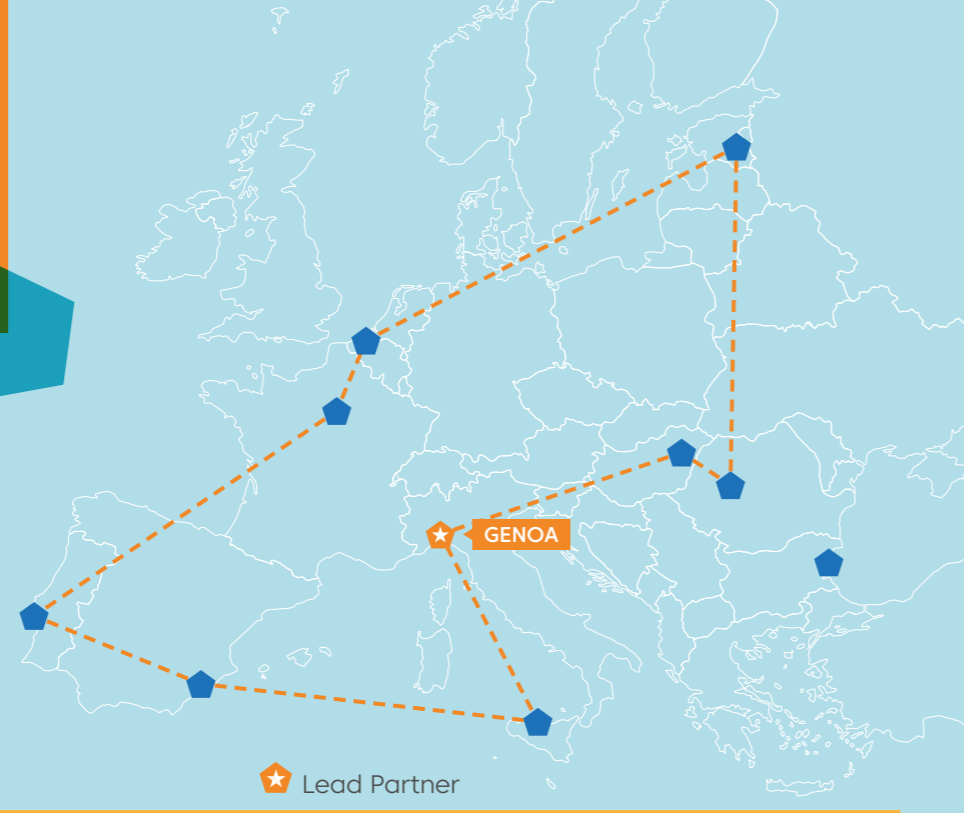# USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Key information

⬠ Location: **Genoa (Italy)**

⬠ Population: **594 700**

⬠ Involved in URBACT network:
INTERACTIVE CITIES

⬠ More information:
http://urbact.eu/interactive-cities

GENOA

⭐ Lead Partner

Leading the URBACT INTERACTIVE CITIES network, Genoa explored social media to enable citizen participation in promoting the city to tourists, workers and business. This work is now providing a basis to respond to the trauma experienced when Genoa's Morandi Bridge tragically collapsed in August 2018.

Genoa's social media ambassadors

⬠ A pioneer in using digital interactive tools

The city of Genoa in northwest Italy has actively sought to use emerging digital technologies to communicate more effectively and bring local people closer to the public administration. This is in the context of a local economy that has moved increasingly from shipyards and steelworks towards tourism, services and technology.

In 2013, Genoa joined the URBACT CityLogo network focusing on improving the city's branding and marketing. In 2016, the city initiated the INTERACTIVE CITIES network, looking to dig deeper into how digital, social media and user-generated content can improve urban management in European cities of whatever size.

The City Council set up and coordinated an URBACT Local Group comprising social media managers of various municipal departments; the local Chamber of Commerce; and private organisations in the city, including museums, the aquarium and the airport. This 'social media group' planned experimental actions covering different aspects of tourism or business promotion.

It also tested initiatives to improve digital services offered to visitors. Notably, it worked with a local digital company to develop an immersive 'Medieval Tour' of the historic centre using 4D and virtual reality experiences. This technology offers the potential to develop and sell more immersive packages, improving the visitor experience and dispersing visitors across city sites.

⬠ Promoting a new shared storytelling

As the URBACT Expert Daniela Patti describes, the core of Genoa's activities were to develop "a territorial marketing strategy to which all relevant local stakeholders could

"You don't come to URBACT for the money, but for the method – the fact that the programme makes you work in an integrated way with all the local stakeholders."

Gianluca Saba

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An Instagram competition selected the best photo of Genoa's 'Rolli Palaces'

contribute and belong." Key principles were to involve 'influencers', whilst inviting everyone to join online actions.

The URBACT Local Group launched a new campaign called 'Make Genoa a Part of You' to promote the hashtag #genovamorethanthis, which was originally launched with the new city logo in 2014. The city chose three 'social ambassadors' from an active community of Genoese Instagrammers (@ IgersGenova) accompanied by a public photo competition which saw 3 612 photos uploaded in five weeks, helping to create a digital, Instagram-oriented map of Genoa.

During the 2017 open days of Genoa's 42 UNESCO World Heritage 'Palazzi dei Rolli', the city gave Genoese bloggers and Instagrammers control of the Municipality's social media accounts. For Rossana Borroni, Genoa's Social Media Strategist: "[It was a] great experience… due to the 'social ability' of the ambassadors and because… a different point of view is an important moment of exchange between Municipality and citizens."

Another initiative created a three-day #Genova25 'Instatour' of the city to mark 25 years since the major redevelopment of the port and new aquarium. The project invited ten Instagrammers from Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and Scotland to discover Genoa for three days and share new perspectives on the city.

⬠ Building on the lessons learned

The Integrated Action Plan of Genoa seeks to ensure that the digital communication work of the city continues to evolve and build on the tested actions. Crucially, the social media team has continued to work, including developing the new #genovalikesyou campaign as a direct response to the tragedy of the Morandi Bridge collapse.

Future work over the next three to five years will also look to pick up on digital tools from partner cities on aspects that could cover promoting local business, revitalising neighbourhoods and measuring impact. Genoa entered a bilateral exchange with Murcia (ES) to hear about its digital co-creative processes for neighbourhood regeneration, and the two cities launched a follow-up 'Digital Citizenship' working group within Eurocities.

The future development of the digital communication and promotion strategy of the city will be supported by money from the City Tax Management System – an URBACT – identified Good Practice based on a joint strategy between the city and the Chamber of Commerce.

Gianluca Saba

Gianluca Saba
Head of International Relations, Genoa Municipality
interview

What was your biggest lesson from INTERACTIVE CITIES?

INTERACTIVE CITIES has been an incredible experience for the City of Genoa. We learned a lot from all the other partners in terms of how to make the most of social media in enhancing and improving the governance in communication between citizens and public administration.

How did URBACT methods or tools help Genoa?

You don't come to URBACT for the money, but for the method – the fact that the programme makes you work in an integrated way with all the local stakeholders. In the case of Genoa, the result is a new city narrative and a permanent platform for exchange with the citizens. Thanks to this, Genoa has increased its visibility, its image [and] its number of tourists.

What are Genoa's plans beyond INTERACTIVE CITIES?

Thanks to URBACT, [the] social media team will keep working beyond the project. This group is very focused on the relaunch of the image of the city – because it could be tremendously damaged from the tragedy [of the Morandi bridge collapse] – and to involve the citizens through dedicated hashtags to make them part of the process of recovering after the crisis. Every week there are regular meetings of this team.

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