

UIA innovative approaches to tackle urban poverty

Specificities and common elements of the **six UIA projects** of the 1st Call for Proposals

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Who doesn't face these problems in his city: run-down, stigmatised neighbourhoods in which poor and marginalised groups are concentrated, creating a vicious cycle of poverty, social, economic, educational and spatial exclusion... Previous approaches have not been able to make a significant contribution to opening up new, lasting positive future perspectives for the residents. The reasons for this are manifold and some cities have resigned. However, there are cities that do not want to accept this situation and want to actively and effectively confront urban poverty and social exclusion in their town. And not only because poverty and corresponding inequality may limit the economic development of the city and generate additional costs, but also because it is about the well-being and social participation of these people.

The Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) Initiative wants to support such cities in trying out new, innovative solutions, combining people and place-based approaches to reduce urban poverty and social exclusion. Six cities (Barcelona, Birmingham, Lille, Nantes, Pozzuoli, Turin) so far have been able to convince the UIA of their innovative solutions and receive financial support between 2017-2020 to test their solutions in the framework of the first UIA Call for Proposals.

The approaches of the cities differ, but at the same time have similar elements as presented in this article.

This article has been written following a joint workshop organised in October 2018 by the UIA Permanent Secretariat gathering, in the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities, the six projects of the first UIA Call for Proposals working on the topic of Urban Poverty. The objectives was to present the main achievements so far but also to share the first lessons learnt from the testing phase.

The focus on the projects working on Urban Poverty is justified also by the fact that the topic has been selected by the European Commission for the fourth UIA Call for Proposals that will be closed on the 31st of January 2019.¹ The UIA Initiative looks forward to further new, innovative solutions dealing with urban poverty and social exclusion that want to test further and complement approaches to the existing UIA projects. We hope that this article will help future applicants in understanding the main features of projects already approved under this topic and to be a source of inspiration for new ideas and approaches.

¹ For detailed information on the 4th UIA Call for Proposals please check the following link : <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/call-proposals>

Public-private-community partnerships

The six cities have in common that they want to pave new ways for their city dealing with urban poverty and social exclusion. Ways, which they do not want and cannot go just on their own, but with equal partners from the urban society.

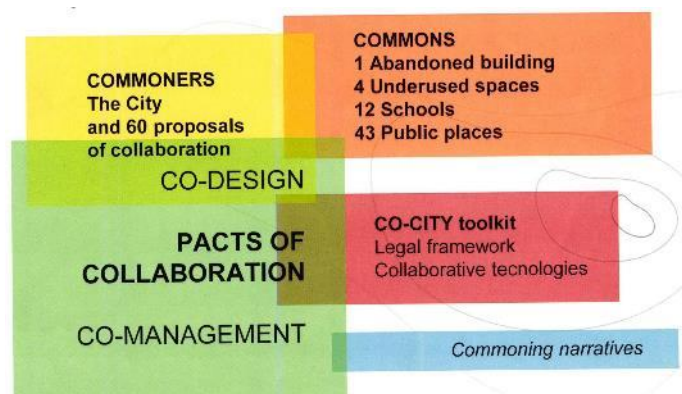
Their approaches are characterised by the fact that the target groups, the beneficiaries, are already part of the design of the project as well as in its implementation. For instance in the [TAST'inFIVES](#) project (Lille) the local residents are involved in the design and running of the community kitchen, which is supposed to support new economic and social activities for the neighbourhood. Several paths are tested before they are finalised and built. For example in the [B-MINCOME](#) project (Barcelona), different types of a guaranteed minimum income are tested and evaluated with 1.000 households, in order to see which types are the most valuable ones, before the guaranteed minimum income might be mainstreamed.

Partners from the private and third sector and residents (initiatives) are also involved in the delivery of the new approaches. [USE-IT!](#) (Birmingham) is a great example of it. About 20 partners from the public, private and third sector are involved in the delivery of the project. The municipality focuses more on a facilitator role.

Without their support, the new and innovative solutions could not be implemented. The new approaches are therefore particularly concerned with the establishment and consolidation of new public-private community partnerships, which make it possible to build new paths to deal with urban poverty effectively and sustainable in a cooperative approach.

These new partnerships make it possible to bring together the necessary resources for the new approaches: personal commitment, enthusiasm, trust, time, contacts, know-how and, of course, financial resources.

In Turin ([Co-City](#)) for example, the urban authority is building up partnerships with residents and local associations that want to become urban change makers for a collaborative management of urban “Commons” to counteract poverty and socio-spatial polarisation. These partnerships are called “Pacts of collaboration”. Christian Iaione, expert of the Co-City project, describes them as follows: “The pact of collaboration is the legal tool through which the forms of cooperation between city inhabitants and the City administration address urban poverty through an urban commons-based approach i.e. stimulating collective use, management, ownership of urban assets,



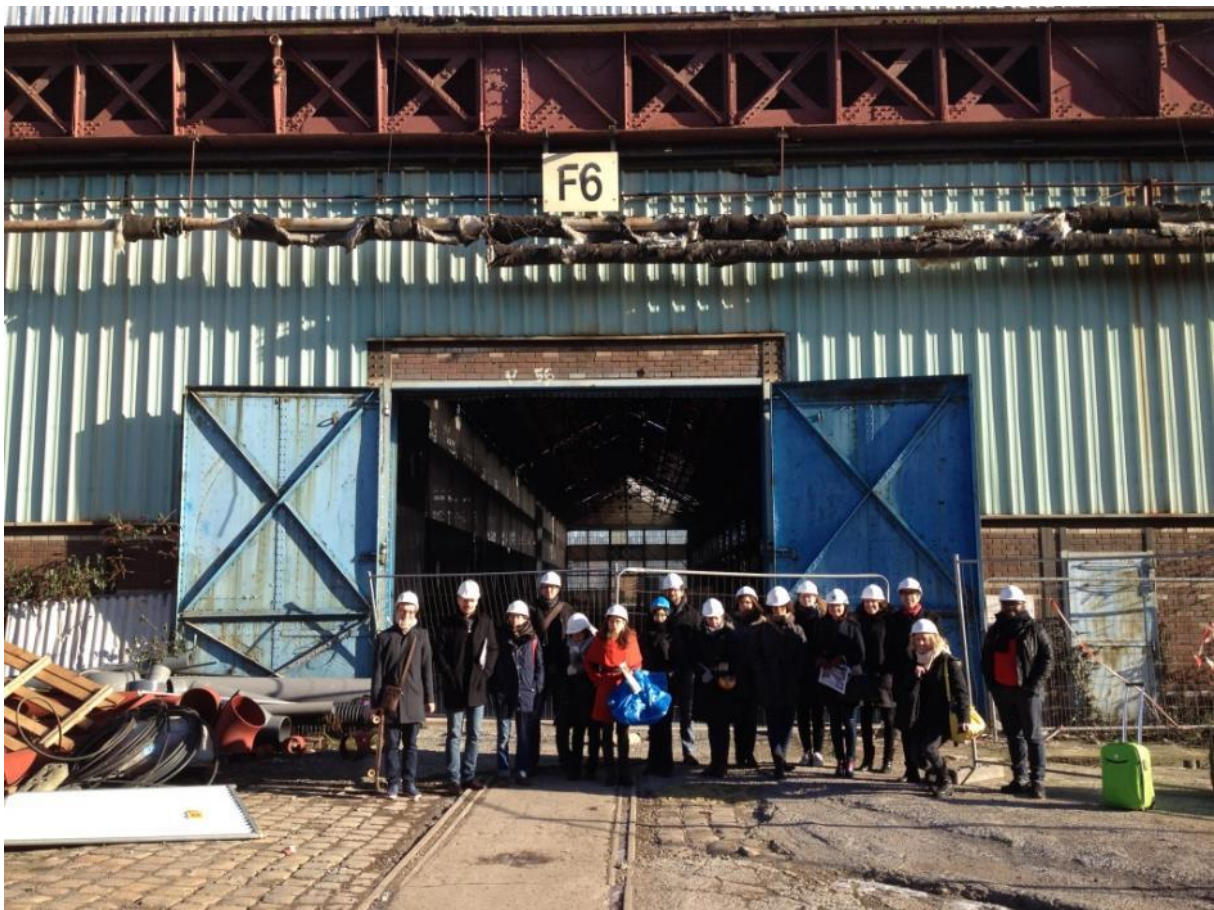
services, the way infrastructure is implemented”. The city of Turin is currently in the co-design phase of the pacts of collaboration. Together with a group of selected city inhabitants, they fine tune the “pacts of collaboration”-proposals with the Co-City project policy goals as well as other policy goals of the city. Part of that is a feasibility evaluation of the proposals. For further information about the “pacts of collaboration” take a look at the [1st zoom-in](#) of the Co-City project.

In Nantes ([5Bridges](#)), where the project is working with homeless people, civil servants and social workers questioned homeless people on their diagnosis of the present system and on their ideas of a new, more pertinent approach to improve the personal situation of homeless people. The results

provide the 5Bridges project, a one-stop-shop social centre in a multi-purpose solidarity place. Now, before the actual construction of the buildings for the one-stop-shop site is finalized, homeless people are participating in small-scale on-site laboratories allowing them to co-design, test, and improve the different services. They also connect the local inhabitants to prepare the community for the arrival of homeless people and change the public attitude about homelessness.

But managing such partnerships effectively, in particular when many partners from different spheres are involved, must be learned and needs time and experience. Here the participating cities are looking for the best way of coordinating such partnerships and involving the communities in the co-design and joint implementation of such projects.

Reuse of abandoned and underused spaces for community engagement, job and business opportunities

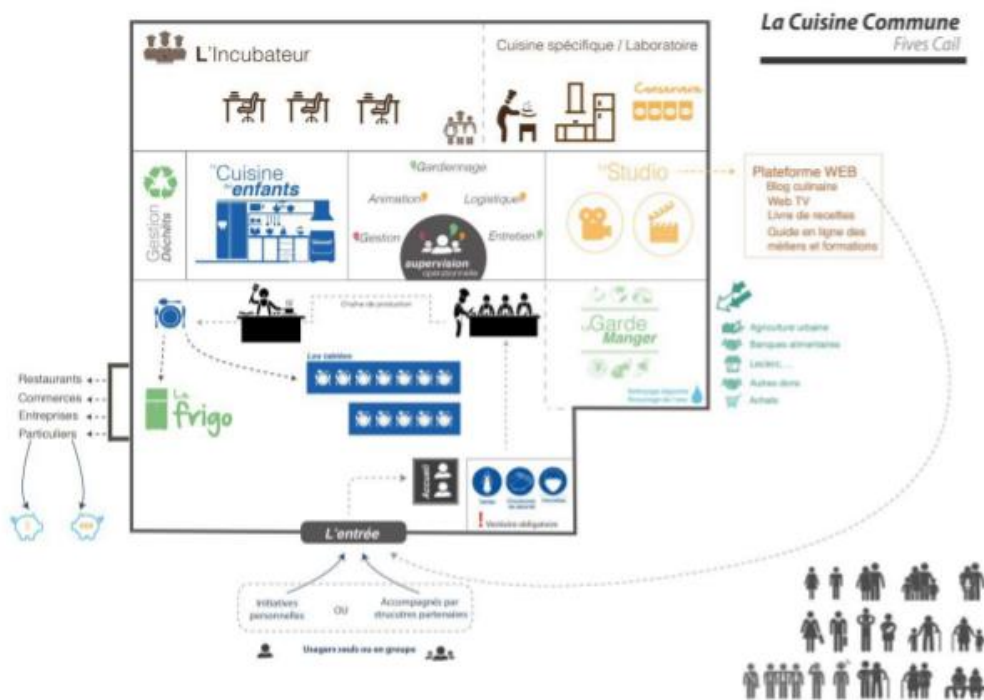


For 3 projects a central element of their innovative idea to deal with urban poverty is the attempt to re-activate abandoned and underused spaces that have lost their original function and value by imagining new uses in support of poverty alleviation.





In Lille ([TAST'in FIVES](#)), as part of a larger urban brownfield regeneration project, in one of the most deprived neighbourhoods of Lille, they renovate a 2.000 m building to host an innovative combination of activities in the fields of urban agriculture, food production, food processing and catering. Core will be a central food hall with a community kitchen where all the activities will take

place. Local residents are strongly involved in the design and running of the community kitchen, which will support new economic and social activities as well as training and job opportunities for the people of the neighbourhood. Unlike usual public infrastructure, this community kitchen will be collectively governed and aims at becoming financially autonomous through an innovative business model building on the private activities generated by the food hall.

TAST'in FIVES integrates also a technological dimension by developing an experimental module for vertical urban farming and "contact-free" technologies to design smart stock management systems. It will help to reduce food waste and facilitate the distribution of meals in collaboration with social NGOs.



In Pozzuoli (MAC) they do not reuse vacant buildings for urban agriculture, but they transform 30 ha of municipal, abandoned open areas in and around a low-income neighbourhood at the rim of the city into farmland. With the farmland to be used for permaculture, they want to trigger a process of economic, entrepreneurial, and social development, together with the improvement of the urban environment of the neighbourhood. The activities around the urban agriculture aim at initiating business start-ups and cooperatives from the neighbourhood and to create new jobs for the local residents. The food will be locally produced for the restaurants in the region to support a “0 km” ecologic agro-business and the local development. At the same time, parts of the municipal open areas will be used as gardens to improve the living environment and biodiversity of the neighbourhood.

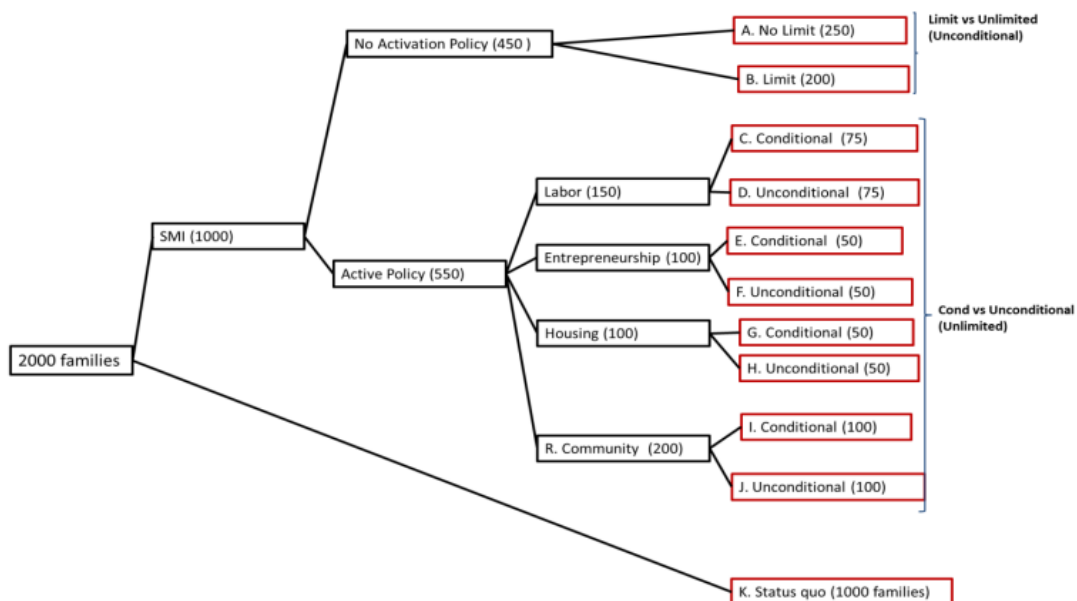
<p>AGRICULTURE</p>  <p>THROUGH THE TRANSFORMATION OF 30 HECTARES OF MUNICIPAL GREEN AREAS, ABANDONED AND IN CONDITIONS OF PROGRESSIVE DECAY, THE PROJECT INTENDS TO USE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY AS A DRIVING FORCE TO PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT, URBAN RENEWAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.</p>	<p>PROFESSIONAL TRAINING</p>  <p>THREE TRAINING COURSES, VALUABLE FOUNDATIONS TO CHALLENGE UNEMPLOYMENT AND PROMOTE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE AREA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INNOVATION BUSINESS AND START-UP • PERMACULTURE • ETHICAL PRODUCTION AND RURAL MARKETING
<p>URBAN RENEWAL</p>  <p>THANKS TO THE RENEWAL OF DISUSED SPACES AND THE CREATION OF MEETING-PLACES FOR CITIZENSHIP, MAC AIMS TO INTEGRATE RURAL AND URBAN SPACES TO RESHAPE THE MONTERUSCIELLO'S LANDSCAPE IN A REAL "AGRO-CITY".</p>	<p>ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT</p>  <p>MAC AIMS TO REPRESENT A DRIVING FORCE FOR THE BIRTH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES ON THE AREA, INCLUDING: SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION OF 3 START-UPS AND A FARM-TO-TABLE MARKET.</p>

In Nantes ([5Bridges](#)) the one-stop-shop, co-designed with homeless people in order to provide coherence in all the services they need to overcome their homeless situation, will be located at a brownfield site on the “Isle de Nantes” where major public (the new city hospital) and private investments (major real estate development) are currently ongoing.

Customised welfare services and one-stop-shops

The attempt to re-design traditional welfare policies supporting individuals in their paths out of poverty and social exclusion is a common trait of the UIA projects described here. In several cases this is done by customizing and personalizing welfare policies and services in order to define the right mix and intensity for each individual.

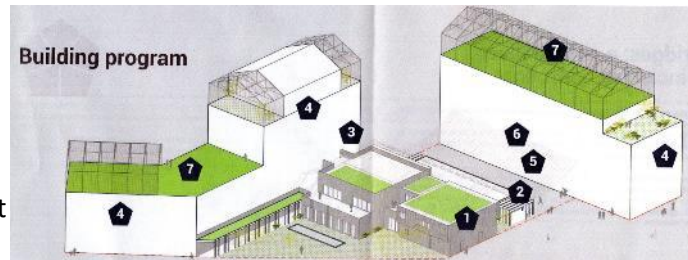
The most evident example of such customization can be seen in Barcelona ([B-MINCOME](#)). The project is testing a combination of “solidary based-services” (training and employment, social entrepreneurship, housing rent aid, community participation) for low income households with the provision of a guaranteed minimum income for 1.000 test households in the neighbourhood of Aix Besos. In the project this economic support takes the name of SMI (Catalan acronym for Municipal Inclusion Support). The project is testing different types of SMI on a trial-basis to evaluate their effects and effectiveness. This to figure out the most valuable types of SMI and services for a more efficient welfare system for low-income households in Barcelona. A particular approach is that part of the SMI is paid out in the form of a social currency as an affirmative action to benefit local economic activities. It will be a way to experiment a social currency as a tool to improve local economic development in deprived neighbourhoods and as a first step to introduce the social currency at city level. Another special feature is the ethnographic approach, which consists of an in-depth ethnographic research with 40 households receiving the SMI to understand their everyday experience of and engagement with economic change, and ethnographic fieldwork with more than 200 households to understand the wider community context, dynamics and community perceptions of the SMI.



² The figures in the graph refer to the situation at the beginning of the project. Some (especially for the sub-groups) have been modified throughout the implementation phase. Accurate figures are indicated in the Expert’s Project Journal.

In the case of Nantes ([5Bridges](#)), the customization and personalization of social services for homeless people is strongly rooted within a new physical space, a one-stop-shop aiming at concentrating all the different support activities and with the ambition to go beyond the pure “emergency support”.

The idea behind the services is as Frederik Spinnewijn, expert for the 5Bridges project, puts it: “To move homeless people quicker through the homeless system to permanent housing solutions by establishing a one-stop-shop where homeless people can get all services they need and will be fully integrated in the local neighbourhood”.



At the project site they will build a “one-stop-shop” that provides a day and night shelter, 40 studio flats for temporary housing for homeless and a restaurant open to homeless and the neighbourhood. In addition to the “one-stop-shop” at the site there will be 67 low rent affordable apartments, a second hand clothing store, an urban farm, providing vegetables for the restaurant, and a co-working platform. These functions will be used to offer homeless people the opportunity to get training and acquire job skills and to access temporary and permanent housing.



Linking larger capital investment projects with local community skills, talents and ideas

Birmingham ([USE-IT!](#)) wants to use larger urban development projects in deprived, migrant neighbourhoods to improve the socio-economic situation of the deprived residents. They strive to increase the employment prospects of the residents and migrants, to generate jobs and stimulate the local economy. For this they link the construction of a new hospital and the new housing development projects in the neighbourhood with the creation of new job and business opportunities for the local residents.



They identify local skills through community researchers, they match job skills in the community with the job demand through the larger investment projects and support the creation of a community of social enterprises and social production connected to the larger investment projects. For this, Birmingham works in a large partnership of more than 15 partners from the private, public, and third sector to test and implement the new mechanism.



Conclusive remarks

All the projects have in common that they are facing the challenge of installing sustainable governance and management structures and financing for the long-term continuation of the projects. Developing lasting structures and financial mechanism will be crucial for the long-term success of the projects.

The six projects are now in the last year of their testing phase. The implementation of the projects locally is widely recognised as a valuable learning process for all the local actors involved. UIA is convinced that this extremely rich wealth of knowledge generated by the six projects is of great interest for other urban policy-makers and stakeholders in Europe and beyond. This is why the UIA Experts working with these projects are producing on a regular basis Project Journals accounting the main progress on the ground but also capturing and sharing the main lessons learnt.

All readers of this article are invited to check regularly the projects' webpages and read the Journals already available.

Annex

Project descriptions

The 5Bridges project

ERDF Budget: € 4,953,297.32

The **5Bridges** project looks at breaking the circle of social and spatial polarisation, targeting the city's homeless and socially excluded population. The project will tackle the interrelated causal factors of urban poverty by creating a one-stop-shop in a new neighbourhood providing comprehensive and tailored services interconnecting different social groups. Designed as a multifunctional area, the one-stop-shop will propose and test new jobs, provide housing and health-related services based on a participatory approach to foster social integration and empowerment (including a neighbourhood restaurant, urban farm, solidarity shop, temporary and social housing and low-threshold-care). Prior to the completion of the building, small-scale labs will be set up allowing the homeless population to test and co-design the activities and user involvement approaches. It will permit this group to participate and connect to the neighbourhood, therefore changing the perception of socially excluded groups. Together with the partnership, social NGOs, public services for employment, housing, health and police, as well as neighbourhood associations will be involved in the project implementation.

Partnership:

- *City of Nantes*
- *Nantes Metropole - Organised Agglomeration*
- *Association Les Eaux Vives - NGO*
- *Société Anonyme des Marches de l'Ouest - Public/Private Company*
- *Société d'Aménagement de la métropole ouest atlantique (SAMOA) - Public/Private Company*
- *Association Emmaus 44 - NGO*

The B-MINCOME project

ERDF Budget: €4,854,088.56

The **B-MINCOME** project will tackle poverty and social inequality concentrated in nine neighbourhoods in the north-eastern part of the city. The area has a disengaged population with low income, high unemployment and early school leaving rates. Through the deployment of participation and empowerment activities and the design of randomised controlled trials, the project will test the impact of different typologies of Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI). Ethnographic research will help to understand motivations, values, and narratives of the target groups but also to gain insight on how they experience the change of receiving GMI, and its subsequent impact. The findings will be used to prototype different models of GMI (including a system for a local digital currency) and to define and implement modular services (health, education, employment) along with empowerment initiatives for the different categories of recipients. Beyond the formal partnership, the project brings together a large group of stakeholders including municipal institutes for education and social services, the metropolitan and regional governments as well as the Chamber of Commerce.

Partnership:

- *City of Barcelona*
- *The Young Foundation - think tank*
- *IVALUA. Catalan Institute of Public Policy Evaluation - Research centre*
- *Autonomous University of Barcelona. IGOP. Institute of Governance and Public Policies - University*
- *UPC. Polytechnic University of Catalonia - University*
- *NOVA. Center for Social Innovation - NGO*

The CO-City project

ERDF Budget: € 4,125,892.00

The **CO-CITY** project seeks to break the self-reinforcing circle of poverty, socio-spatial polarisation and lack of participation in its most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. To tackle this challenge it will develop a 'commons-based urban welfare' centred on urban commons (municipal buildings or spaces). A group of citizens (third sector or informal groups) will be given the opportunity to look after their district by identifying disused municipal assets (buildings or spaces), signing a 'pact of collaboration' with the city and designing a communing programme. They will be responsible for taking over their management to co-produce services, develop a collaborative economy as well as fulfil a neighbourhood regeneration role. Citizens will not be seen as dependent but as potential change makers. Beyond its partnership, the project will work with different stakeholders such NGOs and charities already active in the neighbourhoods as well as the metropolitan government.

Partnership:

- *City of Turin*
- *National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI)*
- *Cascina Roccafranca Foundation - NGO*
- *University of Turin - higher education and research institute*

The MAC Project

ERDF Budget: €3,999,996.68

The **MAC** project seeks to reduce poverty in the Monteruscello neighbourhood, a large public housing district with 20,000 residents with low-income, a high level of unemployment, and characterised by large abandoned spaces. Thirty hectares of the neighbourhood's public green areas will be used in order to spearhead an economic process and development with urban agriculture as a means to combat poverty. The project will have three pillars: implementation of agriculture through innovative permaculture in the housing estate, improvement of the urban environment and encouragement of entrepreneurship and employment. Beyond the formal partnership, the main stakeholders involved will be local food companies benefiting from the agricultural production, the Hotel Management School, the local sports associations as well as the Archaeological Heritage association.

Partnership:

- *City of Pozzuoli*
- *Confagricoltura Napoli – national association*
- *Agrocultura - business support organisations*
- *University of Salerno - higher education and research institute*
- *L'iniziativa - Associazione di promozione sociale - NGO*
- *Fondazione FORMIT - Research Center*

The TAST'IN FIVES project

ERDF Budget: € 4,998,842.31

The **TAST'in FIVES** project wants to reverse negative trends of urban poverty in the deprived neighbourhood of Fives. As part of a larger urban brownfield regeneration development, the project aims at (re)introducing productive activities centred on food. At the heart of the brownfield, a building of 2050 m² will be renovated to host an innovative combination of activities in the fields of urban agriculture, production, culinary transformation and catering. Local residents will be strongly involved in the design and running of a "community kitchen". This will support new economic and social activities as well as training and jobs opportunities for the area. TAST'in FIVES will integrate a technological dimension by developing an experimental module for vertical agriculture and "contact-free" technologies. It will notably help fight against food waste and facilitate the distribution of meals in collaboration with social NGOs. Beyond its partnership, the project will work with different stakeholders including restaurants, caterers, charities as well as social NGOs already active in the neighbourhood.

Partnership:

- *City of Lille*
- *European Metropole of Lille*
- *SORELI - public-private company*
- *Les sens du Goût - NGO*
- *Secours Populaire - NGO*
- *Sauvegarde du Nord - NGO*
- *Rencontres Audiovisuelles*
- *Maison de l'Emploi de Lille, Lomme and Hellemmes - employment agency*
- *ISA - higher education institutes and research institute*
- *CNRS - higher education institutes and research institute*
- *CITC-EuraRFID - higher education institutes and research institute*

The USE-IT! Project

ERDF Budget: € 2,911,893.88

The **USE-IT!** project seeks to identify and connect social and economic assets existing in poor and migrant communities to major capital and infrastructure investments, in order to reduce displacement and maximise the economic and social benefits of urban development for marginalised residents. The model proposed will rely on Community Researchers, recruited among the local community and trained in research methods to identify local assets. Mechanisms will be tested in order to unlock the potential of poor communities and facilitate the creation of a matching skills service to enhance employment and encourage the spin-out of social enterprises that are socially innovative and resilient. The project will provide peer-to-peer support for communities, and act as change and innovation drivers to bring out bold and sustainable solutions. Attention will be given to the identification of innovative forms of community finance that could be used in the area to ensure sustainability and support replication.

Partnership:

- *City of Birmingham*
- *Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce*
- *Karis Neighbour Scheme - NGO*
- *Birmingham Voluntary Services Council*
- *Localise West Midlands - NGO*
- *Smethwick Church Action Network - NGO*
- *Co-operative Futures - NGO*
- *Canal and River Trust - NGO*
- *Father Hudson's Care - NGO*
- *Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs - private sector companies*
- *Health Exchange CIC - private sector companies*
- *Citizen Coaching CIC - SME*
- *Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust - infrastructure and service provider*
- *University of Birmingham - higher education and research institute*
- *Birmingham City University - higher education and research institute*



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