

BOOKLET



URBAN REGENERATION

TRANSFORM A NEGLECTED URBAN
SPACE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

The URBAN REGENERATION project, ref. nr. 2024-1-IT03-KA210-YOU-000253178, is granted by the Italian Youth Agency and funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme.



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Project summary
Project context - Needs that we tackle
Timeline of Activities
What is Erasmus+ ?
Partner Organizations
What is Urban Regeneration?

HOW TO ORGANIZE A PROJECT?

1. Form a group
2. Local Training
3. Map the Space
4. Research & Ideas
5. Ideas to Action
6. Example of Urban Regeneration actions
7. Promotion & Visibility
8. Sustainability

TRAINING SESSION OUTLINES

OUR ACTIONS

Inspiration & Ideas



INTRODUCTION



TO THE KA2 PROJECT URBAN REGENERATION

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Project Summary

The Urban Regeneration project is a transnational cooperation initiative that brings together youth organisations and local actors to explore how young people can actively contribute to the regeneration of public spaces through participation, sustainability, and community engagement.

The project responds to the growing need for inclusive, people-centred approaches to urban regeneration by placing young people at the heart of the process. Rather than focusing solely on physical transformation, the project understands regeneration as a social and educational journey — one that strengthens relationships between young people, communities, and public spaces while fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Implemented through a combination of local and international activities, the project supported young people in analysing their local contexts, identifying underused or neglected public spaces, and co-creating regeneration actions together with community members and stakeholders. Through non-formal education methods, participants developed practical skills related to civic participation, sustainability, teamwork, and strategic planning, while gaining hands-on experience in transforming ideas into concrete actions.

A central element of the project was the exchange of practices and peer learning between partner organisations from different countries. An international training activity provided space for young people and youth workers to deepen their understanding of urban regeneration, reflect on local challenges, and collaboratively refine regeneration ideas before implementing them at local level. This transnational dimension strengthened the quality of the actions and allowed participants to see urban regeneration as a shared European challenge with locally adapted solutions.

The project resulted in the regeneration and reactivation of public spaces in partner countries, accompanied by community events and visibility actions that encouraged collective use and long-term engagement. Beyond physical outcomes, the project created lasting learning experiences for young people, reinforced cooperation between civil society and local communities, and produced a practical methodology that can be adapted and replicated in different contexts.

Through Urban Regeneration, young people were not only beneficiaries, but co-designers of change — actively shaping their environments and demonstrating how youth participation can contribute to more inclusive, sustainable, and vibrant communities.



Project Context

Across Europe, many urban and semi-urban areas are characterised by underused, neglected, or abandoned public spaces. These spaces often reflect deeper social challenges: limited community interaction, low levels of civic engagement, and a growing distance between young people and their local environments. While cities and towns continue to develop, public spaces frequently fail to respond to the real needs, interests, and identities of the people who live there — especially young people.

In many local contexts, young people are rarely involved in decision-making processes related to urban development. When regeneration initiatives do take place, they are often designed through top-down approaches that prioritise technical or aesthetic solutions over social ones. As a result, regenerated spaces may remain unused, poorly maintained, or disconnected from the everyday lives of the community. This lack of ownership weakens social cohesion and reduces the long-term impact of public investments.

At the same time, young people across Europe face limited opportunities to actively shape their surroundings and to develop practical skills linked to sustainability, civic responsibility, and community engagement. While youth participation is widely promoted at policy level, there is a clear need for concrete, hands-on methodologies that allow young people to learn by doing, to collaborate with local stakeholders, and to experience their role as active citizens in real-life contexts.





Environmental sustainability represents another key challenge. Urban regeneration is often discussed in relation to infrastructure and materials, but less attention is paid to sustainable behaviours, local resource use, and the emotional connection people develop with shared spaces. Without this connection, even environmentally friendly solutions risk becoming short-lived. There is therefore a strong need for approaches that combine environmental awareness with social and economic sustainability, rooted in local realities.

Finally, many communities lack structured spaces for dialogue and cooperation between young people, civil society organisations, and local authorities. This limits mutual understanding and reduces the potential for collaborative, long-term solutions. Creating opportunities for transnational learning and exchange can help address this gap, allowing organisations and young people to share practices, test participatory models, and adapt them to different cultural and social contexts.

The Urban Regeneration project was developed in response to these needs. By placing young people at the centre of regeneration processes, the project addresses the lack of youth participation in urban development, strengthens community bonds, and promotes sustainable, people-centred use of public spaces. Through local actions and international cooperation, the project creates a practical framework for transforming neglected spaces into places of connection, learning, and shared responsibility.

Timeline of Activities

1

Kick-off Meeting in Skopje

A face-to-face meeting of two representatives of each partner organisation in Skopje, North Macedonia from 18th to 21st of January 2025.



2

Sustainability Workshops

- Design of the participatory process
- Information sessions for young people
- Developing learning objectives
- Participatory sessions with young people
- Monitoring of learning process



3

Review and selection of spaces

- Select potential areas of the town
- Contact and consult with public administrative bodies
- Management of space permits



4

Consultation with local entities

- Contact and coordination with neighbors and local entities
- Participatory meeting for groups to engage in decision-making



5

Learning & Training activity

Youth workers and a young people from each partner organization attend a training in person in Fuscaldo, Italy from 17th to 23rd of June 2025.



6

Designing urban regeneration actions

- Local training workshops
- Session for local groups to design final urban regeneration action



7

Implementation of urban regeneration actions

All partners carry out with each group a process of regeneration of the chosen urban space.



8

Presentation of new spaces

- Recognition and certification of learning
- Inauguration of spaces
- Preparation of calendar of events and activities in new space



9

Creation of Booklet

- Compiling training workshop plans
- Write down used methodology and urban regeneration process
- Documenting urban regeneration actions



10

Final Evaluation Meeting in Ciudad Real

A face-to-face meeting of two representatives of each partner organisation in Ciudad Real, Spain from 11th to 14th of December 2025.



What is Erasmus+ ?

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Launched in 1987, the "Erasmus" programme was originally established to promote closer cooperation between universities and higher education institutions across Europe. Over time, the programme has expanded and is now referred to as Erasmus+, or Erasmus Plus, combining the EU's different schemes for transnational cooperation and mobility in education, training, youth and sport in Europe and beyond.

The 'Erasmus+' programme concluded its first funding cycle from 2014 to 2020 and is now in its second cycle, spanning from 2021 to 2027.

The 2021-2027 programme places a strong focus on social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, and promoting young people's participation in democratic life.

It supports priorities and activities set out in the European Education Area, Digital Education Action Plan and the European Skills Agenda. The programme also: supports the European Pillar of Social Rights, complements the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, develops the European dimension in sport ...



Partners

The capacities, experiences and strengths are diverse in the consortium, so we fully utilized that situation to ensure meaningful and effective exchange of competencies, practices and experiences between our organisations.



Paolab

Paolab has staff that have studied urban regeneration at an academic level and have experience with organising environmental and sustainable development projects. Paolab is also very experienced in organising local activism initiatives, well established on the local level and has some experience of hosting international mobility projects.



CET Plataforma

CET platforma has vast experience and great competencies for creating dissemination strategies and coordinating visibility actions. CET has many volunteers, a pool of over 1000 young people that it has involved in past activities and has strong cooperation with municipal government, decision-makers and other organisations. It's also part of few local and international networks. CET already has some experience with urban regeneration as it organised few local activities for their volunteers and youth as well as participated in an international project for transformation of abandoned public spaces.



Tilia

Tilia is a relatively new organisation, but composed of staff that has a lot of previous experience from both participating and organising international youth projects as members of other organisations. They have plenty of experience in the field of non-formal education with young people, particularly in green projects for urban decoration. Tilia will contribute by teaching new methods of engagement for young people through non-formal activities, especially related to urban gardening and the inclusion of people from different cultural backgrounds.

We believe that our partnership benefited thanks to the theoretical approach of Paolab, the non-formal methodologies experimented by Tilia and the practical part already developed in other circumstances by CET Plataforma.



What is Urban Regeneration?

To define urban regeneration, we can start from the
etymology of the words.

“Urban” refers to everything related to the city. And what is a city made of? This is the first question we asked the young participants when we began the activities. A city can be defined as such if it includes people and the relationships among them and with public space. An urban planner is, properly speaking, someone who studies the relationships within a community through public space and the system of transport and services. Therefore, in this case, placing “regeneration” next to “urban” means creating new relationships between the community and public space, or regenerating old relationships using a contemporary approach.

A Project for Whom?

The first question to ask when implementing this kind of regeneration action is: who is this project for? Identifying the stakeholders within the context is essential, because there is no regeneration project that can be fully adapted to all contexts. Every place is unique, and preserving its identity is necessary for the community so that people do not feel displaced and can still recognize places for what they are, even if we want to give them a new function and a new spirit.

Analysing the Context

To analyse the context and the community, today we have many tools at our disposal: interviews, photographs, statistical analyses, reportage, maps. These are all useful tools for collecting data that can be visualised and cross-referenced to gain the best possible understanding of the context in which we operate. This is especially useful for young people, to help them visualise the context and make it more understandable.



Collective Participation

The work should be carried out through the active participation of the community, while maintaining a socially sustainable approach. Top-down projects, without real decision-making power for local people, especially in small contexts, tend to be socially rejected. For this reason, in the regeneration process it is important for young people to spend time in the places, to be “contaminated” by the context, and to use all the social skills available in order to immerse themselves in the community. On the other hand, the community will receive the project with much greater interest and will be more likely to take care of it over time

Youth Work

From the perspective of young people, this represents a major contribution to the development of social skills, contextual reading, and strategic design skills. Identifying the “problem,” selecting the truly important themes, developing and creating a coherent technical strategy—these are all phases with very high social impact. On the one hand, they help to understand the mechanisms that regulate community balances; on the other, the approach of young minds to creating solutions is always an incredible resource, even for the designers involved. It is certainly true that it is necessary to have both major and minor references that help to set up already known and safe paths, but at the same time the approach of young people helps to increase design creativity and, above all—and this does not happen very often—helps to empower young people in making choices that can finally be directed toward their peers and be recognizable to themselves.



Sustainability

When thinking about the projects to be implemented, it is necessary to distinguish what is sustainable from what is not, prioritising local materials and, only if they are strictly available nearby, analysing how much time and how far a material had to travel to reach us. But it is also important to keep in mind that what is sustainable for you may not be sustainable for someone else. Except for recycling—that is sustainable for everyone. Then there is economic sustainability, which goes hand in hand with environmental and social aspects. This can be strategically planned: there can be a direct relationship between the project and the benefits, which may justify increasing the initial project cost in exchange for radical (but risky) change, or it can be managed in phases, with lower risks and more opportunities for adaptation by those who receive the project. Moreover, from an economic point of view, it is possible to include functions that generate light income, suitable for the maintenance of the places. However, the real value to be sought for full sustainability is adaptation and care: creating an emotional value of the project that goes beyond materials, construction techniques, and functional benefits.





HOW TO?



ORGANIZE A YOUTH PARTICIPATION
PROJECT ABOUT URBAN
REGENERATION.



1. Form a Group

The first step of the project methodology focused on forming the national youth groups and engaging relevant local stakeholders. Establishing motivated teams and building strong partnerships at local level was essential to ensure meaningful participation and long-term impact.

In all three partner countries, introductory information sessions were organised to present the Urban Regeneration project, its objectives and planned activities. These sessions also included a brief overview of the Erasmus+ Youth framework and Youthpass, introducing participants to the learning opportunities connected to the project. More detailed exploration of these elements was developed later during the local training phase. The main aim at this stage was to attract committed young people and clearly communicate the participatory approach and expected level of involvement.

The information sessions were promoted through open calls shared online via social media, WhatsApp groups and other digital communication channels, as well as through word of mouth among young people in the local communities. This outreach approach ensured accessibility and encouraged diverse participation.

At the same time, project coordinators reached out to local youth and other associations, youth councils and community organisations to explore possible collaboration. Meetings were also organised with municipal representatives working in the areas of youth, civic participation, urbanisation and other relevant departments. These exchanges helped present the project's vision, identify potential synergies and ensure institutional awareness and support.

Participation in local public events, such as association fairs or community gatherings, further expanded the project's visibility and strengthened connections with civil society and local authorities.

By combining youth recruitment with stakeholder engagement and municipal dialogue, this initial phase ensured that the project was rooted in local networks from the very beginning, creating a supportive environment for the activities that followed.



INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

Start small,
talk big



Set up a
"suggestion
board"



Use surveys
or QR
codes for
feedback



organize a
local meet-
up



next
step



Ask kids,
elders &
teens —
everyone
uses public
space!





2. Local Training

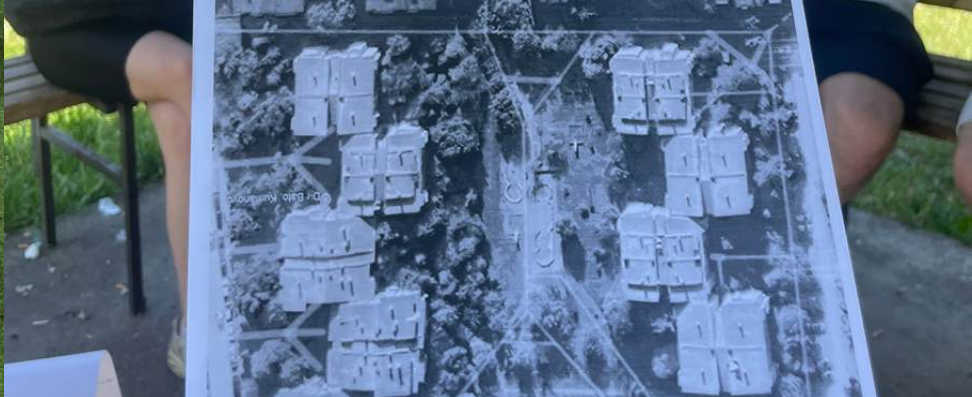
In each partner country – Italy, Spain and North Macedonia – local training sessions were implemented over a period of three to four months to prepare young participants for meaningful engagement in urban regeneration processes. The aim was to build knowledge, motivation and group cohesion, ensuring that young people could contribute actively and confidently to the next stages of the project.

The programme was flexible and adapted to local contexts. Each topic could be delivered as a separate session, or one session could combine two topics in order to optimise time, human resources and available spaces. The core modules included: (1) an introductory session presenting the project's objectives, methodology and expected results, together with a first overview of urban regeneration; (2) an introduction to Erasmus+ and Youthpass, highlighting the learning dimension of the project and the key competences developed through non-formal education; (3) a youth participation workshop introducing the concept of youth participation, presenting examples from different contexts, explaining the participatory approach and its potential impact, and whenever possible connecting participants with existing youth councils or associations to hear first-hand experiences;

(4) a sustainability workshop using non-formal education methods such as interactive games, simulations and small group work to explore the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Whenever feasible, this session included a short study visit to a local example of regeneration in practice, such as an urban garden or community space; and (5) a more in-depth urban regeneration session explaining the concept in greater detail and reviewing concrete examples ranging from small community-driven initiatives to more complex projects led by public authorities. Whenever possible, guest experts such as architects, urban planning students or municipal representatives contributed practical insights.

The final part of the regeneration session included a brief brainstorming activity to identify potential local spaces for mapping, which would be visited in the next phase to assess their needs and possibilities for regeneration.





3. Map the Space

The mapping stage focused on identifying concrete urban spaces for potential regeneration through direct observation and community consultation. In each partner country, areas were selected based on proposals gathered from citizens, youth groups and local associations during previous activities and public events.

A key action was the organisation of participatory photo walks in different neighbourhoods. Based on the suggestions collected, two areas per country were selected for closer exploration. Participants visited these neighbourhoods to document physical conditions, strengths, challenges and opportunities through photographs and field notes. As part of the process, young participants took pictures, discussed their observations and brainstormed initial ideas for possible regeneration actions. Working in small groups, they analysed accessibility, environmental aspects, unused or underused spaces and opportunities for improvement. Informal moments, such as a team-building breakfast before or after the visits, further strengthened group cohesion and motivation.

Community input played a central role in this stage. During local fairs and public events, the project team hosted an information stand to present the urban regeneration initiative and engage directly with residents, associations and local decision-makers. Through short surveys and open conversations, citizens were invited to suggest areas that required attention and share the needs they had identified in specific public spaces.

Following the field visits, participants used a Padlet canvas to upload selected photos, organise their observations and record the ideas generated during the mapping walks. The same digital tool was also used to summarise and systematise the suggestions collected through the proposal boxes. This process helped structure the information gathered and created a clear visual overview to support the development of regeneration proposals in the next phase.



MAP THE SPACE

Observe,
Photograph,
map



Take a
walk
around



Identify
safety
issues

next
step

Note what's
missing
(benches,
light,
greenery?)



Talk to locals
about how
the space
used to be



4. Research & Ideas

Following the mapping phase, the project moved into a research and idea-generation stage. Building on the observations from the photo walks and the suggestions collected through the proposal boxes, participants explored possible solutions for regenerating the selected spaces.

Young people worked individually or in small teams to research examples of urban regeneration initiatives online. The focus was on identifying small-scale actions that could realistically be implemented within the scope of the project and adapted to the local realities of their respective communities. Rather than large infrastructural interventions, participants looked for practical, low-cost and community-driven ideas that could have visible impact.

During the research process, they considered the needs identified in the mapping stage and reflected on questions such as: Does this idea respond to the challenges we observed? Is it feasible with available resources? Who would need to be involved? How can young people take an active role in its implementation?

The examples and inspiration gathered were uploaded to a shared Padlet canvas, where participants added links, images and short descriptions. This digital tool allowed the group to organise ideas, compare approaches and build a collective pool of realistic and context-sensitive proposals.

This stage strengthened analytical skills, creativity and problem-solving, while ensuring that the emerging regeneration concepts were both community-oriented and feasible within the framework of the project.



CO-CREATE & ACT

Time to bring
it to life!



organize a
clean-up
day

next
step

Paint,
plant, or
decorate
together



Celebrate
the change

Add
temporary
furniture from
recycled
materials



5. Ideas to Action

International Training & Ideas Exchange

A key milestone of the project was the international training course, hosted in Fuscaldò, Italy from 17th to 23rd of June 2025, where the three national groups of young people – accompanied by youth workers from each partner organisation – gathered for a week to exchange experiences and further develop their regeneration ideas.

The training created a space for intercultural learning, peer feedback and collaborative planning. The first day focused on group building, including getting-to-know-each-other activities, team-building exercises, sharing expectations and establishing a group agreement. Participants also explored Youthpass and key competences, reinforcing the learning dimension of the project.

During the following days, each national team presented the results of their local mapping and research processes. Through structured sessions such as the “UR Barometer” and “UR Vision Lab,” participants analysed the current situation of their selected spaces and refined their vision for regeneration. The “UR Dream Team” activity supported them in identifying key stakeholders, defining roles and clarifying the partnerships needed for implementation.

Interactive methods such as World Café discussions encouraged cross-country feedback and exchange of ideas. A hands-on experience and a session focused on local good practices provided additional inspiration and practical insights.

As part of the planning process, participants developed a UR Blueprint to structure their ideas into concrete and realistic action plans. In addition, the youth designed brief visual leaflets presenting their specific regeneration proposals. These materials were intended to clearly communicate their ideas and were later shared with local stakeholders, decision-makers and other interested parties.

The course concluded with final evaluation and reflection, consolidating learning outcomes and preparing each national group to implement their regeneration actions in their communities with clearer strategies and strengthened confidence.



International Training in Fuscaldo, Italy





6. Example

of Urban Regeneration Actions

How to Build DIY Urban Furniture from Recycled Materials?

Learn to build benches, planters, and more using free, recycled materials and creative thinking! Start by building furniture from pallets, bottles, or old wood today!

STEP 1: GATHER MATERIALS

Look around
first!



Wooden
pallets



next
step



Tires



plastic
bottles



Ask local
stores or use
community
donation
boxes.



STEP 2: BUILD YOUR STRUCTURE

What you
will need?



Gloves &
safety
goggles



Paint or
varnish



Screws &
screwdriver



next
step



Start with a
simple bench
or planter.
Tutorials on
YouTube help
too!



STEP 3: DECORATE AND INSTALL

Make it
beautiful &
weatherproof



Use bold
colors



Add local
art or
quotes



next
step



Place it
where
people
gather



Coat it
to last
longer





FINAL STEPS

You started with forgotten materials — and turned them into something useful, beautiful, and meaningful. From gathering resources to building and painting together, this process wasn't just about furniture, it was about creativity, teamwork, and ownership.

Now it's time to celebrate!

- Add a small sign: "Built by the community"
- Organize a local launch: a picnic, a workshop, or just a chill hangout
- Take photos, post online, and tag everyone who helped

Because when people feel proud of what they've created, they're more likely to protect and grow it 🌱



7.Promotion & Visibility

1) Fuscaldo, Italy - Community Lunch

For the final event, we envisioned creating a moment to give back the hospitality we had received from the community and the surrounding residents during the interventions. To this end, we organized a “worksite lunch”, as a sort of open worksite for the community, and then we shared the results with the neighbors who chose to join the lunch and offer ideas and suggestions for the future.

2) Kumanovo, N.Macedonia - Die Cast event

The Die Cast Show 2025 was organised in the park in Kumanovo, transforming a previously neglected area into a vibrant community space. The event gathered collectors and visitors from across the city, creating opportunities to exhibit, trade and connect around die-cast car collections, while demonstrating the strong potential of the regenerated public space for inclusive community activities.

3) Ciudad Real, Spain - Public Seed Exchange

The final dissemination event was held in Ciudad Real, where Asociación Tilia hosted the transnational meeting with partners from Italy and North Macedonia at the Espacio Joven Ciudad Real. The programme included a public seed-exchange at the urban garden on Calle Sol, gathering around 50 participants and presenting the raised garden beds initiative focused on water saving and composting.



8.Sustainability

How to continue using the spaces and take care of them ?

The issue of using projects beyond the design phase is strategic and is also the concrete answer to the effectiveness of an urban regeneration project.

A project that is not used is no longer urban regeneration. Very often, these kinds of actions take place in areas affected by decay and abandonment, where people no longer recognize the social and attractive value of the place and therefore avoid it. Simply redeveloping these spaces does not allow people to feel once again a living connection with the place; people need to be drawn there, for any reason, and enabled to create new memories and new relationships.

A strategically designed project is one that does not require future planning, because it already incorporates, within its very implementation, systems of engagement that make it autonomous and sustainable. That said, establishing even a small program together with the community, organizing events, and making the place once again collectively useful is the only way to take care of it and continue to use it. The people who live around the place need to rebuild a bond in order to independently choose to take care of it. Apart from structural maintenance, which should be the responsibility of public institutions, everyday care—the kind that slows down the deterioration of places—is the result of the sense of attachment that can be fostered in the people who use the space and who have experienced its creation.



SESSION OUTLINES



FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TRAINING



The international training course hosted in Italy represented a key milestone in the middle of the project implementation. It marked the transition between the local phases – including training and preparation, mapping of spaces and needs, and initial idea generation – and the implementation of concrete urban regeneration actions in each partner country. The training created the space to channel the ideas developed locally, refine them through peer feedback and structured methodology, and prepare participants to return home ready to implement specific actions with the active involvement of their national youth teams.

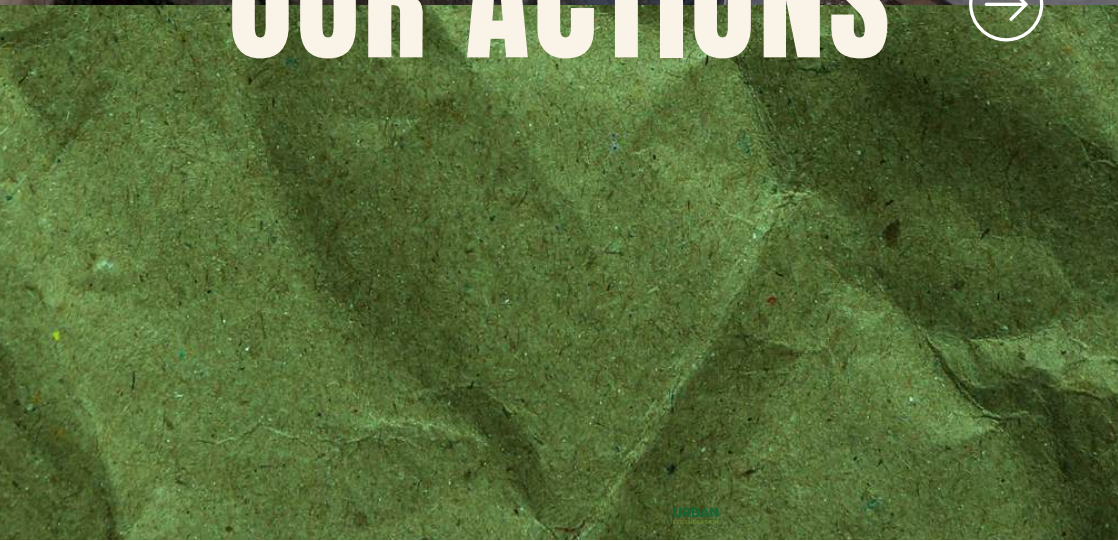
The programme followed a non-formal education approach, combining experiential learning, reflection, teamwork and action planning. The detailed agenda and session descriptions can be found in this document (click link): [Training on Urban Regeneration: Agenda & Sessions](#)

The document includes objectives, step-by-step instructions, materials and suggested debriefing questions for each session, following the structured format commonly used in youth work toolboxes.





OUR ACTIONS





We managed to restore two abandoned spaces within the historic center, which were previously unusable due to steep level changes and the risk of falling, by introducing context-sensitive urban furniture elements that help make the squares safe and usable. At the same time, we brought these spaces back to life by hosting small events and collective building workshops.

Before



The Process of Urban Regeneration



After





North Macedonia

The regenerated space in North Macedonia was an abandoned neighborhood park in the city of Kumanovo. The regeneration process focused on context-based sustainability, prioritising local materials and practical, low-impact solutions. It improved the park's functionality while promoting responsible, community driven urban development.

Before



The Process of Urban Regeneration



After





Spain

Three urban regeneration actions were carried out in Ciudad Real, focused on promoting sustainable practices and community participation. The main one was building raised garden beds in the municipal urban garden, by using reused wooden pallets and organic waste to improve soil quality and reduce water consumption, while two additional mini urban garden beds were created in the municipal Youth Centre of Ciudad Real and the Popular University of Ciudad Real, spaces dedicated to social, educational and cultural activities for children, youth and adults.

Before



The Process of Urban Regeneration



After



URBAN REGENERATION



this is us

regenerate

check out
our
website



urbanregeneration.paolab.eu

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