

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRANSFER NETWORK "ACTIVE NGOS" MARCH-MAY, 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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EDITORIAL

“Spring is the time of plans and projects.”* The last three months have been busy for the Transfer Network ACTIVE NGOs. Cities involved in a project produced Transfer Plans, setting their goals and road maps for the adaptation and transfer of the Good Practice. In this newsletter we offer a glimpse of each partner’s transfer expectations.

*Leo Tolstoy

Adaptive reuse, renovation, repurposing... there are a lot of words describing the transformation of a space in order to serve a completely different purpose than before. These practices have been actively implemented in the private sector and now the public sector is ready to join. In the second Transnational Seminar “Spaces, access, funding programmes & economic sustainability” ACTIVE NGOs were discussing and exploring this subject, find more below.

Engagement of local communities is one of the cornerstones for successful public-civic cooperation. 50.1% of Europeans took part in the recent European elections, reaching the highest turnout in 20 years. Increasing political activity is a good sign for the ACTIVE NGOs Network and the URBACT programme, which brings cities together to drive local changes by using integrated and participatory approaches. Intensive collaboration, knowledge exchange and mutual learning will help us to respond to the challenges Europe is facing.

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

During March-May 2019 URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) were actively working on finalising their Transfer Plans and preparing for the 2nd Transnational Seminar in Dubrovnik. 14 ULG meetings took place in the ACTIVE NGOs Network cities during this period. In addition, three of the project partners organised remarkable local events in their cities.

Syracuse organized a public event for mapping the associations and gathering the needs of stakeholders on April 18th 2019. The participants of the meeting were seeking for solutions to create a network of collaboration between the associations and a network of places, where citizens can play an active role and make their contribution to improve social services. Also, the mapping process of the associations started through a simple application developed within the "Virtuocity" APP. Twenty-eight active participants of NGO with a strong desire to contribute to the improvement of social services of Syracuse attended the event.

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Dubrovnik organised a round table “Civil Society Council of the City of Dubrovnik – potentials and challenges” on April 30th 2019. The Council is an advisory body to the City Council with the aim of strengthening and encouraging civil society development, advising city councillors on policy while representing different sectors. The round table aimed to open the dialogue with the city administration and to produce policy recommendations for the next Call for Civil Society Council members. The round table gathered public administration, city council representatives, NGOs, former members/president of the civil council and media.

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Riga NGO House hosted URBACT Campus for Transfer Networks in the Nordic-Baltic Countries. Intense learning process took place for two days, on April 25th and 26th 2019. The ACTIVE NGOs team took part in information and knowledge exchange, networked and shared similar challenges at the regional and national level with other networks. New contacts and working approaches were brought into the Network thanks to this event. The two-day event was concluded with an interactive study visit at Riga NGO house and the experience of Riga city was shared beyond the ACTIVE NGOs partnership.

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Riga has actively started implementation of its Improvement Plan by organising networking and consultation activities. In March 2019 Riga NGO house organised Consultation day to educate and inspire representatives of Riga NGOs in a various field like bookkeeping, legislation related to NGOs, taxes and communication to improve their effective operation. Further on, the Networking event getting to gather

environment activists was organized. The aim of the event was to facilitate the cooperation and communication between NGOs working in the same area.

Riga NGO House together with 30 non-governmental organisations working in different thematic areas took part in a big informative and cultural event outside its premises in one of remote neighbourhoods of Riga – Bolderāja on June 1st 2019. It was a big networking event giving opportunity for NGOs to network and mutually learn from each other as well this was an opportunity to provide general public with information about NGOs and opportunities to get involved. Riga NGO House and its services were actively promoted for the inhabitants of Riga of different age, social and ethnic origin. The variety of events offered from informative activities and consultations to creative and arts activities attracted a big number of visitors. NGO House is looking forward to taking part in such activities in other neighbourhoods of Riga.

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WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO DURING OUR TRANSFER JOURNEY?

In its Improvement Plan, **Riga** city has identified 5 strategic directions to improve the Good Practice of the Riga NGO House and extend its outreach. Riga NGO House will expand its activities by opening two new branches in different neighbourhoods of the city. The services will be improved by live streaming seminars, by installing a lift, by creating a new public transport route and a new bus stop close to the NGO House and by organising activities in other neighbourhoods of Riga. The cooperation between NGOs active in the NGO House will be facilitated by organising networking events and by initiating activities implemented jointly by several NGOs. The communication and promotion of NGO House will be improved by organising surveys to identify the needs of NGOs, by involving neighbourhood NGOs in the circulation of information and by undertaking informative campaigns to reach a wider audience. Finally, the NGO House will engage in best practice and experience exchange with local and international partners and NGOs.

Within the Transfer Plan, **Brighton** plans to establish a 'distributed NGO House'. An existing network of spaces in East Brighton will be improved to develop all the functionalities of the NGO House as well as



connections with public services. Neighbourhood Action Plan asset map will be digitalised and situated to key community assets across East Brighton. Visibility of current municipal funding streams will be broadened and regular training will be provided to local community on funding and establishing an NGO. A model of a Citizens forum for East

Brighton will be explored and a coherent and grassroots-led neighbourhood branding for Whitehawk, Bristol Estate and Manor Farm will be developed.

Dubrovnik aims to establish better communication and cooperation between the socio-cultural centre Lazareti (currently in renovation) and the Youth Centre based on the model of civil-public partnership and participative governance. First, the city will establish a better communication and coordination system between the NGOs in each of the centres, and then will work on strengthening the cooperation between the two centres and their NGOs in terms of mutual decision-making, programme partnerships, umbrella organisations etc. In addition, Gučetić Summervilla will be observed to be transformed into a community cultural centre in Mokošica, the suburban area lacking any kind of cultural and social resources. In the final event 'NGO Day' local NGOs will present their work to potential partners and a wider audience in order to strengthen the civic network and engage citizens.

Espoo will facilitate the dialogue between the city and its NGOs by taking part in the neighbourhood festivals, the Market of Opportunities, the Espoo Day and similar events. NGOs will be encouraged to make public presentations about their activities and the opinions and proposals of the local public regarding communal spaces and neighbourhood activities will be gathered via questionnaires. The Uusimaalaiset.fi online platform, which includes information about NGOs, events and voluntary work, will be promoted and plans for visualizing these data will be made. Additionally, visual exhibitions introducing the work of local NGOs will be created and displayed in public spaces. Service design workshops will be organized for immigrant NGOs to help them find their specialties and develop their activities. The needs of NGOs in terms of space will be mapped and clear rules about the funding, using and managing of these spaces will be created.

Within the Transfer Plan, **Siracusa** aims at developing a more open and inclusive governance model to unlock the existing potential in the city by providing NGOs opportunities for growth and collaboration. The adaptation of the Riga Good Practice will focus on the creation of a network of three civic spaces (The House of Citizens, the newly opened Urban Center and the recently closed Youth Center) by co-designing their identities (governance, common topics and different aims, etc.) and launching pilot activities. A network of 3 diverse places, collectively designed and sustainable from a social and economic point of view, will be set up.

ACTive NGOs READY FOR THE EXCHANGE AND LEARNING



On May 29- 30, 2019 project partners met for the second **Transnational Seminar** in Dubrovnik (HR).

In the first day project partners and ULG representatives met to discuss the questions related to “Spaces, access, funding programmes & economic sustainability”.

It was opened by the Deputy Mayor of Dubrovnik Ms.Jelka Tepšić, who highlighted the challenges of Dubrovnik - space is the most valuable asset in city.

“All civic organizations and initiatives need a space for their activities. Therefore, a diversity of strategies is needed to secure spaces for civic use, whether it is municipal building or when they are not available, in private properties”, stressed ACTive NGOs’ Lead expert Levente Polyak in his presentation. We were lucky to have Daniela Patti as the Ad-hoc expert in this Transnational Seminar. She gave inspiring presentation on municipal policies to support social economy. Afternoon was devoted to the ULG presentations from Brighton and Hove (GB) as well as Espoo (FI) partners.

Further on, project partners worked hard to give feedback on the timelines of their Transfer Plans. The day 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.



Next morning started with the site visits, where the partners visited Youth Centre - a place where children and youth attend various events devoted to arts, technologies and other related subjects organized by

local NGOs. The group also attended the Gučetić Summer Villa - a place which is owned by municipality, needs huge renovation works, but with the support of the municipality it will become an attractive place for civic participation in Dubrovnik.

After the inspirations of the site visits participants got involved in discussions on the challenges of civic spaces Dubrovnik are facing in Peer review session. Useful potential solutions came up during the discussion.

Afternoon was devoted to the ULG presentations from representatives of Riga (LV), Santa Pola (ES) and Syracuse (IT). Presentations were followed by session of the vox-pops workshop.

In total, more than 30 stakeholders participated in the second Transnational Seminar. Great experiences were shared by ACTIVE NGOs partners within those 2 intensive days.

By returning in their home cities, ACTIVE NGOs partners are ready to share their learning gained in Dubrovnik to other ULG members and they are actively preparing for the next Transnational Seminar "Governance, communication & decision-making" in Syracuse (IT) in October, 2019.

USEFUL FOR CITIES

The 17th European Week of Regions and Cities will take place in Brussels on 7th-10th October, 2019. The European Week of Regions and Cities is an annual four-day networking event for experts in regional and local development. The event gathers more than 6000 participants and 600 speakers in more than 150 sessions. The European Week of Regions and Cities 2019 will focus on the following topics: the future of the EU and the roles of regions and cities; a Europe closer to its citizens; a greener Europe; a more socially integrated Europe; a smarter Europe and a more connected Europe.

Follow the news [here](#) and don't miss the registration date!



WHAT IS NEXT?

In the upcoming months:

- Project partners will continue the implementation of their Transfer Plans.
- Project partners will work on production of their final learning logs, vox-pops videos and transfer diaries to capture their learning experiences in the transfer process.
- Project partners will prepare for the next Transnational Seminar "Governance, communication & decision-making" in Syracuse, October 2019.

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

- 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).