# D6.3 Historic Urban Areas Leadership Guide

## February 2025

# Innovation Meets Cultural Heritage in Cities

## A Leadership Guide to kickstart transformation of Europe's Historic Urban Areas through Hubs of Innovation

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# Innovation Meets Cultural Heritage in Cities

## A Leadership Guide to kickstart transformation of Europe's Historic Urban Areas through Hubs of Innovation

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# Preface

Europe's overall identity is largely shaped by its Historic Urban Areas—the capital cities, regional centres and market towns where Europe's unique diversity and cultural heritage is experienced by citizens, workers and visitors alike. Over recent times, however, challenges such as climate change, globalisation, the Covid 19 pandemic, war in Ukraine and flat lining economic growth have led to urban and social decline, community disengagement and economic difficulties in many of these historic places crucial to Europe's prosperity and world identity.

This 'Leadership Guide' demonstrates how introducing **Hubs of Innovation** into historic urban areas can help kickstart long term heritage-led regeneration aimed at addressing many of these challenges. It brings together the key conclusions and impacts of **HUB-IN**- a Horizon 2020 funded EU project-with evidence evaluated over 4 years of testing and establishing solutions, along with recommendations to Europe's leaders-Mayors, politicians, CEOs, directors, creatives, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and European and international institutions-on how to take this work forward.

To facilitate realising the longer-term benefits and potential impacts of Hubs of Innovation, the HUB-IN consortium of partners has laid the foundations for a HUB-IN Cities Network - an ambitious consortium of European cities, international organisations, networks and universities. Our mission is to further boost the regeneration and transformation of Historic Urban Areas across Europe and beyond through innovation and entrepreneurship, whilst restoring and preserving their unique cultural and social identity and the environment.

The HUB-IN Cities Network is a unique initiative arising from the HUB-IN project that aims to establish a sustainable and inclusive knowledge-sharing, action-oriented network across Europe, focused on the heritage-led regeneration of historic urban areas through innovation and entrepreneurship, and fully aligned with European policy and the New European Bauhaus' commitment to 'beautiful, sustainable and inclusive' placemaking. It was launched at HUB-IN's Final Conference **'Innovation Meets Cultural Heritage in Cities'** in Lisbon in November 2024.

If your city or town is rich in cultural heritage and you share our passion to kickstart its regeneration through Hubs of Innovation, then find out more about the HUB-IN project and our future plans in this guide. We invite you to join us in the start of a new journey to build on the knowledge developed so far and drive the social, economic and environmental transformation of your historic urban area.

On behalf of

## HUB-IN Cities Network
*Creating Hubs of Innovation in Historic Urban Areas*

# About HUB-IN

**Mission**

Hubs of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HUB-IN) aim to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in Historic Urban Areas (HUAs), while preserving their unique social and cultural identity and the environment. The project adopts innovation and entrepreneurship as the main drivers of urban regeneration in HUAs and directly draws from the UNESCO concept of Historic Urban Landscapes. HUB-IN fully aligns with and contributes to strategic European policy including the international agendas for Cultural Sustainable Development (UNESCO) and Cultural Heritage Strategy (Council of Europe).

In the first stage of HUB-IN, a network of hubs for innovation and entrepreneurship will be developed in the HUAs of eight city partners (Lisbon, Slovenska Bistrica, Braşov, Nicosia, Genova, Grand Angoulême, Belfast, and Utrecht). In the second stage, the resulting methods and tools will be scaled up to a global network of HUAs in follower cities and the HUB-IN Cities Network. The Hubs of Innovation and Entrepreneurship will test, demonstrate, and pilot activities through co-creation and co-design in three main clusters with the potential to deliver the sustainable transformation of HUAs: 1) Culture and Creative industries, 2) New Lifestyles and 3) Resilient and Human Connected Places.

**Vision**

HUB-IN expects to contribute to reverse trends of abandonment and neglect of historic heritage in a systematic way through the creation of networks of Hubs where innovation will be the main driver. The project will also have a direct impact on the creation of new sustainable opportunities for local traditional businesses and for the development of new creative skills and jobs.

## Consortium Behind HUB-IN

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# 1. Introduction

The HUB-IN project is a research and innovation initiative-funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 programme—that aims to create a sustainable and inclusive knowledge-sharing network across Europe, focused on the heritage-led regeneration of historic urban areas through innovation and entrepreneurship. The scope and ambition of the project's Mission is set out in the **'HUB-IN Framework'**- a strategic document that explains the project's key principles and approaches how Hubs of Innovation align with European Policy.

The HUB-IN project ran from Sep 2020 to February 2025. Its outputs cover a wide range of new innovative tools and methods for delivering transformational change within historic urban areas—all road tested by 8 pilot cities and validated by 20 follower cities. This catalogue of knowledge, experiences and evidence-based results is now available as part of—a web portal and online learning resource designed to facilitate knowledge transfer around heritage-led regeneration and enhance both personal skills and organisational capacities beyond the life of the project.

The term **Historic Urban Areas,** as used in HUB-IN, draws directly from the UNESCO concept of **Historic Urban Landscapes**—defined by UNESCO as the urban area resulting from the historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of "historic centre" or "ensemble" to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting. In this way Historic Urban Areas relate to both the tangible and intangible factors that both set the context and shape the historic area's character, identity and values. Within HUB-IN, we consider three subcategories of historic urban area (HUA):
1. Historic areas which are, in whole or in part, town or city centres.
2. Historic areas which are outside of the town or city centre. These will typically be part of medium and larger towns and cities.
3. Historic areas that focus on the wider urban values that define the identity and character of the town or city.

## 1.1.　　HUB-IN Guidance

This **Leadership Guide** is one of three HUB-IN guides—all of which respond to the initial research question, set out in the diagram below, and draw from the monitoring of the project's lessons learned, results and conclusions, each focusing on different target audiences. The Leadership Guide is a high-level overview of the project's key findings and main conclusions, with key recommendations for European leaders at the local, national and international level. In this way it is a 'signpost' to how Hubs of Innovation can help transform historic urban areas alongside the more detailed **City Guidebook** and **City Story-Telling** insights into the pilot cities' regeneration actions and experiences.
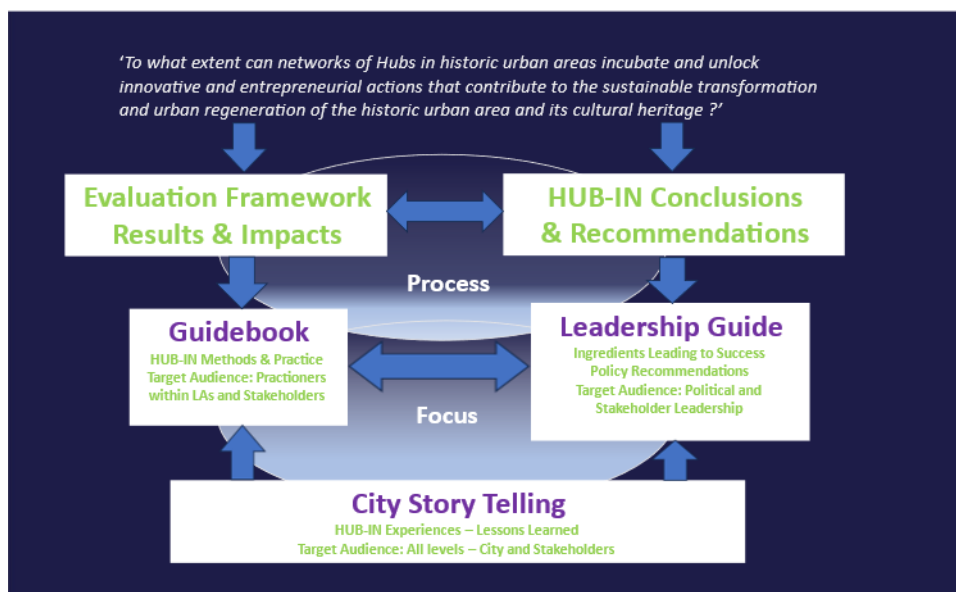
The Leadership Guide is also an **invitation to join us** to take this work forward, both in terms of actions on the ground and policy development, as part of a new **HUB-IN** Cities Network, conceived to maximise the impact that Hubs of Innovation can bring to historic urban areas across Europe and beyond.

## 1.2.   'State-of-the-Art' in Heritage Led Regeneration

Our starting point in September 2020 was firstly to understand the current 'State-of-the-Art' in innovative heritage-led regeneration in European Historic Urban areas by identifying, collating and analysing circa 100 good examples of heritage-led regeneration from across Europe. These real-world examples of successful regeneration formed the basis of an innovative new open-source **Atlas** and a **Business and Financing Models Guide** as practical sources of inspiration and learning.

We can see from the HUB-IN Atlas of heritage-led regeneration good practice that there are examples of historic urban areas successfully attracting new investment and jobs linked to the 'knowledge' economy, the 'creative' industries and more recently the 'makers' economy. Given these growth sectors are mostly no longer tied to particular locations, it makes sense that the ambience and beauty of heritage buildings gives historic urban areas a competitive advantage in securing sustainable economic growth within this sector.
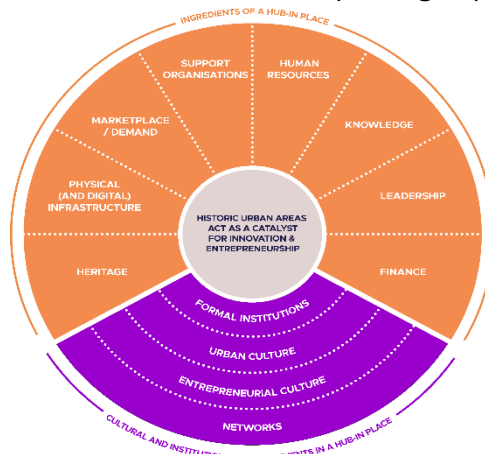
The challenge that HUB-IN addresses is how to stimulate the innovation and associated entrepreneurship needed to maximise that potential as a catalyst for the wider transformation of historic areas across Europe. To do this, 40 case studies were selected to analyse, in depth, the common 'ingredients' that lead to successful urban heritage-led regeneration that is inclusive and sustainable. We call this the Heritage-Led Entrepreneurial Eco-System Framework.

## 1.3.   Heritage-Led Entrepreneurial Eco-System Framework

The ecosystem of a historic urban area is a complex web of stakeholders, resources and collaboration that forms, interacts and evolves over prolonged periods of time, with individual stakeholders and distinct contribution to sense of place, belonging initiatives all making their the overall uniqueness, and identity.

Through the analysis of Atlas, combined with research in the field of entrepreneurship, we ingredients that historic urban areas to sustain creative We found that:

good practice cases in the leading academic innovation and identified the range of influence the capacity of attract, develop and enterprise and innovation.

- the way in which the elements of an entrepreneurial ecosystem are utilised and combined is strongly influenced by the type of stakeholder taking the leadership role within an initiative

- there are three main types of leadership identified—public, entrepreneurial and community—with combinations of these the most common route to successful initiatives
- physical infrastructure including heritage, stakeholder networks and finance, along with leadership, are the key elements from the wider range of 'ingredients' identified which offer the most potential to strengthen local ecosystems

The research concludes that tangible and intangible heritage do serve as entrepreneurial assets that historic urban areas can draw on, and that strong local eco-systems can build the momentum needed to ignite heritage-led regeneration.



# 2. How to create HUBs of Innovation in Historic Urban Areas

The Heritage-led Ecosystem Framework insights, drawn in part from the Atlas of good practice, form the backdrop to road testing the potential of Hubs of Innovation as an effective means of delivering transformational change in historic urban areas. Here, we briefly set out the HUB-IN process developed and implemented in the 8 pilot cities of Belfast, Braşov, Genova, Grand Angoulême, Lisbon, Nicosia, Slovenska Bistrica and Utrecht and show how you can establish HUBs of Innovation in your historic urban area.

While Hubs of Innovation can be seen to have potential to effect positive change, it is ultimately actions that deliver results and impacts that together can realise the beneficial outcomes sought. However, the most effective actions are not developed in isolation but are part of a broader vision for the historic urban area, which itself is grounded in an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, the challenges and opportunities of the place.

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It follows that creating Hubs of Innovation is a 'process' best developed in stages where the 'sum is greater than the parts' and therefore better able to support sustainable transformative place making that builds momentum and triggers long term regeneration.

The four interrelated stages of the HUB-IN process are illustrated in the diagram and supported by a **Toolkit** of relevant tools and methods all available on the HUB-IN web portal and Academy on-line platform.

The stages are:

1. **Understand the State of Play** in the historic urban area together with stakeholder-mapping, the strengths and weaknesses of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, along with the area's main challenges and opportunities using the HUB-IN Geo Tool

2. **Prepare to set up the Hub of Innovation**- either virtual or within a physical building – co-creating an overarching **Vision** with key stakeholders (as pictured below at a roadmap co-creation workshop in Lisbon) and setting out a series of missions to guide future change within a **Strategic Road Map**

3. **Set up the HUB** – co-creating and implementing an **Action Plan** with a range of complementary actions including:
   - The scope and governance structure of the HUB, drawing inspiration and practical support from the Business and Finance model guide
   - Actions designed to accelerate heritage linked innovative and entrepreneurial initiatives and start-ups using the HUB-IN 'Match and Ignite' tool

4. **Test and Grow** – capturing and understanding the results of the actions implemented is key to all stages of the process, as data has to be collected throughout the regeneration journey. Providing evidence of the beneficial impacts plays a crucial part in growing the Hub with further actions, widening its scope and support—thereby helping secure its future viability and sustainability. For further guidance on this see the **HUB-IN Common Impact Assessment Framework.**
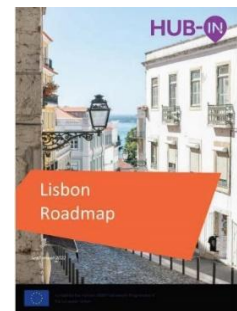
See also the **City Guidebook** on the HUB-IN web site for further 'on the ground' insights from pilot cities to provide inspiration and guidance for cities looking to replicate the HUB-IN Process. The Guidebook is organised thematically along themes emerging within the eight pilot cities' hubs, including:

   - Creating the Ecosystem Infrastructure

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- Acceleration Programmes and Challenge Calls
- Placemaking
- Data collection and mapping
- Co-creation and Community Engagement
- Policy and Regulation
- Art and Creativity
- Sustainability



# 3. 10 Key Findings

The HUB-IN pilot cities' implementation of their actions has been monitored throughout using the Common Impact Assessment Framework, tailored to meet the needs of each city. This has enabled the overall impacts of the project to be evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively in the terms of their economic, social, cultural and environmental results[1]. This evaluation, taken with the project's research outlined earlier in this guide, leads us to the following 10 key findings that can be achieved through the creation of Hubs of Innovation in historic urban areas:

## 3.1 Economic Results

1. **Hubs of Innovation strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems, leading to a thriving creative sector with heritage as the catalyst for economic growth**

   Establishing networks among entrepreneurs, innovators and local businesses resulted in denser, better connected and more active innovation ecosystems that lay the foundations for economic activity and longer-term growth. The role of the entrepreneurs innovating heritage-

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[1] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned

based products and services is an important part of HUB-IN's vision of enabling a thriving creative sector with heritage as a driver.

**Across the eight pilots, 78 products or services were developed in the Accelerators and Open Calls. 100 entrepreneurs and innovators led the creation of those products and services** with a mix of heritage blended with technology, Art and Design along with traditional crafts.

### Utrecht[2]

> 401 artists engaged in the artistic and entrepreneurial training sessions provided through Utrecht's Acceleration Programme, split across three artistic hubs. 167 artistic goods and services were enhanced with heritage due to participation in training sessions, and Hubs (Hof and Nijverheid) reported €27,965 for revenues, and €7,445 in grants awarded (all excluding VAT) due to participating in the Action's support and showcasing events.

### Lisbon[3]

> Lisbon's 'De-Incubator' Acceleration Programme supported 21 Innovators and Entrepreneurs across 9 final projects. These included 'Unspecial Tours,' a service to create conditions so that blind, special needs and mobility-impaired people can visit and experience tourist destinations and cultural heritage to the full, and 'aRoundtheNeighborhood,' a digital platform for exploring routes based on the intangible cultural heritage in Colina do Castelo.
> 89% of innovators in the De-incubator plan to use cultural heritage in future projects or

## 2. Hubs of Innovation's 'Accelerator Programmes' deliver effective skills development and new 'start ups' through capacity building for the creative and cultural sectors

By implementing an Accelerator programme, each pilot city paired funding for creatives with a capacity-building programme that focused on building entrepreneurial skills. This enhanced the skills of local citizens and stakeholders and helped the sustainable creation of jobs in the pilot cities.

### Genoa[4]

> For example, in Genoa, the "Fair-to-Share" project, which aimed to create a temporary shop in the HUA for artisans and small businesses, decided to formalise into a start-up. Implementing the project through HUB-IN allowed them to test their business model and, due to its success, they are now planning to hire additional staff.

## 3. Hubs of Innovation contribute to sustainable tourism by balancing heritage preservation and use of new technologies

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[2] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Utrecht
[3] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Lisbon
[4] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned

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Balancing heritage with innovative prototypes, new technologies and tourism development linked to heritage has been crucial in maintaining the authenticity and sustainability of historic urban areas. By improving visitors' experience and making local heritage more interactive, Hubs can start the shift towards a more sustainable visitor economy with heritage at its heart.

**Belfast [5]**

> For example, Belfast's Maritime Mile Challenge Fund offered grants to creative industries, SMEs, and individual practitioners to develop prototypes that enrich the visitor experience of the Mile. Local creatives used new technologies to create products such as 'Maritime Echoes', which used game engine technology to engage users in live, real-time conversations with AI-powered historical characters, asking them about their life and experiences. These products had a strong emphasis on co-creation with local residents–one entrepreneur's prototyping sessions involved almost 100 people.
> Local tourism operators such as HMS Caroline are now keen to incorporate the prototype into their offerings, and the Titanic Hotel are now hosting one of the apps and in discussion on ways they can use the technology to further enhance the heritage offering for the building.

## 4. HUBs of Innovation-led cross-sector collaboration that can lead to enhanced value chains

Strengthening cross-sector collaboration, particularly between public, private, and community actors, led to more resilient and innovative ecosystems in HUAs. Co-creation events allowed a wide range of stakeholders from different areas; over 210 organisations / associations participated across the Hubs at the granular action level, at an approximate split of 28% public sector, 42% private sector, 10% academic, and 20% community.

**Utrecht[6]**

> For example, Utrecht has been highly successful at bringing in funding from real estate owners and professionalising its governance structure through the Business Association. The ambition is for this partnership to continue, and funding has been secured for the next 3 years. There is also financial capacity to hire personnel to look for new funding opportunities and initiate more actions. By bringing together public, private and community stakeholders, the Hub has secured sustainable financing within a participatory governance structure.

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[5] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Belfast
[6] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned

**Genoa[7]**

For example, Genoa's Action 2 "Public Art" featured the "La Via delle Storie" (the "Street of Stories"), implemented by the local Academy of Fine Arts professors and students and involving different arts from painting to digital, decoration, creative writing. The Academy and municipality signed a framework agreement that, besides allowing for this specific action's implementation, could be the starting point for further future cooperation. The experience was so positive for the Academy' professors and students, as well as for the local resident's association (Comitato per Prè), that it will be repeated in the future.

## 3.2    Social Results

### 5. Hubs of Innovation increase stakeholder engagement and civic participation, fostering inclusive decision-making processes

Engaging diverse groups, including residents, local businesses and community leaders, led to more inclusive decision-making processes and greater buy-in for projects.



**Grand Angouleme[8]**

Grand Angouleme's Caravanne Creative Lab brought together 166 registered participations across 13 Caravanes, including architects, project coordinators, tourism consultants, students, dancers, authors and more. The art school now includes the trail in its summer programme; and in 2024, ENJMIN (video game school) and ÉESI (fine arts school) organised a joint workshop on the Metropolitan Trail. In both cases, the trail provided interesting narrative material and potentially access to other members of the public.

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[7] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned
[8] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Grand Angouleme

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**Lisbon** [9]

Lisbon involved students in a competition launched in partnership with C40 "Students Reinventing Cities- Mouraria" and "Students Reinventing Cities- Alfama". Cities select a priority urban area for young people to redesign, seeking creative and innovative solutions that address city climate targets, resident priorities, and local challenges. Participating students then select a site to develop a proposal for and develop a comprehensive action plan.

The competition attracted a large number of students, including representation from international universities, supporting the in-flow of knowledge and ideation into the HUA: the Mouraria competition involved 90 participating students, 23 registered teams, 19 projects presented, 9 international universities, two initiatives that bridged the Hub ecosystem and climate action. Winning proposals included repurposing underutilised buildings such as the Largo da Rosa monastery and R. Damasceno Monteiro and Calçada car parks into multi-functional spaces with solar panels and green roofs.

## 6. Hubs of Innovation's regenerative actions improve social cohesion and a sense of belonging, strengthening community ties

Regeneration projects fostered a stronger sense of pride and belonging among citizens, with improved civic participation and community collaboration. The use of intangible heritage secured and consolidated community engagement and ensures local residents are at the centre of how heritage is used.

**Brasov**[10]

Brasov's 'City as a Classroom' Initiative engaged young people who spent time in the HUA to design and make street furniture, facilitating a more inclusive decision-making process. The University of Transylvania's Faculty of Wood Engineering and Furniture Design, along with NGOs like De-aarhitectura, HEBLU and DeGraph 29, offered guidance and resources throughout the project. A noteworthy aspect of the pitching event was the involvement of local furniture producers, who were interested in the prototypes developed by the students.

The program not only provided technical skills but also fostered a sense of responsibility towards the community. The programme's success also raised interest from the private sector and other local stakeholders and was replicated in 2024, with hopes to replicate the project in the future.

**Nicosia**[11]

Ten co-designed Heritage Walks in Nicosia introduced over 1,000 walkers to different areas of the city's history, including tangible and intangible heritage assets such as Nicosia's stage and screen history. A majority (86%) of post-Walk respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed that the Walks had raised awareness of local heritage (on a scale of 1-5, 99 post-walk respondents). Over half, (54%), planned to participate in more local initiatives in the HUA, supporting further discovery. 69% reported their pride in Nicosia had increased 'a lot' or 'extremely' as a result of the walks.

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[9] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned
[10] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned
[11] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Nicosia

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## 3.3   Cultural Results

**7. Hubs of Innovation can lead directly and indirectly to the rehabilitation of underused spaces and vacant land, revitalizing historic urban areas**

A key focus of several pilot cities was to transform underutilized buildings or land into vibrant hubs of innovation that retain cultural significance while fostering economic activity. Looking to the future, cities also developed frameworks in which to ignite the long-term repurposing of underused buildings.

**Slovenska Bistrica[12]**

> Slovenska Bistrica refurbished an underused historical building as its Hub of Innovation—a co-working space which aims to offer a resource for start-ups and small businesses, drawing activity to the area whilst preserving the building's heritage.

**Belfast[13]**

> Belfast co-created the Waterfront Promenade Framework to reverse trends of abandonment and neglect of historic heritage in the area by reanimating the Waterfront. This includes reusing Hickson's Point, a prominent and currently empty public realm for a building of national importance or an iconic public space, as well as lighter public realm improvements such as stepped access to the water's edge, community gathering spaces and ground level activation.

**8. Hubs of Innovation strengthen local identity by integrating cultural heritage into regeneration strategies, improving community pride and participation**

Creating Hubs of Innovation enhanced the sense of unique identity in historic urban areas (HUAs). Projects that integrated local cultural narratives, storytelling and heritage into their regeneration strategies saw an enhanced sense of identity and community pride.

**Grand Angouleme[14]**

> Grand Angouleme's Metropolitan Walking Trail developed the local community's knowledge and interest in local heritage, with 97% of survey respondents saying they discovered new places on the trail.

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[12] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned
[13] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Belfast
[14] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Grand Angouleme

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**Genoa [15]**

Genoa ran a multimedia storytelling campaign across social media, city posters and other forms of communication that featured community stories on the HUA's unique personality. These stories were co-created through 19 one-on-one interviews.
The social media campaign received 1,000,000+ online views of the Creative Storytelling campaign across Facebook and Instagram, featuring community stories on the HUA's unique personality.
97% of community respondents feel "somewhat" or "a lot" that the HUA has a unique identity yet need remains for further interventions to continue its regeneration.

## 3.4   Environmental Results

9. **Hubs of Innovation contribute to climate resilience by embedding sustainability principles into regeneration processes, promoting circular economy practices and green entrepreneurship**

Increased efforts to make HUAs climate-resilient showcased the ability of heritage-led regeneration to address environmental challenges. Pilot cities embedded environmental sustainability into HUA regeneration, promoting circular economies, climate resilience and green innovation.

**Slovenska Bistrica [16]**

Slovenska Bistrica worked with KNOF, a social enterprise which specializes in developing circular business models, to refurbish their HUB sustainably. Most of the furniture in the space was required through reuse or made from recycled materials. This saved a potential 384kg of greenhouse gas emissions.

Several SMEs in Accelerators reported increased skills in "entrepreneurship and innovation that are environmentally sustainable" in pre and post self-assessment surveys, even if not the focus of their products. Some innovators did also directly target sustainability, such as recycled aluminium jewellery workshops in Slovenska Bistrica, based on traditional metalworking techniques and with materials coming from a local aluminium factory.

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[15] See D5.3 Evaluation Report- Genoa
[16] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned

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## 3.5    Future value and sustainability

**10.   Hubs of Innovation have shown that they can generate a "flywheel effect", building momentum to trigger on-going longer-term transformational change in historic urban areas**

The Flywheel effect is when cities focus on what they do best with often small initial steps that build momentum, gathering more support and further development until cities reach the tipping point where the flywheel starts to turn ever more quickly.

Hubs of Innovation can, through the types of actions we have demonstrated work in practice using the tools and methods we have developed, present a credible innovation model as to how to ignite longer term heritage-led regeneration where initial shorter-term initiatives can provide the seeds that grow to generate future value and more sustainable outcomes.
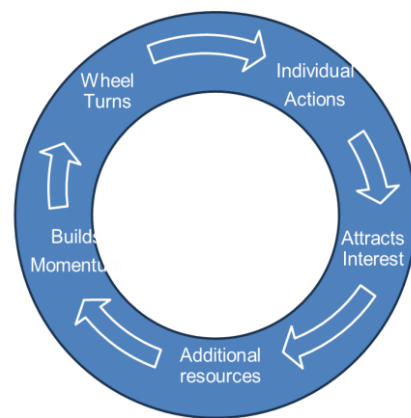


**Belfast**[17]

Belfast have leveraged its networks and evidence to unlock approx. €70,000 of matched funding (£50,000) towards its Actions in the HUA, specifically the Waterfront Promenade Framework.
Other projects have been awarded approx. €70,000 funding and identified HUB-IN as contributing to the award, as it provides evidence and momentum relevant to those projects: for example, the Waterfront Promenade Framework was also used to leverage funding from the Irish Government for a feasibility study for a bridge on the Maritime Mile.

**Utrecht**[18]

In Utrecht, initial investment in the Hub attracted more stakeholders and the Hub has now leveraged approx. €642,000 of funding towards its future Actions in the HUA.

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[17]See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned
[18] See D5.4 Final Economic, Social, and Environmental Appraisal and Lessons Learned

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# 4. Overall Conclusions

The HUB-IN project set itself the challenge of establishing whether:

*'Hubs of Innovation can incubate and unlock innovative and entrepreneurial actions that in turn directly and indirectly contribute to the sustainable transformation and protection of historic urban areas and their tangible and intangible cultural heritage'*

**The 10 Findings, based on the monitoring and evaluation of the actions of the pilot cities provide compelling evidence that Hubs of Innovation can unlock innovative and entrepreneurial actions that in turn contribute to the sustainable transformation and protection of historic urban areas. Here, we bring together these findings with the overall experiences and lessons learned from the consortium as a whole to set out our 5 strategic conclusions:**

1. **Hubs of Innovation within Historic Urban Areas create a strong value proposition**

   - By linking the heritage values and beauty of historic urban areas with innovation and entrepreneurship, Hubs of Innovation offers a distinct, value-added approach to urban regeneration. They build on previous efforts in this field while introducing new methodologies that position heritage as a driver of sustainable social and economic transformation.

2. **Academic research drawn from circa 100 case studies and pilot city experiences confirm the effectiveness of the HUB-IN approach and its value proposition:**

   - Identifying the key ingredients needed within historic urban areas for innovation and entrepreneurship to flourish
   - Showing how the HUB-IN process of road maps and action plans can strengthen local ecosystems and build the momentum needed to deliver short term beneficial outcomes and ignite long-term heritage-led regeneration
   - Confirming that leadership and stakeholder engagement are key crucial ingredients in delivering successful Hubs of Innovation
   - Emphasizing the importance of Intangible heritage in securing and maintaining community engagement and interest.
   - Showcasing how Inclusive approaches build trust and help address wider challenges such is citizen disenchantment, and participation of hard-to-reach groups

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3. **Hubs of Innovation' established within 8 pilot cities and concept tested with 20 Follower Cities provide a scalable and adaptable framework**:

- Effectively 'connect' key stakeholders - institutions, entrepreneurs and local communities that drives sustainable change
- can align with and add value to key ongoing and planned initiatives within the HUA in order to maximise impact
- facilitates co-creation of innovative new individual actions that accelerate entrepreneurial and creative activity and start - ups and which together
- builds entrepreneurial assets that Historic Urban Areas can
- draw on to foster more inclusive and sustainable regeneration
- enables successful knowledge transfer of the concept meaning the concept is replicable and capable of being upscaled[19]

4. **The long-term impact of HUBs of Innovation extends beyond the HUB-In project's time frame**

- Transformational outcomes in historic urban areas required sustained effort and long-term investment
- These transformations are not "isolated events" but a part of a continuous process of adaptation and growth, given the evolving nature and scope of the challenges and opportunities in historic urban areas
- Building upon the knowledge, experience and insights gained, it is crucial to expand engagement with a wider audience as part of a Network of historic urban areas where 'Innovation meets Heritage'
- The HUB-IN Cities Network provides a platform for ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange, ensuring continued momentum beyond the initial Horizon 2020 funding period

5. **HUB-IN aligns with and reinforces key international and European policy agendas**

- The project's goals and outcomes align with major international frameworks, including the European Green Deal, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- The HUB-IN experience underscores the need for stronger policy support to link heritage and innovation more effectively, particularly at the European level - reinforcing the importance of historic urban areas and the role of Hubs of Innovation as a catalyst for transformative change

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[19] 20 Follower Cities were recruited for the project who tested the concept and developed their understanding of how to create Hubs of Innovation through 10 webinars and 3 in-person workshops, with the contribution of pilot cities' learnings along with expert advice from the consortium partners. This 'knowledge transfer' process is available for upscaling to other cities as part of the HUB-IN Academy.

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- There is significant synergy between HUB-IN's objectives and the New European Bauhaus initiative, reinforcing the need for transformational approaches that integrate heritage, sustainability, and innovation.

# 5. Strategic Policy Recommendations

These recommendations are informed by the findings and overall conclusions of the HUB-IN project, as well as insights from the earlier policy report **'Towards Innovative, Inclusive and Creative Hubs in European Cities'** prepared jointly with HUB-IN's sister projects, Centrinno and T-Factor.

Whilst the recommendations mainly focus on governmental policy making institutions they reach out to all leaders at local, national and European and International levels to maximise the impact of heritage-led urban regeneration through innovation and entrepreneurship.

## 5.1    International Level Recommendations

**1.        We ask UNESCO to:**

**1.1.        Recognise and support the wider uptake of Hubs of Innovation as a tool to help implement the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach**

- HUB-IN, as an EU funded research and innovation project, takes its inspiration from UNESCO's HUL approach and policy to encourage, for example, local authorities to develop instruments and tools sensitive to local values and needs.

- HUB-IN's findings and conclusions show how heritage-led Hubs of innovation can help transform historic urban areas in this way through the lens of innovation and entrepreneurship - adding new ways of effectively realising Historic Urban Landscape policy where the areas heritage values shape the strategy and outcomes.

## 5.2    European Level Recommendations

**2.        We ask the EU to:**

**2.1.        Create long-term funding mechanisms for scaling up successful EU-funded projects to maximise impact and return on investment**

- Longer- term follow-up funding mechanisms would more effectively deliver the transition from experimentation to impactful large-scale upscaling and capitalise on the initial investment over a longer period than is currently possible within the lifespan of a project.

- Finding sustainable funding streams to support further development and knowledge transfer of the HUB-IN Academy and HUB-IN Cities Network is challenging. Given these upscaling mechanisms are currently in place the risk is of losing this knowledge and know-how as key stakeholders move on to new projects.

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- This recommendation aligns with our earlier joint policy recommendation with the Centrinno and T-Factor projects that investing in networks of innovation & communities of practice create a long-lasting community around the local regeneration process

**2.2.    Explicitly integrate heritage-led regeneration through Hubs of Innovation into key European policy and delivery frameworks**

- For example, the Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus could more directly recognise heritage-led innovation hubs as a means of fostering creativity and environmental resilience while respecting the cultural identity of historic urban areas

- Recognising as demonstrated by HUB-IN that heritage can be a driver of sustainable and inclusive design and act as a vehicle for economic and social innovation

**2.3.    Refocus regional policies to support district-level Hubs of Innovation**

- For example, European cohesion funding could target district-level projects that address local challenges in historic urban areas. HUB-IN pilot cities' district-level approach highlighted how hyperlocal projects can lead to impactful change when resources are appropriately channelled both at local and regional level.

**2.4    Expand European Skills Agenda to include heritage led innovation and 'place making' training**

- For example, support training and upskilling initiatives focused on heritage-linked jobs and sustainable urban development. HUB-IN pilots demonstrated the potential of heritage-led regeneration to create new employment opportunities and foster innovation.

- In doing this there is a need to build understanding of the importance of context and place-making with its wider social impacts on wellbeing, sense of belonging and identity and its potential environmental impact on the quality of new building design appropriate to historic urban areas.

- This could include expanding the HUB-IN Academy to provide targeted training programmes for local authorities, community leaders, and innovators, focusing on skills such as heritage-led regeneration and innovation, sustainable urban planning and stakeholder engagement.

## **5.3**   National Level Recommendations

**3.    We ask National Governments to:**

**3.1    Develop national frameworks for heritage-led Hubs of Innovation linked to urban policies that support climate resilience and sustainable development**

- For example, encourage cities to adopt the Hubs of Innovation model through funding incentives and policy frameworks. HUB-IN pilot cities showed that these hubs have the potential to drive heritage-based innovation and long-term socio-economic growth.

- Also endorse urban strategies and action plans to promote the utilisation of historical buildings and urban areas for innovative and experimental initiatives in line with the entrepreneurial opportunities arising from Hubs of Innovation.

- Promote economic sectors linked to cultural heritage - such as crafts, creative industries, and sustainable businesses - through national policy measures. HUB-IN pilot cities highlighted the potential of heritage to drive innovation and local job creation and the need for national policy support.

**3.2    Promote skills development and capacity-building programmes for local authorities and communities linking innovation and entrepreneurship to heritage-led regeneration**

- HUB-IN experiences underline the importance of equipping stakeholders with the tools to succeed.

- For example, invest in capacity-building initiatives to train urban planners, local authorities and community leaders in heritage-led regeneration including innovation and entrepreneurship and circular economy practices

- Establish partnerships with universities and vocational schools to build capacity in heritage-linked industries particularly to capitalise on the growth opportunities with the creative industries that Hubs of Innovation can attract.

**3.3    Facilitate public-private-community partnerships for heritage-led development, and support novel funding arrangements and governance models**

- Encourage and support collaboration between the private sector, public institutions and community sectors in heritage – led regeneration

- Consider adopting the full range of funding and governance solutions identified by HUB-IN including government, the private sector and communities, for example, through crowd funding, resulting most often in a 'cocktail' of financing solutions.

- Channel targeted investments to support priority sectors such as the creative industries and sustainable tourism in historic urban areas and consider regulation to balance tourism pressures with heritage preservation and residents' quality of life.  Experiences from Lisbon, Brașov and Slovenska Bistrica for example highlighted this need common to many historic places to manage tourism sustainably to retain the unique identity of historic urban areas

## 5.4    Local Level Recommendations

**4.    We ask Local and Regional Governments to:**

**4.1    Introduce policies and programmes to facilitate the creation of Hubs of Innovation by leaders from the pubic, community and entrepreneurial sectors to regenerate historic urban areas**

- This Leadership guide has demonstrated that Hubs of Innovation have the potential to trigger long term heritage-led sustainable regeneration capable of delivering economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits.

- While we look to international, European and national stakeholders to provide the important validation and policy support recommended above, it is at the local level that the necessary public, community and entrepreneurial leadership needed to implement Hubs of Innovation on the ground, will be forged.

- Hubs of Innovation, as developed by HUB-IN, can be physical or virtual and can take many forms in terms of the challenges they prioritise, but all share key elements, evidenced within this report, and which together form our final recommendation addressed to cities' leaders.

**4.2  Commit to a long-term delivery programme that:**

- Values cultural heritage, not only in terms of its protection, but as a strategic asset:
  - central to the identity of the place and the wellbeing of its citizens
  - providing historic urban areas with a competitive advantage in the growing creative industries and makers' economy.

- Recognises the importance of heritage driven open calls, challenge funds and educational programmes as effective ways to accelerate entrepreneurial activity, build new skills, create new jobs and ultimately more sustainable lifestyles within historic urban areas.

- Builds and nurtures multi-stakeholder partnerships and inclusive co-design processes to inspire interest and sustain community engagement capable of delivering Hubs of Innovation and sustainable transformational change over time.

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# 6. Next Steps

The upscaling and replication of the HUB-IN concept to other cities began during the project through the recruitment of 20 'follower cities many of whom are at the early stages of also developing Hubs of Innovation. It was always foreseen that the potential of developing Hubs of Innovation at scale across Europe could only be fully realized as a longer-term programme once the initial HUB-IN project had been developed, the tools and methods created, and the 'proof of concept' road tested to demonstrate that Hubs of innovation offered an effective way to kick start Heritage-led regeneration of historic urban areas.

## Sign Up for the HUB-IN Academy:

The Final Conference of HUB-IN held in Lisbon in November 2024 therefore laid the foundations for continuing collaboration established during the project to ensure the knowledge and expertise gained through HUB-IN is not lost but taken forward and further developed through the **HUB-IN Cities Network** with access to learning through the [HUB-IN Academy](#).

This learning offer includes courses on the overall HUB-IN Process, from the creation of strategic road maps through to detailed action plans, as well as courses on key tools including Business Models and Funding, the HUB-IN GeoTool, Match & Ignite and Acceleration Programmes.

We see this next stage as the start of a new journey with a HUB-IN Cities Network based on a commons approach organized as a 'community of interest' to bring together the range of stakeholders across the public, entrepreneurial and community sectors needed to deliver sustainable transformation of historic urban areas.

## Join the HUB-IN Cities Network:

- Gain a platform to boost your international and national profile
- Leverage cultural heritage for competitive advantage in attracting investment, business and talent
- Get access to the Hub-In Academy—a web platform providing open access to the HUB IN information and resource base
- Contribute to the New European Bauhaus through your heritage, innovation, and entrepreneurship



We start with members of the HUB-IN consortium, its Networks, Universities, agencies, SMEs and pilot and follower cities but want to extend this to a wider group of cities and their stakeholders.

## Find Out More About HUB-IN:

Find out more from our web site [www.hubin-project.eu](http://www.hubin-project.eu) and join us by signing the HUB-IN Cities Network '**Memorandum of Understanding'** – a confirmation of your willingness to work together to further develop the concept, its scope and vision including securing future funding  to ensure the HUB-IN Cities Network's sustainability and future  development.

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