

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRANSFER NETWORK "ACTIVE NGOs" MARCH, 2019



ACTIVE NGOs is an URBACT Transfer Network dedicated to developing and improving cooperation models between NGOs and municipalities. Drawing inspiration from the Good Practice of the Riga NGO House, a platform for public-civic participation, the network brings together cities from across the Europe.

WINGS TO EMPOWER CITIZENS



PARTNERSHIP

LEAD PARTNER (GOOD PRACTICE):
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORTS DEPARTMENT OF RIGA CITY COUNCIL (LV)

PARTNERS:
CITY OF SYRACUSE (IT)
CITY OF DUBROVNIK DEVELOPMENT AGENCY DURA (HR)
BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL (UK)
CITY OF ESPOO (FI)
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF SANTA POLA (ES)



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Partner Cities and Challenges

Riga (LV)

Riga is the capital of Latvia, being the natural centre of Latvia's cultural, education and sports life. The city is home of several ethnic minorities. This diversity is represented in the city's civil society with many ethnic cultural organisations active in the Latvian capital. The significant presence of NGOs in Riga has prompted the Municipality to engage civil organisations in a variety of ways, serving as an innovative platform for civic-public participation – Riga NGO House (URBACT Good Practice). Set in a refurbished school building, the Riga NGO House is a space for civic activities. It also provides training, networking and consultations for the empowerment of NGOs.

Operating successfully and becoming a key institution in Riga's civic ecosystem in its 5 years of existence, there is still space for improvements like **expanding activities, improving services, enhancing governance, communicating and promoting** of the NGO House, as well as **improving cooperation** with other Latvian and foreign partners and municipalities.

Brighton & Hove (UK)

Brighton and Hove is a city in East Sussex, in South East England. At the 2011 census, it was England's most populous seaside resort, with a population of 273,400. Despite the relative prosperity of the city, a number of neighbourhood wards are amongst the most deprived in the United Kingdom. East Brighton is one of these neighbourhoods being isolated from Brighton's central areas and other neighbourhoods of the city. Limited transportation options tend to lock East Brighton residents in their neighbourhood with no access to the centre's cultural and educational offers, as well as natural assets like the seaside and the beach. This creates a sentiment of isolation and abandonment among residents and a bad reputation in the eyes of other communities.

The challenge of the Council and the organizations active in the areas addressed by the ACTive NGOs network is to **bring together the community spaces, initiatives and services into a coherent network**, by streamlining access to the community facilities as well as by creating **shared ownership and responsibilities**.



Dubrovnik (HR)

Dubrovnik is a Croatian city on the bank of the Adriatic Sea. It is one of the most prominent tourist destinations in the Mediterranean. In 1979, the city of Dubrovnik joined the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. The population of Dubrovnik is currently facing a decline in the national population census. At the same time, the number of seasonal workers has continuously increased since 2007 and reached its highest peak in 2013. The population change has unevenly affected different parts of the city.

In the core of the ambition to strengthen public-civic cooperation is **the creation of 3 new community, cultural and youth centres** for which models of participative governance will be established. A strong cooperation between NGO's and the City is needed to ensure effectiveness, trust and stability in order to positively affect the life of the citizens.

Espoo (FI)

Espoo is the second largest city in Finland, located next to the capital, Helsinki. The city is known as a hub of know-how, research and development, at the heart of which stands the Aalto University campus.

Espoo is facing challenges in providing service due to a rapidly increasing population, ageing and migration. There are about 3000 NGOs in Espoo that could potentially contribute in providing services. However, the level of civic-public cooperation is low and the municipality has insufficient knowledge of the local NGOs activities. Therefore, **capacity building between civic actors and the city is necessary through an inventing of an NGO house platform**.

Santa Pola (ES)

Santa Pola is a coastal town at the Mediterranean Sea located in the Baix Vinalopó region in the Valencian Community, Spain. Santa Pola is well-equipped with services and infrastructure. The main economic

activities are tourism and fishing. As a popular summer destination, the city has a floating population of 80.958 on annual average.

Santa Pola has a vibrant civil society with more than 200 registered associations in the city. However, the growth in the number of NGOs and civic activities has been adding increasing pressure on the public infrastructure that was planned in the 90s; all municipal buildings are overused and there is not enough space for citizen activities. Additionally, many associations are not proactive enough and have a limited impact on the local society. The City Council is aiming at **strengthening local associations, providing space for citizen activities and involving NGOs in the provision of services**.

Syracuse (IT)

Syracuse is a mid-size town in the South-East of Sicily. At the end of December 2016, there were 122,291 people living in Syracuse, a number that shows a population increase in the last ten years. Although Syracuse's population is slowly ageing, generally there are more young people in the city if compared to the Italian average. A main concern for the city is the decline of its industrial area which contributes to the economic and social depression of the region with high unemployment, ageing population and rising poverty being the most obvious challenges.

There is no comprehensive overview of all civic actors in the city available, despite previous attempts to create a cartography of NGO initiatives. Syracuse aims at adopting the Good Practice of Riga NGO house and developing a more **open and inclusive governance model** to unlock the existing potential of local NGOs. The operation of the **Urban Center**, opened in 2017, will be co-designed with local stakeholders. Moreover, a **sustainable operational model** will be developed for the **House of Citizens**, opened in 2015, but discontinued its activities in 2017.

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

During the first two months of project implementation (Phase 2), Urbact Local Groups (ULGs) were actively working on their Transfer Plans by analysing the city's starting point in relation with the Good Practice and defining the transfer and adoption process in the ACTIVE NGOs network lifespan.

All partners organized their first ULG meetings to contribute to their Transfer Plans development process.

The **City of Riga** conducted its first ULG meeting on the 7th of December 2018. The stakeholders were introduced with the activities to be conducted during the two-year project. A discussion on the Improvement plan to be elaborated by the Good Practice City and the topic of the first transnational meeting 'Mapping, network building and community involvement' followed. At the end of the meeting Sabīne Zāgere from Riga Planning Region provided an inspiring presentation of the URBACT project "CHANGE!", creating a link between two URBACT networks and boosting the motivation of Riga's ULG members to participate actively.



The **City of Espoo** organized the first ULG meeting on the 29th of January 2018. Many participants from the city departments and different NGOs took part in the meeting. The ACTIVE NGOs project was introduced and many ideas, thoughts and proposals for the Transfer Plan were shared.

The **City of Dubrovnik** held their first ULG meeting in Art radionica Lazareti on the 31st of January 2019. The meeting focused on the transfer of the URBACT Good Practice in Dubrovnik in order to establish a public-civic partnership based on the principle of the participatory governance in the two new cultural-social centres, the Lazareti and the Youth Centre. Partners also discussed the main directions in which their Transfer Plan should act in order to achieve the aforementioned goal. In a very friendly atmosphere, the ULG group expressed the excitement to be a part of the project and to collaborate for the next two years!



In East Brighton the stakeholders held their first ULG meeting on the 4th of January 2019 at Whitehawk FC - a new partner to the group. Having heard about the ACTIVE NGOs project at the East Brighton Coffee & Croissant networking session, Whitehawk FC's Commercial Manager, Kevin Miller hosted the meeting. The meeting was used to refresh the aims of the ACTIVE NGOs project. The ULG continued mapping their stakeholders and discussed potential ULG members to the visit first Transnational Meeting in Santa Pola (ES).

The **City of Santa Pola** organized its first ULG meeting on the 11th of February 2019 at the City Council Ajuntament de Santa Pola. During the meeting main actions of project were presented. The City Council, Local Development Agency and different Local Associations came together to analyze the current situation on their mutual collaboration, the current needs, the possibility to transfer URBACT Good Practice Riga NGO House, as well as the challenges city cope with to improve and achieve more efficient management of the municipal premises which are offered to non-governmental organizations in Santa

Pola. At this first meeting there were around 20 participants from different local associations, neighbours, technician public servants from local departments such as urbanism, youth and trade, as well as several political representatives of the Local Corporation. The participants were very active by sharing their main current problems regarding the realization of a mapping (web SIG), funding and its efficiency, public-private collaboration, premises needed for public use and a lot of other proposals to work on during the project lifespan.

ACTive NGOs READY FOR EXCHANGE AND LEARNING

On the February 26th - 27th, 2019 project partners met for the first **Transnational Seminar** in Santa Pola (ES).

On the first day of the 1st Transnational Seminar “Mapping, network building & community involvement” partners and ULG representatives meet in Santa Pola (ES). It was opened by the Mayor of Santa Pola Ms. Yolanda Seva Ruiz by emphasizing importance of public-civic cooperation.

Lead expert Levente Polyak in his presentation “Mapping and network building” stressed that “Mapping civil society is an inevitable first step for a municipality to get to know the civic actors active in its territory. Connecting them to each other and developing these connections into civic networks or ecosystems helps individual organizations to improve their abilities and competences and allow the municipalities to understand better the most important themes and priorities in the city”. Further on, Ad-hoc expert Miguel Jaenicke (Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas, Madrid) gave an inspiring presentation on his experience about mapping civic initiatives, mapping tools and building local networks. He also suggested to do mapping on the both ways digital and printed version. Expert and his presentation were highly evaluated by the participants of the meeting.



Afternoon was devoted to the ULG members presentations from Riga, Brighton and Santa Pola. After that, project partners worked hard to discuss their Transfer Plans of URBACT Good Practice Riga NGO House. The first day of Transnational Seminar was concluded by the Project Steering Committee meeting, during which project network outputs, communication and budget issues as well as a time plan of next activities were discussed.

The second day of the 1st Transitional Seminar started with the exchange and learning activities. Participants attended **Villa Adelaida** - the premises donated to Santa Pola Municipality to be used for public to support art, music and literature, **La Senia** – the public space for NGOs and elderly people as well as the **Youth Centre** dealing with youngsters to promote creativity among them. The site visits demonstrated excellent examples of local community engagement in Santa Pola. Visiting the real examples of participation allowed project partners to develop a greater understanding of how civic- public cooperation, basing on URBACT Good Practice Riga NGO house, can be used into practice for other project partners' cities.



After the inspirations of the site visits participants got involved in discussions on the challenges Santa Pola is facing in Peer review session. There are municipal premises available for public use in Santa Pola, but customization or renovation is needed. One of the solutions mentioned in the discussion was to partly use the premises for commercial reasons, to earn extra funds for maintenance and further development.

Afternoon was devoted to the ULG members presentations from Espoo, Dubrovnik and Syracuse. The NGOs Communication web platform, providing the visibility and recognition for organizations presented by Espoo, was considered as a further operation tool of other project partners.

In total, more than 40 stakeholders participated in the 1st Transnational Seminar.

After returning in their home cities, ACTIVE NGOs partners are sharing their learnings in Santa Pola to other ULG members and preparing for the next Transnational Seminar “Spaces, access, funding programmes & economic sustainability”, Dubrovnik (HR) in May, 2019.



WHAT IS NEXT?

In the upcoming three months:

- Project partners will finalise their Transfer Plans by the end of March 2019.
- Project partners will prepare for the next Transnational Seminar “Spaces, access, funding programmes & economic sustainability” in Dubrovnik, May 2019.
- Project partners will take part in the URBACT CAMPUS, to strengthen their capacity on successful project implementation around regions of Europe organized by URBACT local info points.

Just to remind, the following transnational exchange and learning activities are planned within the project:

- Transnational Seminar “Spaces, access, funding programmes & economic sustainability”, Dubrovnik (HR)
- Transnational Seminar “Governance, communication & decision-making”, Syracuse (IT)
- Transnational Seminar “Capacity building, professionalisation & active procurement”, Espoo (FI)
- Transnational Seminar “Dissemination, impact and project sustainability” - final event, Brighton (UK).



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