.

**Implementers:** Higher education institution and local authority.

**Target audience:** Students.

**Link:** <https://www.parmacittauniversitaria.unipr.it>.

<sup>2</sup> Alliance of organisations operating as a grant making organisation and promoting social innovation and development in Southern Italy entirely through private resources. – <https://www.fondazioneconilsud.it/en/> (last accessed on 8.1.2024).

<sup>3</sup> The Global Shapers Palermo Hub aims to involve young people and engage local communities to implement traversal initiatives and projects with particular attention to the issues of legality, social inclusion, hospitality, multiculturalism, education and entrepreneurship. It is part of the Global Shapers Community, an initiative of the World Economic Forum. – <https://www.globalshapers.org/hubs/palermo-hub/> (last accessed on 8.1.2024).

## TRANSPORTE A PERDIDO

**Location:** Alentejo (PT).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-category:** Transport.

**Description:** This project is implemented by *CCDR Alentejo Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Alentejo* and seeks to provide a 'Mobility as a Service' solution in very low-density areas, such as Alentejo, and to guarantee an adequate and complementary response to citizens' needs.

Its aim is to guarantee accessibility for the entire population which, to date, has no proximity to public transport, complementing existing services and never overlapping with the existing offer. It also aims at increasing the coverage of the existing public transport network, providing an offer in areas and/or periods of the day or year where this offer does not exist or is deficient. The project is based on making the offer more flexible, with a view to better adapting it to existing demand, reducing operating costs, and optimising service conditions. It seeks to combine the advantages of greater flexibility associated with cabs with the advantages of lower costs associated with buses.

**Implementers:** Public institution.

**Target audience:** Residents in low-density/sparsely populated cities/regions.

**Link:** <https://mobilidade.alentejo.pt/>.

## TIMISOARA QUALITY TRANSPORT (TQT)

**Location:** Timisoara (RO).

**Category:** Reinvest in regions.

**Sub-Category:** Transport and cooperation between local administration and academic community.

**Description:** The TQT project is a local community project, the result of a partnership between the West University of Timișoara (WUT) and the Public Transport Society of Timișoara (STPT).

The University, in partnership with a working team from STPT, designed and implemented batches of surveys targeted to users of public transport on certain selected routes in the metropolitan area based on factors such as: the distance covered; long routes that connect the outskirts of the city, the central points, the commercial centres; the rush hours; the duration of a cross route: the North-South axis, and the West-East axis respectively. The questions focused on 3 objectives at most, such as: conditions on the means of transport, access to traffic information, timing of departure/arrival of the means of transport, the attitude of the STPT staff towards the passengers, etc. The questionnaire is meant to be distributed over the course of 2 weeks through mobile teams made up of students. The survey is carried out once every 6 months and there are 6 series scheduled for the 2020-2023 period.

The conclusions drawn from the surveys are organised and grouped so as to represent solutions proposed by the STPT working teams. This helps create a constant cycle of both monitoring the travel conditions and adapting the available services to the users' needs.

WUT, together with a team of computer science students, is also seeking to adapt and transfer the conclusions drawn from the surveys into solutions and software systems that will improve the digitisation of the local traffic management, and to run tests and simulations to replace factors with a negative environment impact (for e.g., to start using trams/trolleybuses running on solar energy or to organise boarding times so as to avoid crowding).

At the end of each survey and analysis stage (every 6 months), the working teams issue a report based on the collected data and on the conclusions of the analysis, and suggest improvements.

**Implementers:** Higher education institution and public transport company.

**Target audience:** Residents in a city/region.

**Source:** EUniversCities Network, [Handbook for Strategic City-University co-operation](#), (2021).

## SECTION 4: ADOPT A CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH TO BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY

### FINDING OPPORTUNITIES IN DECLINING CITIES

**Location:** Altena (DE).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

Description: After facing diminishing resources and increasingly complex problems, the municipality of Altena adjusted its priorities, working more closely with citizens. Actions taken included: organisational restructuring (such as downsizing and resource-sharing), developing civil society (including the involvement of hundreds of volunteers), economic revitalisation (through tourism, for example), and integration of refugees.

Altena provides a case study of two practical interventions which can arrest and ultimately reverse decline and stagnation:

- 'Stellwerk' Altena's volunteers' platform: The platform was set up in 2008 and started without a budget. The municipality made available the premises, paid the energy and cleaning bills, and provided a minimum of administrative resources. Currently the Stellwerk has 8 volunteer workers who co-ordinate several hundred volunteers providing disability support, arts and music groups, home visiting and home care services, refugee integration, and much more. The Stellwerk provides an essential channel of communication between civil society and the municipality.
- Pop-up shop campaign: provide an effective way to populate the town centre with new enterprises. The goal is to support entrepreneurs in testing the viability of their business in that particular location and then facilitate the transition into a permanent rental agreement with the property owners. The municipality carries some costs and also risks during this period and needs to be prepared to overcome resistance from existing shops and also the owners of empty premises. Altena established 14 pop-ups of which 5 are now trading as permanent, regular businesses on the high street.

After being awarded the URBACT Good Practice title, Altena was able to create the Re-grow City Transfer Network to which seven European cities facing the challenge of declining population (Manresa (ES), Idrija (SI), Igoumenitsa (EL), Isemia (IT), Melgaço (PT), Aluksne (LV), Nyírbátor (HU)) were invited which were similarly.

**Implementers:** Local authorities and local businesses.

**Target audience:** Local businesses and residents.

**Source:** <https://urbact.eu/good-practices/finding-opportunities-declining-cities>.



## PARTNER VON MORGEN

**Location:** Magdeburg (DE).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** This is a program for small and medium-sized companies in Sachsen-Anhalt. International students have the possibility to apply for an internship with the companies that take part in the program.

The focus is on an internship with a precisely defined task that is related to the company's foreign trade plans, including, for example, analysing potential target markets, planning participation in trade fairs, or creating foreign language websites. The task is carried out by foreign students who are enrolled at a college or university in Sachsen-Anhalt and have an appropriate profile that meets the requirements of the respective company. Only after the specific task of the internship has been determined will a suitably qualified student be selected for the assignment.

Together with the participating companies, consultants from Expert People Management GmbH define a concrete project that is aimed at the company's individual foreign trade projects. The consultants see themselves as a link between the SMEs and the international students.

**Implementers:** Local businesses and higher education institution.

**Target audience:** International students.

**Source:** <https://mwl.sachsen-anhalt.de/wirtschaft/aussenwirtschaft/partner-von-morgen>.

## FIRST-JOB GUARANTEE

**Location:** Sønderborg (DK).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The scheme is valid for the educational engineering programmes in Sønderborg. It is up to the companies to declare that they want to offer a number of positions for graduated engineers for a minimum duration of six months. It is also up to them to decide if they would like to offer a permanent or a temporary position. Salaries and other conditions such as giving notice are subject to the current standards for the newly educated. The scheme entered into force for MSc engineers in June 2022 and for Bachelor engineers in January 2024.

The scheme does not only make demands on the companies but also on the students. Students work together in groups or teams. They enter into the so-called PBL-method (Problem-Based Learning) in which they work on a series of different cases or solve tasks in groups with other students. To ensure the right commitment, the students engage to live up to the following compulsory requirements:

- The graduate must collaborate with a Danish company on a project. For BEng: Internship and/or Final Project; For MSc: In-company Project and/or Thesis;
- The graduate must have completed the degree without delay;
- The graduate must have acquired Danish language skills equivalent to level B1 on the CERF scale (Requires certification); and,
- Participation in career activities offered during your study. Some activities will be mandatory.

**Implementers:** Local businesses and higher education institution.

**Target audience:** Local businesses, students, and young people.

**Source:** [https://www.sdu.dk/en/uddannelse/bachelor/electronics/karriere/first\\_job\\_guarantee](https://www.sdu.dk/en/uddannelse/bachelor/electronics/karriere/first_job_guarantee).

## THESSALONIKI CREATIVITY PLATFORM

**Location:** Thessaloniki (EL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The Creativity Platform team is a non-profit, collective scheme, seeking to function as an interdisciplinary platform of exchanging ideas, actions, research, and appliances related to the 'creative capital' and the 'creative economy' in the city of Thessaloniki. Many cities and regions, worldwide, have exploited their creative human capital, by investing in strategies and policies which promote strong identities in the main fields of creative economy: music, cinema, literature, applied arts and fine arts.

The Creativity Platform aims to:

- Function as a scientific and research observatory, by focusing on the mapping of the creative economy and the assessment of its dynamics and prospects;
- Establish a dialogue forum on the cooperative planning of an integrated cultural- and creative- economy strategy, by activating everyone involved: artists, institutions, agencies, production structure and intermediates;
- Function as a networking and collaboration platform, both for the enhancement of the local creative community identity, as well as for its outreach, by connecting the community with creative economy poles from other countries;
- Develop and evolve supporting tools, as well as tools of ongoing training and information of the creative community, on issues related to its empowerment and financial viability.

**Implementers:** Civil society organisation.

**Target audience:** Residents, young people, and local authority.

**Link:** <https://creativityplatform.org/>.

## SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PARK OF EPIRUS

**Location:** Ioannina (EL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The Scientific and Technological Park of Epirus was founded in 1999 by the University of Ioannina and the Region of Epirus. Since 2003, the management company 'Scientific and Technological Park of Epirus SA' has taken over the operation of the Park. The mission of the Scientific and Technological Park of Epirus is to be the main support body for the introduction of new and innovative technologies in both the private and public sectors.

The main role of the Scientific and Technological Park of Epirus is to disseminate the know-how produced in the academic community and research centres/institutes, with the aim of creating a new pole of development in Epirus. The Scientific and Technological Park of Epirus also aims to act as an 'Incubator' of new businesses for all four capitals of the Regional Units of Epirus, where small but dynamically rising businesses aim to promote innovation in collaboration with research institutions for the development of new products and services.

There is a strong cooperation between the Scientific and Technological Park and the University of Ioannina, with events such as 'Career Days' taking place. Around 80% of the employees working in the Scientific and Technological Park have graduated from the University of Ioannina.

**Implementers:** Local authorities and higher education institution.

**Target audience:** Local businesses.

**Link:** <https://step-epirus.gr/>.

## THE BRAIN BACK UMBRIA

**Location:** Umbria (IT).

**EU Funding:** Yes, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The project aimed to understand how brain drain has affected the Italian region of Umbria by asking emigrants to fill in a questionnaire concerning issues such as their qualifications and work abroad, why they emigrated, and what would get them to return. Using the data, it devised a strategy based on the creation of networks reconnecting emigrants with their native region so as to support establishment of businesses in Umbria by emigrants and reverse brain drain.

**Implementers:** Regional authority.

**Target audience:** Citizens of the region who are residing abroad.

**Source :** [https://www.regione.umbria.it/programmazione-fesr/archivio-in-evidenza/-/asset\\_publisher/FjoPSEWf0apR/content/brain-back-umbria-concorso-di-idee-impresonditoriali;jsessionid=94F96B9E3DD0904DD437AB63B8E0CC35](https://www.regione.umbria.it/programmazione-fesr/archivio-in-evidenza/-/asset_publisher/FjoPSEWf0apR/content/brain-back-umbria-concorso-di-idee-impresonditoriali;jsessionid=94F96B9E3DD0904DD437AB63B8E0CC35); [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/projects/Italy/reversing-the-brain-drain-umbria](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/Italy/reversing-the-brain-drain-umbria).

## GENOVA BLUE DISTRICT

**Location:** Genoa (IT).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The Genoa Blue District, is a district dedicated to the Blue Economy that integrates the supply chain of the sea, hi-tech, business, and tourism, and is the engine for the development of the city of Genoa. It is a focal point for the entire Blue Economy, not only related to the port but also to the entire maritime and logistics chain of Genoa.

The Municipality of Genoa offers a physical space and resources to develop business ideas related to the blue economy sector, based on the concept of 'open innovation'.

**Implementers:** Local authorities and local businesses.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Link:** <https://www.genovabluedistrict.com/en/genova-blue-district/>.

## AKKORD VAN GRONINGEN

**Location:** Groningen (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The Groningen Alliance is a strategic partnership between the University of Groningen, the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, the University Medical Centre Groningen, Martini Hospital, the province of Groningen, Noorderpoort, Alfa-college and the municipality of Groningen.

The ultimate goal of the Alliance is to give an economic boost to the region and the wider Netherlands by creating more knowledge-based activity and work in Groningen and ensuring that the metropolis region of Groningen continues to develop into a knowledge and innovation hub of national and international repute. For the period 2022-2024, the key focus of the Alliance is on energy, digitalisation and health.

Education, research, and innovation are the generators of Groningen's knowledge economy. The Alliance is thus focused on providing a competitive innovation climate, high-tech facilities, an accessible labour market, and a pleasant, affordable living environment.

Talent attraction, welcoming talent, and talent retention, remain vital tasks of the Alliance for the future.

**Implementers:** Local and regional authority, and higher education institutions.

**Target audience:** Young people, international professionals and local businesses.

**Link:** <https://groningen.nl/akkoord>.

## CAMPUS GRONINGEN

**Location:** Groningen (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** Campus Groningen is a place located in the City of Groningen where companies and research institutions work closely together, mainly in the fields of Healthy Aging, Sustainable Society, and Energy. The Campus consists of two locations, the Healthy Aging Campus and the Zernike Campus. There are almost 200 companies located at Campus Groningen.

The University of Groningen, the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, and the University Medical Center Groningen, are all involved in the activities at Campus Groningen. Campus Groningen aims at bringing together science and research with societal needs. Further, the Campus serves as a testing facility in order to foster innovation and pilots.

The idea of the Campus is also to foster entrepreneurship and regional development together. On its website, Campus Groningen explicitly states: 'It is entrepreneurship, from which and for which the Campus targets regional economic development: entrepreneurship that brings innovations, which employs more than 95% of the regional population and where students find a place during and after their studies.'

Concrete examples of cooperation are students working in research institutions at the Campus and being able to use the machines and materials there. This allows them to, for example, access data bases or more performant servers. Students can also do internships in the research institutions or companies located at the Campus. In some cases, there seems to be the possibility for students to extend their internship and/or get hired. Overall, the Campus Groningen aims at being a driver of growth for businesses, students, and researchers.

Campus Groningen offers companies the chance to settle on the campus and aims particularly at small companies.

**Implementers:** Local and regional authority, and higher education institutions.

**Target audience:** Young people, (international) professionals, and local businesses.

**Link:** <https://campus.groningen.nl/en/campus-groningen-2>.

## LIFE COOPERATIVE

**Location:** Groningen (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** Established in 2015, LIFE Cooperative is an organisation consisting of 40+ Life Science and Medical Technology SMEs with over 4,000 full-time employees spread across the three northernmost regions of the Netherlands. By working together and sharing best practices, the Cooperative aims to ensure that the region becomes a life science job engine. Competing companies joined forces to train students to prepare them for the entrance into the local job market.

With its members experiencing difficulties in attracting staff, the Cooperative is also working on a Human Capital strategy. The aim of the strategy is to identify the specific problems regarding attracting talent in the life science sector in the region and then to come up with ways to deal with it.

One of the important parts of the strategy is the development of an incubator for young and experienced talent: the LIFE Cooperative Academy. The Academy's objective is to increase the number of people working in the life sciences & health sector in the region. Companies and educational institutions will work closely together, also to bring job opportunities to the attention of talent.

The strategy will run from 2023 until 2030.

LIFE Cooperative also coordinates a joint investment in developing certain fields at the university. It is thus also a cooperation between the universities and the local businesses.

LIFE Cooperative is also interlinked with Campus Groningen. In fact the idea to create LIFE Cooperative started within Campus Groningen.

**Implementers:** Local businesses.

**Target audience:** Young people, (international) professionals, and residents.

**Link:** <https://www.healthyageingbusinesscooperative.nl/en>.



## ENERGY TRANSITION NETWORK (ENTRANCE)

**Location:** Groningen (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** EnTranCe is an energy innovation workspace where new sustainable energy technologies are developed and tested. Students collaborate with private companies and researchers.

EnTranCe is an initiative from Hanze University of Applied Sciences, University of Groningen, and the Energy Academy Europe. It is a public-private partnership whose primary strategic partners are BAM, Gasunie, GasTerra, the municipality of Groningen, the Province of Groningen, TNO, and the New Energy Coalition.

EnTranCe looks at the economic and legislative changes that are needed within the energy transition and the developments in the labour market that the transition leads to. It further deals with effective communication and with supporting communities with their local initiatives.

As an open innovation hub, everyone who wants to test a product, service or process in a controlled, realistic environment, can make use of EnTranCe's energy testing ground; from start-ups with a new energy service or companies with a product prototype to (international) consortia seeking to change the energy system. EnTranCe offers state-of-the-art test facilities and technical support. The testing ground gives access to a large energy ecosystem with relevant partners that include energy companies, network administrators, governmental authorities, and leading knowledge institutes in the Netherlands and abroad. Startups notably have the opportunity to expand their business models using experts from the education and industry sectors (lawyers, economists, marketing and financial experts, business experts, and behavioural scientists). Good ideas are translated directly into successful product-market combinations.

Students can also use the testing facilities at EnTranCe, such as the LivingLab. There they meet managers, consultants, researchers, and entrepreneurs. In their projects, the students examine practical problems and work on potential solutions, for which they can use EnTranCe extensive testing facilities.

**Implementers:** Local and regional authorities, local businesses, and higher education institutions.

**Target audience:** Young people and local businesses.

**Link:** <https://www.entrance.eu/en/>.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF THE NORTH – UVHN

**Location:** Groningen, Friesland, and Drenthe (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Van Hall Larenstein, NHL Stenden – all universities of applied sciences – together with the University Medical Centre Groningen and the University of Groningen, have united under the banner 'University of the North' in order to achieve a number of goals in the coming years.

Based on the conviction that together they will be able to achieve what they cannot achieve separately, the five Northern knowledge institutions are intensively working together in the fields of teaching, research, and innovation.

Through unique collaboration with the business community and societal organisations, their research, teaching, and innovation stimulates transitions in their region.

By joining forces and presenting themselves to the outside world under one banner, they create more impact than they could on their own.

Together, they are also a stronger discussion partner for government and industry, they provide more appealing education for students, and they are a versatile collaboration partner for national and international knowledge institutions.

**Implementers:** Higher education institution.

**Target audience:** Local businesses, civil society organisations, students, government, and national and international higher education institutions.

**Link:** <https://universiteitvanhetnoorden.nl/en/about-us/>.

## MAKE IT IN THE NORTH

**Location:** Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** Make it in the North was created by a group of organisations in the Northern Netherlands (business associations, universities, city governments) that wish to connect internationals with local companies.

This project solves two problems by bringing them together: the shortage on the Northern Dutch job market, and internationals looking for work. They build a bridge between companies in Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe, and English-speaking talent through a career-job portal, networking events, and job fairs.

**Implementers:** Local authorities and local businesses.

**Target audience:** International newcomers.

**Link:** <https://www.makeitinthnorth.nl/>.

## OPEN AMSTERDAM! AMSTERDAM STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL TALENT

**Location:** Municipalities of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The City of Amsterdam and its partners want to ensure a better match between the talent and skills on offer in their city and the needs of the business sector. Key focus areas include providing opportunities for retraining and continuing education, as well as attracting talent from abroad.

The Amsterdam Strategy for International Talent provides international talent with support in the areas of education, employment, and quality of life, for example by helping people to find housing or to enroll their children in international schools.

Other focus areas and actions include:

1. Increasing the region's appeal in terms of the quality of the higher education offer for international students;
2. Enhancing the cooperation between universities and enterprises in the region, also to improve the matching between regional demand for talent and the highly skilled workforce formed by the education system;
3. Facilitating talents' transition from university to the labour market through career events and job fairs;
4. Providing international talents with services for easily finding information related to job opportunities as well as to aspects of daily life such as healthcare and accommodation (available in Dutch and English); and,
5. Offering top-quality education at both Dutch and international schools for the children of international talents.

**Implementers:** Local authorities and businesses, and higher education institutions.

**Target audience:** International newcomers.

**Link:** <https://www.amsterdam.nl/en/policy/policy-economy/developing-talent/>.

## ROTTERDAM BUSINESS CASE PROGRAMME

**Location:** Rotterdam (NL).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** This project is an illustrative example of cross-sectoral cooperation. The Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Entrepreneurial Sound Board, and the Municipality of Rotterdam got together and created the concept of *De Rotterdamse Zaak* (the Rotterdam Business Case). The objective is to enable entrepreneurs living below the poverty line to increase their income and profitability by improving their entrepreneurial and management skills.

The Rotterdam Business Case is a work-based learning company in which both students and senior entrepreneurs support and consult businesses in marginal economic areas. The project focuses on entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and self-employed workers, who conduct their business below the poverty line and who have a lack of (financial) means to find solutions for the challenges they face.

The concept of the Rotterdam Business Case is based on the combined experience and expertise of former entrepreneurs who provide senior coaching and counselling, and young students of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, who consult at junior level with practical support. Together, they draw up business plans, cost calculations, marketing strategies and annual reports. For the students, it is a chance to gain practical experience while for the experienced entrepreneurs, it is an opportunity to put their skills to good use again. And for the entrepreneurs in difficulties, the project represents a chance to save their businesses.

Since its launch (first as a pilot project in 2012, then as real project from 2013 onwards), the project produced tangible results: From 2012 to 2015, more than 400 entrepreneurs benefited from the specific services offered by the Rotterdam Business Case.

Also, in terms of transferability, the project proved successful. In collaboration with both the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, the Rotterdam Business Case was introduced to other cities/regions in the Netherlands. To encourage the replication of the project, a national foundation has been established to assist other regions in setting up a pilot of their *Zaak* (Case). Meanwhile the *De Utrechtse Zaak* (the Utrecht Business Case) has been launched.

**Implementers:** Higher education institution, regional authority and local organisation.

**Target audience:** Young people, local businesses, and consultants/entrepreneurs.

**Source:** <https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/the-rotterdam-businesscase-de-rotterdamse-zaak#casestudydetail>.

## JOBTOWN URBACT PROJECT

**Location:** Lead Partner: Cesena (IT), together with Latsia (CY), Nagykálló (HU), Kielce (PL), Kaiserslautern University (DE), Rennes (FR), Avilés (ES), Gondomar (PT), Aveiro (PT).

**Category:** Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** Youth employment problems are essentially structural, not a passing issue of the economic crisis – though the impact of the crisis has been severe and risks converting conjunctural problems into additional structural burdens.

As such, the issue needs to be addressed in a sustainable way. To address the problem, this project proposes the creation of Local Partnerships for the Advancement of Youth Employment and Opportunity.

The Local Partnerships for the advancement of Youth Employment and Opportunities cooperate in particular around:

- Developing or improving approaches to learning, and the acquisition and validation of competences and qualifications;
- Work-based experience. Developing new and better approaches to apprenticeships, traineeships, entrepreneurial experience, and other direct ‘hands on’ experiences of, or contact with, the world of work;
- Identification and forecasting of needed skills and competences, stemming from developments in the labour market and the resultant shifts in demand for skills and worker profile. This will be done by liaising directly with local employers and agencies, and by building on what is offered by existing structures (e.g. Skills Councils, Regional labour market observatories, and so on) and information resources.

**Implementers:** Local authorities and local businesses.

**Target audience:** Young people.

**Source:** <https://archive.urbact.eu/jobtown-complete-overview>.

## SECTION 5: CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

## DEMOCHANGE

**Location:** Region of Salzburg (AT).

**EU funding:** Yes, the European Regional Development Fund.

**Category:** Empower young people; Reinvest in regions.

**Description:** The DEMOCHANGE project was launched in 2009 and ran for three years. Its aim was to prevent a challenge that local experts had forewarned about: an ageing population in the region.

A series of pilot projects were set up under DEMOCHANGE, with the highlight of the projects being that local citizens had an active role in the forging of their results. Workshops and World Cafés were organised where citizens and local representatives had the chance to share their opinions/ideas on topics related to housing and infrastructure developments, and governance.

The project also saw the improvement of social services such as childcare in a move to encourage young families to move to the region. At the same time, campaigns were led to attract young people who had previously left the region to come back, with these people being offered support in the search for housing and the use of other essential services.

DEMOCHANGE also included actions that helped match people's educational careers with the local labour market's demand, thus improving their job opportunities.

**Implementers:** Local authority and higher education institution.

**Target audience:** Young residents and non-residents of the region.

**Link:** [http://www.demochange.at/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35&Itemid=7](http://www.demochange.at/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35&Itemid=7).



## MUNICIPAL STRATEGY OF VARNA

**Location:** Varna (BG).

**Category:** Empower young people; Integrate newcomers and build communities; Investigate.

**Description:** In 2015, the municipality of Varna in Bulgaria adopted a strategy that aimed, among others, to boost the attractiveness of the city among young people.

The strategy sought to strengthen cooperation between the local authority and local higher education institutions to help solve some of the challenges the city was facing through their research expertise. Dialogue and cooperation between students and the local authority were also improved through the strategy, with many initiatives being taken that allowed students to have their say on measures to be taken by the local authority. These actions sought to ensure that decisions made at municipal level were based on input from experts, as well as the target audience of such decisions i.e., students.

With the city facing a high rate of youth unemployment and a risk of economic stagnation, the strategy looked to improve local labour market conditions. One of the measures taken by the municipality under the strategy was the provision of financial incentives to companies that would:

- a) provide a service that would contribute to the development of the city,
- b) grow the city's high-technology job sector to help diversify the city's economic activities.

Aiming to improve the city's cultural offering, the strategy also included measures that would see the improvement of public spaces and the city's entertainment sector. The municipality also committed to organising cultural events for students and young people.

**Implementers:** Local authority and higher education institutions, in collaboration with local businesses.

**Target audience:** Young residents and non-residents of the city.

**Source:** [https://archive.urbact.eu/sites/default/files/media/eunivercities\\_lap\\_varna.pdf](https://archive.urbact.eu/sites/default/files/media/eunivercities_lap_varna.pdf).

## QJ — QUARTIER JEUNES

**Location:** Paris (FR).

**Categories:** Empower young people; Integrate newcomers and build communities; Reinvest in a region.

**Description:** Set up in 2021 in the old town hall of one of Paris' central districts, the QJ acts as a central hub for young people living in Paris and its surrounding region.

First and foremost, the centre acts as a meeting point for young people aged between 16 and 30 years old where they can exchange and organise social events. The centre itself organises several different events that offer young people the chance to bond with their fellow residents.

On top of this, the centre holds several practical workshops and events on a permanent basis where young people can receive practical information or advice on aspects related to their day-to-day lives. These workshops deal with themes such as health, accommodation, and legal issues and are led by representatives from local entities.

The centre also offers services that aim to facilitate young people's entry into the workforce. More specifically, it organises workshops on CV-drafting and interview preparation as well as presentations on different jobs and meet-ups with representatives from local businesses.

**Implementers:** Local authority in collaboration with several civil society organisations.

**Target audience:** Young residents of the city.

**Link:** <https://qj.paris.fr/programme/jsp/site/Portal.jsp>.

## TREMPO

**Location:** Nantes (FR).

**EU funding:** Yes, the Creative Europe Programme.

**Category:** Empower young people; Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** The Trempo initiative was set up in 1990 with the aim of promoting the work of local musicians and allowing them to develop their skills.

In terms of skills development, Trempo runs various activities that contribute to the professional growth of these musicians. It organises classes, internships, and workshops that allow musicians to develop their skills, not only as musicians but also as entrepreneurs. In addition to music-specific classes on themes such as song writing techniques, Trempo runs programmes where musician can learn about communication skills and how to conduct self-promotion as entrepreneurs.

In 2011, the structure moved to an up-and-coming area in the city of Nantes and its new premises includes workspaces, music studios, and a bar where local emerging musicians can showcase their talents. In doing so, Trempo ensures that its training activities are accompanied by real opportunities for local musicians to develop their own platforms and grow as artists.

**Implementers:** Local authorities in collaboration with civil society organisations and local businesses.

**Target audience:** Emerging musicians.

**Link:** <https://trempe.com/le-projet/>.

## TALENT IN DE REGIO

**Location:** Groningen (NL).

**Category:** Empower young people; Investigate.

**Description:** Talent in de Regio is a project run jointly by the University of Groningen and the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, and consists of a team of lecturers, researchers and PhD students.

The team has developed a Talent Monitor tool which gathers data and statistics on the labour market of the north of the Netherlands. It consists of interactive visualisations of where people grow up and where they end up after their studies. The data gathered during the research is then pooled together and categorised into different themes that are easy to read – Knowledge Themes. This information is then made available to HR professionals, policymakers, and researchers among others.

Talent in de Regio is also working on developing a Matching & Career Tool between students and companies in Groningen. It is essentially a platform where people in Groningen can create profiles, fill in information about themselves, and actively seek employment opportunities. Companies, including SMEs, can also use the platform to directly recruit students, workers, and job seekers. Talent in de Regio is also looking at providing (paid) training opportunities through the portal in the future.

**Implementers:** Higher education institution.

**Target audience:** Students, young people, and businesses.

**Link:** <https://talentinderegio.com/>.



## STARTUP MADEIRA

**Location:** Região Autónoma da Madeira (PT).

**Category:** Empower young people; Integrate newcomers and build communities.

**Description:** Launched in 1997, the Startup Madeira initiative acts as an entry point into the local economic ecosystem for entrepreneurs.

The initiative offers tailor-made services to entrepreneurs and aims to meet their needs at every stage of the entrepreneurial process. Among the services that are offered by the initiative are physical workspaces, financial advice, and administrative support.

For those taking the leap into entrepreneurship, Startup Madeira provides advice on how to turn ideas into business realities with programmes on things from skills development to developing business plans. The initiative also offers tips on expanding businesses for those with more experience in the field.

Startup Madeira is also running a promotional campaign aiming to boost the popularity of the region among foreign-based entrepreneurs and digital nomads. The creation of the Digital Nomad Village in the region is a prime example of this promotional campaign. It offers products and services that are adapted to the needs of digital nomads and looks to create a bond between them and local inhabitants and businesses.

**Implementers:** Local authority in collaboration with several other local entities.

**Target audience:** Local and international entrepreneurs.

**Link:** <https://startupmadeira.eu>.

## YOUR REGION YOUR FUTURE – YURA PROJECT

**Location:** Burgenlandkreis (DE), Ústí (CZ), Śląskie (PL), Hajdú-Bihar (HU), Novara, (IT), and Steiermark (AT).

**EU funding:** Yes, the Interreg programme.

**Category:** Empower young people; Adopt a cross-sectoral approach to boost the local economy.

**Description:** The cross-border Your Region Your Future (YURA) project was launched in 2010 and ran for three years. In a region that had been facing a high rate of youth emigration/out-migration, its main aim was to find solutions for these issues.

A series of pilot projects were organised in each region under the initiative, with these projects falling into three categories:

- a) Learning partnerships,
- b) A business academy,
- c) Future labs.

The learning partnerships sought to strengthen cooperation between schools and local businesses with students having the opportunity to learn more about employment opportunities on offer in their region through visits and lectures.

In the business academy, a select number of students were offered extra lessons on business-related subjects such as creating business plans. Its aim was to familiarise students with the world of business and entrepreneurship.

The future labs offered young people the chance to provide their input on various topics such as mobility, employment, and leisure activities in the region. This ensured that young people's concerns about these matters were heard, making sure that their future was (partly) shaped by them.

**Implementers:** Local authorities, businesses, and education institutions.

**Target audience:** Young residents of the region.

**Source:** <https://www.eu-regionalmanagement.at/projekte/central-europe-project-yura/>.

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