

IN FOCUS PEER-REVIEW WORKSHOP

BUCHAREST, 27-28 JUNE 2017

Peer Review Exercise Report

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1. Introduction

This document describes how cities in the Urbact Infocus network reviewed each other's Draft Integrated Action Plan (IAP), using a role-play method. The peer review role play method has the following benefits:

- Organising a peer-review session as such creates a natural deadline for partners and local groups to have their draft IAP ready
- It is a playful way to receive useful comments from partner cities on draft action plans
- It creates deeper levels of common understanding among the partners
- Taking different roles helps to look at an action plan with different eyes; this generates new and often unexpected insights
- In all, it helps to improve the quality of action plans and also contributes to the cohesion in the network.

This document describes how the peer review exercise worked, and contains the results and recommendations that came out of the peer review exercise.

Section 2 describes the steps that we took to conduct a role-playing peer review, before, during and after the meeting; Section 3 outlines the meeting format that we used; Section 4 provides the guidance note that the partners received on how to review their peer's plans. Section 5 contains the outcomes of the peer review reports, summarizing the results per partner city.

2. Steps in the peer reviewing process

A. Before the meeting

In an early stage of the Infocus network, to reach agreement among the partnership on the structure of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), we set a clear and realistic timeline for IAP production. It was decided to have a peer review session somewhere halfway the project. Before that session, the following tasks were done:

- All partners: submit the preliminary drafts of their IAP to the lead partner (LP) and the Lead Expert (LE).
- LP: Uploads drafts onto a shared folder, so that each partner can access all draft IAPs.
- LE: made a table that shows who will review which action plans (table 1).
- LP sent a clear instruction mail with “homework” to the partners (some 2 weeks before):
 - o Each partner should read in advance at least three other IAPs (although kindly invited to review any other draft as well).
 - o The experts provided them with a guidance note (section 3) which included a set of questions that helped the partners reviewing other partners’ drafts. This helped them to start sketching ideas and suggestions.
 - o Each partner prepared a brief presentation of their IAP; tell them to make a short and to-the-point presentation (15m max), eventually provide them with a format.
 - o LE/LP: Decide on the “roles” that will be assumed during the role play exercise (explained later).

B. During the meeting

At the beginning of the meeting, the ad-hoc expert explained the meeting process and role-play method clearly; He started with a plenary role-play peer review of one or two partners; this helped to get a better shared understanding of the process. Next, we split in parallel groups with a max of 5 partners (each group had a moderator)

- Each parallel session lasted about one hour, during which one IAP was reviewed.
- We made the group division so that partners that reviewed the IAP as homework are in the same group; thus, the group consists of three partners who have already read the IAP at home, and one or two who have not.
- The presenting partner could use max 15 minutes to present their IAP.
- After that Q&A/roleplaying started:
 - o First, the other participants could ask clarifying questions.
 - o Then, the moderator started the role play. The moderator suggested partners to take roles in situ, for instance by asking “are there any (#senior politicians #journalists #company bosses #etc) in this room? Yes? What would be your question about this IAP? –Other questions could be: “what suggestions would you have for improvement”, or “what in your view is good and not so good in the plan” etc.

- The moderator gave priority to give the word to the partners who have reviewed this IAP as homework.
- During this roleplay, an assistant of the presenter took notes to capture the suggestions and note what is unclear or needs improvement. These are key inputs to improve the IP later on.

Peer pair (speed) dates

Each partner has read, at home, at least three IAPs in detail. During the parallel session roleplay described above, there was not always full opportunity to discuss all the points. Therefore, the suggestion was raised to organise one-on-one “dates” where the partners have another opportunity to share their opinions and suggestions about the IAP.

C. After the meeting

- Each partner sent their three written reviews to the peers and to the LP/LE.
- Each partner shared the suggestions, comments and questions with the Local Group, and discussed how to deal with the comments.



In Focus partner Porto presents its Integrated Action Plan

3. The meeting format

Partners peer reviewed each other in groups, using role play. In each session, one city presented their IAP, the others reacted on it. In this, each city plays a role. We used 5 roles:

- Presenter of the IAP. This is the only “real” role. The city representative took max. 15m to present their draft IAP.
- Leading local politician: This is the person who decides about the plan on the local/urban level.
- Leading regional politician: This is the person who decides about the plan on the regional level.
- Journalist. This person will ask clarifying and critical questions, keeping things simple and look what’s in it for the citizens of the town and region.
- Company. This person will look at the plan from a business perspective.

Each could ask questions or add comments from their perspective.

As an example, and to show how it works, we reviewed the cases of Bilbao and Bucharest in a plenary way.



In Focus partner Bucharest 3rd District presents its Integrated Action Plan

Group 1. Moderator: Willem van Winden

	1a (11h30-12h30)	1b (12h30-13h30)
Bilbao	Leading regional politician	Company
Plasencia	Company	IAP Presenter
Torino	Leading local politician	Journalist
Frankfurt	IAP Presenter	Leading local politician
Ostrava	Journalist	Leading regional politician

Group 2. Moderator: Miguel Rivas

	2a (11h30-12h30)	2b (12h30-13h30)
Bielsko-B	IAP Presenter	Company
Grenoble	Company	IAP Presenter
Bordeaux	Leading local politician	Journalist
Bucharest	Leading regional politician	Leading local politician
Porto	Journalist	Leading regional politician

Group 3. Moderator: Willem van Winden

	3a (9h00-10h00)	3b (10h30-11h30)
Bielsko-B	Journalist	Leading local politician
Plasencia	Leading regional politician	Journalist
Bordeaux	IAP presenter	Leading regional politician
Frankfurt	Company	Company
Porto	Leading local politician	IAP presenter

Group 4. Moderator: Miguel Rivas

	4a (9h00-10h00)	4b (10h30-11h30)
Bilbao	Leading local politician	Leading regional politician
Grenoble	Leading regional politician	Journalist
Torino	IAP presenter	Company
Bucharest	Journalist	Leading local politician
Ostrava	Company	IAP presenter

Table 1. Who will read which action plan before the meeting?

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Who will read which action plan?

		Bielsko - Biala	Bilbao	Bordeaux	Bucharest	Frankfurt	Grenoble	Ostrava	Plasencia	Porto	Turin
Bielsko - Biala	will read:		X	X						X	
Bilbao	will read:				X			X			X
Bordeaux	will read:	X					X			X	
Bucharest	will read:	X					X				X
Frankfurt	will read:		X		X				X		
Grenoble	will read:				X			X			X
Ostrava	will read:		X			X			X		
Plasencia	will read:			X		X				X	
Porto	will read:	X		X			X				
Turin	will read:					X		X	X		

4. Example Guidance note on reviewing your peers' IAP

Below is the Guidance Note that was sent to each partner city; it is a template with key questions concerning the contents and quality of the IAP.

Review's subject	e.g. Bilbao
Reviewer	e.g. Ostrava

1. City context and definition of the initial problem/policy challenge

- City background (and on-going developments) in relation to the IAP's main theme. Is the information on this aspect accurate and relevant?
- What's the problem/main challenge to solve? Is it clearly introduced?

2. Vision. Strategy. Main goals

- As a whole, what is the impact (or impacts) the IAP wants to achieve? Are they clear enough?
- What is the role of the smart specialisation concept/approach in the IAP? Could you make any suggestion on how this concept could be used as a driver according to the main orientation of your peer's IAP?

3. Working lines/set of initiatives

- Are they coherent as a whole? Do they respond to a common and concrete policy challenge?
- Clarity of the actions: are they well described? Is it clear what is intended to carry out? Is it clear who takes the lead on each action, and the mix of stakeholders to engage?
- According to the overall policy challenge, do you miss any type of initiative that might be relevant to consider? Any suggestion for your peer?

4. The collaborative model: stakeholders involved

- This should be more than just listing the ULG members and meetings. Is there any collaborative governing model under consideration, with the ambition to go beyond the In Focus timeframe?
- What about a specific dialogue with the RIS3 leading authority at regional level? Is it in the agenda? Any suggestion for your peer on how to capture the interest of RIS3 teams from the regional level, or how to best align the city agenda with regional RIS3?

5. Other comments and remarks

It will be useful having your **overall impression** on your peer's IAP and the room for improvement facing the final draft that will have to be produced by end of this year.

5. IAP Peer review reports: A synthesis per city

For each city, this section contains a synthesis of the comments made in the peer review reports that were delivered by the partners as a result of the meeting. It may help the cities in the network to improve their drafts.

Bielsko Biala

Strengths and positive aspects

- The specializations are very clear and selective (three specializations are chosen), and it is interesting that the IAP places the intervention in urban regeneration and territorial features as a strategic axis to enhance the city's attractiveness, aiming at an improved economic performance.
- The actions are coherent with the policy challenge.

Room for improvement

- It seems relevant to further explain how the city's tradition as "a city of hundred industries" (not that specialised) has been evolving towards the current specializations.
- The IAP should explore in more depth what is specifically meant by "lock-in", which seems to be a central issue in the region. Smart specialization could be further stressed as a way to avoid lock-in and pursue economic renewal over time. Could it be that the strong involvement of powerful "industry leaders" in the ULG makes the lock-in worse? What is their interest in finding new emerging economic niches and specializations?
- It is unclear how innovative the action lines are, and to what extent they are actionable in the frame of a city-driven IAP (e.g. dual learning, promotion of R&D cooperation, etc.). Some of them may actually contribute to reinforce lock in, e.g. by strengthening already existing industries, such as the ones largely based on automation.
- Perhaps more initiatives could be added on i) connecting existing specializations to one another; ii) enhancing entrepreneurial culture; and on iii) how to identify emerging specializations in the city (vs. existing and well-established industries).

Bilbao

Strengths and positive aspects

- The main goal, making the transition to a more knowledge-based economy, building on current assets, is well explained. The approach with balancing old and new sectors as well as continuing successful processes of economic restructuring is very appealing; The logic is fairly clear and strategic decisions are easy to follow.
- The action plan does not pretend to do everything. It concentrates on three of the six sectors defined in the overall city strategy. This focus reflects the idea of smart specialisation and makes the action plan more effective. Each working line responds to a concrete policy challenge.

Room for improvement

- It would help to add more evidence on the industrial structure: employment data, economic indicators, names of companies etc., so that the choices are better justified.
- It should be clarified which actions are specifically part of the IAP, and which ones were already in the existing strategy. Where do the flagship projects come from - are they the product of ULG, or selected activities fit to the purpose of the IAP? Moreover, result indicators are missing.
- For the reader, it is unclear if all working lines mentioned in the IAP will be applied to all prioritised sectors. Also, how are the flagship projects related to the working lines? Moreover, it is highly recommended that the table with tasks and responsible parties (stakeholders) is completed.
- The question of who takes the lead and which stakeholders will be involved can be clarified in some working lines. Moreover, it would be interesting to have more details on the idea of developing a competitive intelligence strategy.
- It might help to add a view on how to go on beyond the In Focus project's timeframe.

Bordeaux

Strengths and positive aspects

- The challenges are well identified in the IAP. It makes sense to use the new territorial and administrative framework as an opportunity to empower the metropolitan area. The IAP wants to achieve a change in the way economic development support is provided in the city-region (a "new order"), catering for i) changing governance/institutional arrangements between métropole and Region and ii) societal demands (need for experimentation, new public-private partnerships).
- The actions are well described, with reference to who is responsible for each of them and the stakeholders that should be engaged.

Room for improvement

- A provocative question is whether, the way it is put, this can be considered more of a plan for Bordeaux Métropole as an organization, and less for Bordeaux metropolitan area as a territory?
- The plan could elaborate more on how and why new modes of service delivery are relevant in relation to the concrete economic specializations of Bordeaux (p 4-5). This could help bringing to the fore the concrete local specificities of Bordeaux vis-à-vis other places, which would be in line with a more smart specialization-like way of thinking.
- The smart specialisation approach needs improvement. Will all 11 areas be promoted? Some choices are presented in the action sheets, but still the main body of the document could be more informative on the issue.
- In the action sheets, more info on budgets and financial sources should be added in the final version.
- It would be good to put more attention on the participation of the citizens and small companies, in the visioning and policy process. The intention is to "clarify the respective roles for business, economic agents, inhabitants, but also the efficiency of public intervention". This is the holy grail of local economic development policy – but how can it be achieved concretely?
- Related to that, the ULG is perhaps too "institutional", composed by traditional public (or public-related) organizations only; It might be considered to bring more "unusual suspects" on-board.
- It would help to explicitly link the plan's ambitions with RIS3 notions of entrepreneurial discovery, targeted support to local features, open governance models with new types of stakeholders, connectivity across sectors, etc. Some of these issues are addressed in the projects and initiatives, but a more explicit link could be attempted.
- At times, the IAP reads a bit like a sum of projects championed by the different actors in the LSG and less like a more holistic group of actions around a concrete (selective) vision.
- The ULG composition and workflow is explained, but no future collaborative model is considered.

Bucharest

Strengths and positive aspects

- The main challenges and goals of the IAP are well described: the lack of a dynamic business environment, brain-drain, administrative fragmentation within the 6 districts, lack of RIS3 in the region. As the demographic aging in the district is very high, talent management is a necessary measure. The LAP intends to address those challenges.
- The IAP is using a great graph to present the stakeholders visually.

Room for improvement

- There is too little background information regarding the city context and governance issues in the analysis section.
- The goals defined are very broad (develop a good ecosystem, stimulate entrepreneurial environment, foster cluster development, create new workspace, talent management) and hence need specification. Especially “A2 Motorway” and “Dâmbovită river” need to be explained: what are the goals, which are the concrete actions that can help achieving those goals? Stakeholders and responsible persons for taking the lead on the actions also need to be defined.
- It might be interesting to learn more about the agendas of the ULG meetings and the method used to make ULG members participate in the process. For example, did discussions take place, were the initiatives (Hala Laminor, Highway, River Bank) developed together with the ULG, did the ULG give feedback? The IAP needs less description of the actors themselves, and more information on the way they are involved.
- The plan is not easy to understand for the "non-URBACT" reader.
- The actions section lacks detail (precise content, funding, ownership, timelines etc).
- There is some conflation between objectives and actions.
- The engagement of companies is (too) limited.
- Adding a SWOT analysis would be helpful.

Frankfurt

Strengths and positive aspects

- The choice to focus on technological innovations for SMEs is a good one, because RIS3 now mainly supports large businesses or very innovative start-ups.
- The concept of “Houses of”, linking science with economy in particular fields, is an interesting way to promote the triple helix, also for other cities.
- The IAP seems well aligned with the regional smart strategy.

Room for improvement

- The plan could be more coherent; it reads more like a merged collection of “sub-plans”. It is directly connected with the economic development office and the tasks they develop. More focus might be needed.
- The collaboration model and participation of stakeholders need more elaboration in the plan.
- The activities lack detail.
- It might be considered to add an acceleration program for startups – including workshops, mentoring and intensive work on the development of business.

Grenoble

Strengths and positive aspects

- The plan brings to the fore “values” as something transversal to the IAP.
- The plan puts forward a large set of rather innovative actions, especially on user involvement and ways of dealing with sports/mountain related economic clusters.
- The need to adopt new modes of intervention and deliver new services is well presented in many actions – e.g. experimentation environments and test beds, living labs, hack days, innovative procurement, etc. This is certainly very timely and relevant.

Room for improvement

- The explanation of the city background needs elaboration.
- There is no clear problem definition, apart from “the need to review the innovation metropolitan policy for 2018-2023”.
- No specific relationship is explained between Grenoble Alpes Métropole and the RIS3 authority.
- An overarching inspiring vision for the plan is missing, something that could unite stakeholders, companies, knowledge institutes, and the citizens around a shared vision. Right now, there is the impression that the “vision” and “mission” taglines are perhaps too broad and could potentially fit almost every city (which seems a bit at odds with the RIS3 philosophy).
- The plan puts forward a very impressive number of initiatives. Yet, it seems almost impossible to link them all to a concrete vision, let alone to implement them in the time frame of 5 years.
- Initiatives are numerous and very broad in many cases, with no clear identification of the “owner”, or budget.
- The plan should elaborate on how and why the proposed new modes of governance and service delivery are relevant in relation to the concrete economic specializations of Grenoble. This could help bringing to the fore the concrete local specificities of Grenoble vis-à-vis other places, which would be in line with a more RIS3 way of thinking.
- More details should be added about the participation process and the participants.

Ostrava

Strengths and positive aspects

- The plan contains interesting information regarding the shift from old to new economy.
- Excellent work on the importance of human capital, and how this is the entry door to success underpinning all other policies (clusters, infrastructure, promotion, etc).
- The impact the IAP wants to achieve - the increase of the number of talents from other regions and from abroad and retain – and other specific goals are clearly and exhaustively described.

Room for improvement

- The IAP needs to point out more acutely that the lack of attractiveness of the city is a key issue to work on.
- The action lines lack structure, with different lines for different ideas. Also, they should include partners, phases, timetable, budget, indicators (see Torino’s action sheet as good example). Most of the actions are well described, others could be described in more detail.
- The links to RIS3 is only partial; The IAP mainly addresses a key (lacking) feature –talent attraction and retention- as a basis for economic specialisation. The description of the goals and actions could highlight the importance of the smart specialisation concept, giving for instance more emphasis to stakeholder involvement or to multi-level governance.
- As regards RIS3, the IAP could describe the regional strategy more in detail, in order to highlight how the planned actions contribute to implement the Regional strategy. Moreover, the IAP could better explain how the horizontal talent attraction initiatives are related to the vertical domains/sectors/industries identified by RIS3.

- The draft does not indicate if there is a collaborative governing model (including local stakeholders) under consideration beyond the In Focus timeframe. At the beginning, the partner decided not to follow ULG recommendations and to focus the IAP on the topic of talent management, but it is not indicate whether the ULG has played an active and real role in the identification and definition of each planned initiatives.

Plasencia

Strengths and positive aspects

- The IAP draft provides a very detailed SWOT analysis, highlighting the cities' strengths, potentials and challenges. This SWOT also introduces the important industrial sectors and provides relevant information about them. The challenges for Plasencia are very clearly described, it is to handle the effects of the economic crisis: destruction of companies, unemployment, lack of competitiveness of the companies.
- The IAP shows a very good level of alignment with regional RIS3: it is focused on 3 of the 5 excellence areas identified by the RIS3, and each planned initiative is linked to a specific domain/strategic line of the RIS3.

Room for improvement

- For some actions, more specification with regards to stakeholders is needed. Also, it would help to identify more specific and measurable expected results for each working line. Finally, the actions will require a large budget. Where will it come from?
- Some initiatives seem to be already existing: in this case, it is not clear whether the IAP aims at identifying other specific actions in order to more implement such existing initiatives or whether the existing initiatives are included "as they are" in the IAP because they are coherent with In Focus goals.
- In response to the high unemployment and the fact that industries such as the construction industry broke down due to the crisis, it might be a good idea to provide retraining measures. For instance, construction workers could be retrained to work in the forestry sector (which is a sector the action plan wants to extend).
- In the chapter on the participative governance model, it would be interesting to learn more about the way Plasencia integrates the ULG members into decision making processes of the project. The format of the meetings could be described (plenary, tête à tête, etc) and also the methods used for making the ULG participate (open discussions, concrete inquiries, etc).
- It should be clarified in which way the RIS3 authority participates to the ULG meetings or if there has been cooperation between Plasencia and the RIS3 authority.
- One area for further specialisation is agrofood. Is there any regional/national cluster Plasencia can be a part of? It might help.

Porto

Strengths and positive aspects

- It is still a work in progress. There is an index of the topics/subjects that they are going to developed. The index is well organised. The information about the recent trends and dynamics is very insightful and provides a good view of the Porto situation.
- The interesting themes for Porto included in the regional S3 (investment attraction, entrepreneurship promotion) are well linked to the local competences (physical spaces, urban regeneration and master planning). The need of coordination between city, regional and national governments is urgent, and the concept of smart specialization can help them to get together to plan together.

Room for improvement

- More evidence could be added to make the introductory part more convincing. E.g. diagnostic data concerning demand and supply for business locations, needs analyses, info on existing campuses and business parks.
- The proposed actions are future oriented and general. The IAP should also indicate more specific projects (at least some flagship projects or initial / pilot projects).
- The proposed “orientations” are based primarily on the city’s capability. It is clear that the other actors will be involved in the processes, but it would be worth to gain more commitment from “3rd parties”: universities, private investors etc.
- The IAP lacks detail about the involvement of stakeholders (who, what and how).

Turin

Strengths and positive aspects

- The analysis of the context is very good, precise and complete. It outlines the challenges in terms of economic development and innovation, supported by evidence, fact and figures. It also includes a good description of the new strategic mission of the citta metropolitana.
- The link with RIS3 is obvious, all objectives/actions are related to it. By putting "priority of the RIS3 strategy" at the end of each action, this gives the impression of a good alignment.

Room for improvement

- The vision and objectives of the IAP need more clarity and elaboration
- Objectives and actions are conflated at times
- The actions and initiatives are very well presented (partners, funders, phases, etc.), but their number is rather limited.
- On stakeholder involvement, improvement is needed; there is a low number of external third parties involved (only a few companies and clusters);
- The IAP is unclear on the governance: what is the role division between urban, metropolitan and regional level?

In Focus

Within the framework of the URBACT programme, In Focus is a pioneering transnational network aimed at boosting the urban/metropolitan agenda on economic development by means of smart specialisation as overarching approach, while at the same time articulating better with RIS3 at regional level. Led by the city of Bilbao, In Focus is also joined by Bielsko-Biala, Bordeaux, Bucharest, Frankfurt, Grenoble, Ostrava, Plasencia, Porto and Torino.

The In Focus agenda is also supported by the Smart Specialisation Platform created by the European Commission and placed at the Joint Research Centre.

Key contacts

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