Through its participation in the URBACT SmartImpact network, Zagreb has initiated 11 projects within one Integrated Action Plan aiming to deliver a systemic approach to becoming an increasingly ‘smart city’. The actions will be monitored and improved on an ongoing basis as part of the overall development strategy of the city.

Zagreb is the capital of Croatia and enjoys a diverse economy melding strong cultural and architectural heritage with modern high-tech industries and service sector. The city has developed several strategies to become an increasingly ‘smart city’, including a Sustainable Energy Action Plan, ‘ICT System and e-Governance Development Strategy’ and ‘Open Data Portal’. The city has also committed to ensure that the system of regulations and incentives is adapted to bring the most relevant partners together to scope out the activities. “One of the biggest motivations to be involved in this project was a great network - ten cities at different levels of development in [different aspects]. I think we learned a lot from each other.” Mirjana Zubak

According to Anka Đurić, this has “brought an additional level of involvement.” Zagreb’s existing Digital Business Platform (ARIS), which maps and monitors projects and processes, provides a living-lab-type action plan into Zagreb’s existing Digital Business Platform (ARIS), which maps and monitors projects and processes. According to Anka Đurić, this has “brought an additional level of involvement.” Importantly, the actions will be implemented and continuously monitored and improved by the same multi-stakeholder team that developed the idea as part of a ‘living-lab’ style approach. The city has also committed to ensure that the system of regulations and incentives is adapted to make it supportive of the new models being developed.

Implementation is further supported by integration of the action plan into Zagreb’s existing Digital Business Platform (ARIS), which maps and monitors projects and processes. According to Anka Đurić, this has “brought an additional level of involvement.” Zagreb’s existing Digital Business Platform (ARIS), which maps and monitors projects and processes, provides a living-lab-type action plan into Zagreb’s existing Digital Business Platform (ARIS), which maps and monitors projects and processes. According to Anka Đurić, this has “brought an additional level of involvement.” Importantly, the actions will be implemented and continuously monitored and improved by the same multi-stakeholder team that developed the idea as part of a ‘living-lab’ style approach. The city has also committed to ensure that the system of regulations and incentives is adapted to make it supportive of the new models being developed.

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Facilitating a multi-disciplinary approach
An important step in the development of action ideas was to bring the most relevant partners together to scope out the vision and needs. These formed an URBACT Local Group that worked on project strands, each initiated by multi-disciplinary teams comprising representatives of the city authority, Zagreb Development Agency, Zagreb University, scientific and research centres, incubation centres/hubs, companies and consultants.

As Anka Đurić, Head of Department ‘Analysis and Business Process Improvement’ in Zagreb city authority and URBACT Local Group coordinator, says, “With some starting challenges, the overall experience [of the URBACT Local Group] was positive. It was a process that led to mutual learning and growth of participants corresponding to their level of involvement.”

A living-lab-type action plan
The work of the URBACT Local Group developed 11 project initiatives that together form the Zagreb SmartImpact Integrated Action Plan (see box). “The Integrated Action Plan produced in this way has a strong sense of ownership among its creators, which is a good precondition for its implementation in future,” highlights Ms Đurić.

The Plan does not focus on technological solutions so much as governance structures, processes, financing, and models of regulations and incentives to deliver a smarter city. It is closely aligned with the official ‘City of Zagreb Development Strategy for the period to 2020’. 