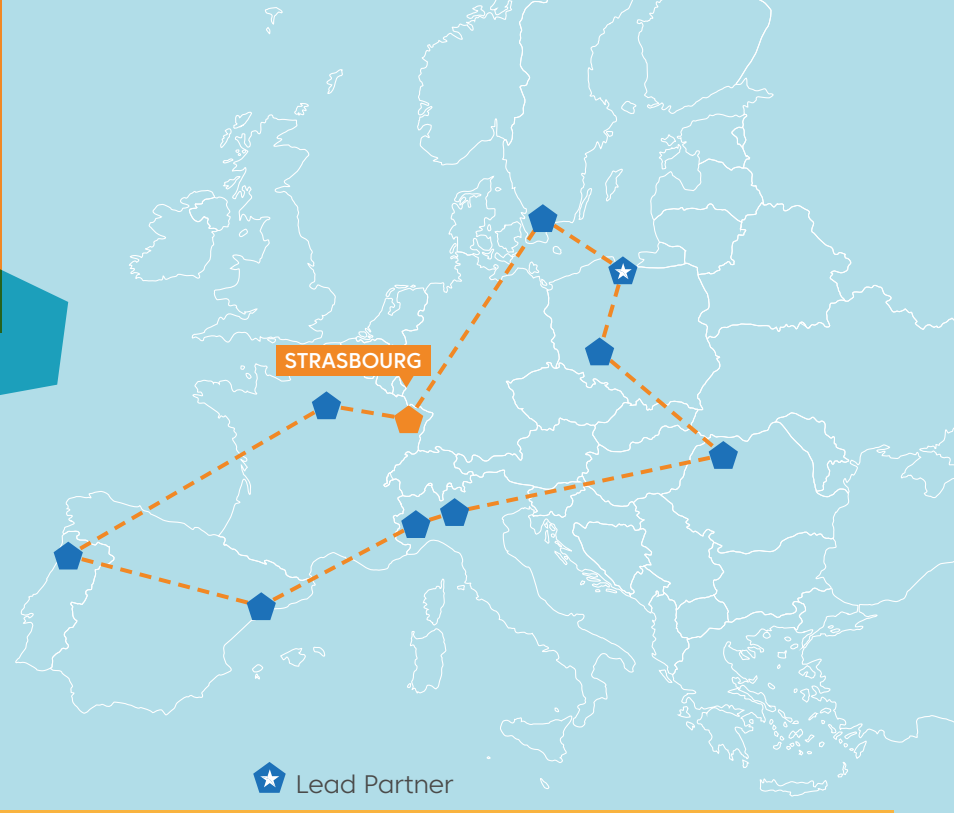# FROM CIVIL SERVANTS TO INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURS

Key information

⬡ Location: **Strasbourg (France)**

⬡ Population: **276 000**

⬡ Involved in URBACT network: **BoostInno**

⬡ More information: **http://urbact.eu/boostinno**

STRASBOURG

⭐ Lead Partner

The URBACT Local Group discuss an international case study from Milan

The municipality of Strasbourg has been working for years to establish itself as a broker for social innovation. As part of the URBACT BoostInno Network, the city discovered tools that helped them build a unified platform to support start-ups across the private and public sectors.

From car sharing schemes to open source software initiatives, Strasbourg has established itself over the past decade as a hotbed of social experimentation. This is not just about new products and services, but new ways of doing things. At the centre of it all has been the municipality's adoption of co-construction methodologies, designed to bridge the divide between the public and private sectors. The city even has a dedicated Council of Social Solidarity to mediate this process. Founded in 2010, this body, which brings together stakeholders from the municipality, businesses and NGOs, is a unique attempt to replace managerial public policy with a more collaborative model.

"We have been working for a long time on this, and we've achieved a lot," says Sandra Guilmin, Head of Social and Solidarity Economy at the municipality, "but while co-creation is strong, we still have to work on encouraging a culture of public participation, which sadly is not so advanced in France." As the city works to integrate silo-busting measures into its economic development strategy, 'Strasbourg éco 2030', it is also searching for new ways to empower citizens in this process. From the offset, then, the URBACT BoostInno network was conceived as part of this larger journey — an experiment to unlock the city's latent economic energy.

⬡ Stimulating, not managing, participation

Despite their relatively advanced starting point, practitioners from Strasbourg learnt a lot from the partner cities. "Our main benefit came from the international network," reflects Ms Guilmin. "Working together gave us a lot of examples not only about how cities are different but how we are similar." Strasbourg were particularly surprised, for example, to find that the municipality of Turin (IT) was also working on a project to integrate civil servants into their city's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Now, thanks to BoostInno, the two cities are exchanging reflections on how to avoid over-controlling the public. Cities like Milan (IT), meanwhile, provided novelties. Strasbourg were so impressed by their civic crowdfunding campaign — in which the municipality co-funded EUR 400 000 to support social initiatives — that they included an equivalent long-term goal in the Integrated Action Plan they defined as part of their work with BoostInno. This was approved by the city authorities and the Eurométropole in autumn 2018.

Beyond new relationships, the city also discovered useful tools thanks to URBACT. One of the most successful was Kumu, a data visualisation platform that had been used in the transnational meetings to compare and contrast the challenges of the partner cities. Strasbourg made use of its capacity to trace synergies across physical and mental spaces in order to visualise relations between stakeholders

in a new way. As a result, the city's URBACT Local Group, which was made up of local business people and activists as well as municipal officers, were able to identify how the activities of a think tank called 'Appuiculteurs', for example, could be linked most effectively to 'KaléidosCOOP', a creative co-working, entrepreneurial and community space due to open in 2020. By using professional drawings and cartoons, the URBACT Local Group also worked to communicate the conclusions of these meetings to a wider public.

⬡ Linking circular and solidarity economies

The most tangible local success of BoostInno, however, was the support it provided during the formation of a dedicated communication platform for new enterprises with a strong social impact, called 'Start-up des Territoires'. The purpose of this initiative, which was already planned

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Strasbourg's URBACT Local Group used drawings and cartoons to communicate to a wider public

in 2015, was to link principles of circular economy with those of social and solidarity economies. The initiative also marked a shift in the city's governance paradigm that had been established with the Council of Social Solidarity: within the platform, public projects were considered as part of the same innovative ecosystem as private ones. By following the detailed guidelines of the Integrated Action Plan, Start-up des Territoires was able to grow to attract the participation of over 1000 individuals. As of autumn 2018 the platform has given birth to 15 projects in diverse fields, from agriculture to tourism. Over 200 jobs will be created as a result.

"Strasbourg was not just sharing and learning but actively creating new tools," enthuses Peter Wolkowinski, Lead Expert of BoostInno. "This was one of the biggest successes of the network." If early in the project the URBACT Local Group had been so concerned to communicate clearly to non-specialists, by the end they were also keen to provide a legacy for professional practitioners in other cities. Beyond maps, comics and diagrams, the city also produced a technical handbook on co-creation, which explains the theory and practice of brokering. The process of developing this provided a useful opportunity for the municipality to evaluate their involvement in BoostInno. Its positive reception from the public also provided a valuable recognition of years of work in this new and risky field.

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