

CROSS - Citizenship and Recovery of Opportunities for Suburban Space

About the project

The aim of the project is to empower young people through processes of regeneration of urban spaces. It's core scope is to bring a change of perspective on the topic of citizens participation and decision-making, both as regards to the activities that will involve the young people and in the reinterpretation of neighborhoods as living spaces where to rebuild the collective bonds and the skills to take care of the community. CROSS is being implemented in five countries across Europe: Spain, Italy, Romania, Portugal and Germany and the activities will take place between February 2022 to February 2024.

Why Regeneration of urban spaces

Urban regeneration is crucial for addressing community issues, fostering social inclusion, restoring ecological balance, and reducing economic disparities. Revitalizing urban spaces can contribute to the overall prosperity of an area, benefiting the entire community. Key features include interventionist activities involving public, private, and voluntary sectors, with evolving institutional structures.

From physical transformation to a broader vision of improving quality of life, urban regeneration encompasses social and cultural aspects. Over the past thirty years, it has been central to international debates, influencing cities' development while addressing social inequalities. Recently, a shift towards prioritizing social impact has emerged, emphasizing community involvement in decision-making and repurposing abandoned spaces, particularly cultural heritage. This approach fosters social cohesion, innovation, and new impact economies. This shift requires new paradigms, moving from global models to local, community-led visions. That's why we at CROSS believe in the crucial importance that such an holistic approach for urban regeneration can support local youth engagement and participation.

About youth empowerment

Empowering youth through urban space regeneration is a dynamic catalyst for positive change. By involving young people in the revitalization of urban areas, we not only transform physical landscapes but also cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility among the younger generation. Through hands-on involvement in community projects, youth gain valuable skills, foster leadership qualities, a sense of belonging and develop a deep connection to their surroundings. Moreover, the process of regeneration fosters collaboration and social cohesion, breaking down barriers and creating inclusive spaces for diverse perspectives.

As urban spaces are reborn, so too are the aspirations of the youth involved. This empowerment not only addresses the physical aspects of the environment but also nurtures a generation of resilient, proactive individuals who understand the importance of community engagement. In essence, the regeneration of urban spaces becomes a powerful tool for fostering the growth, development, and empowerment of young people to be the leaders and drivers of change within their communities.

Regeneration of Spaces in the CROSS Project:

SPAIN_Granada: Regeneration of the Mina de Oro

Mina de Oro is an abandoned and overlooked area in Granada, the aim is to engage young people to the regeneration of this neglected site. Key actions include distribution of flyers presenting the CROSS project, workshops on urban regeneration brainstorming ideas, and imagine possible interventions. A field trip to the Gold Mine with the youth group proved to be increasing the sense of bonding, collective responsibility and curiosity for the location. The overall focus is on creating awareness and a sense of ownership among young people to actively contribute to the regeneration of Mina de Oro.

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PORTUGAL_Sintra: regeneration of the viaduct

One notable instance of space recovery in Portugal occurred in Sintra, focusing on a viaduct. This viaduct appeared neglected, and the numerous individuals (hundreds) passing by daily expressed fear of crossing it. The apprehension stemmed from its abandoned appearance and the presence of young people engaging in graffiti and similar activities.

The restoration efforts have significantly improved the aesthetics and overall ambiance of the location, making it more beautiful and pleasant.

Viaduct before:



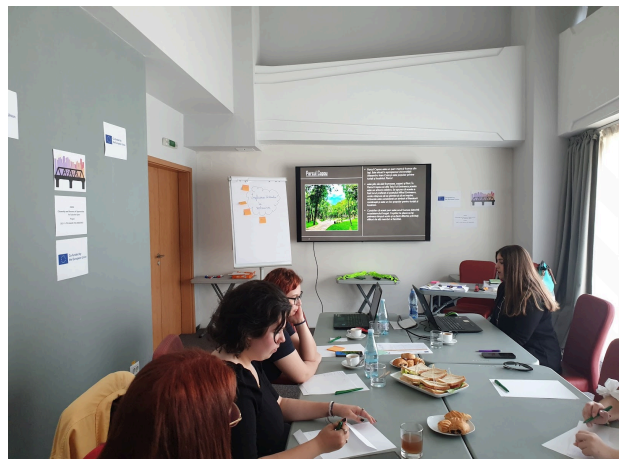
Viaduct after:



ROMANIA_Iasi: Youth Community Photo Contest

EUROPANET took the initiative to engage the youth in the city of Iasi through a contest. The contest involved the youth taking photos of three places they appreciate and consider beneficial for the community, as well as three places they wish to see transformed. An award was presented for the most innovative ideas. The collected ideas aimed at benefiting the community, such as converting a cigar factory into a skate park, refurbishing an abandoned stadium for youth activities, and enhancing neglected parks with artistic paintings.

The feedback from the youth indicated that they felt their opinions were valued and heard during this process. Additionally, EUROPANET initiated contact with the local authority, although constraints in funding prompted the setting of realistic expectations regarding the feasible scope of actions.



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GERMANY_Berlin: Mapping youth needs and visions

In the Weiße Siedlung area of Neukölln, a participatory mapping workshop and idea collection were executed, providing a platform for the youth to voice their opinions. The outcome revealed a collective desire among the youth to organize a community festival in the autumn, aiming to highlight the lack of structural support in the neighborhood. The brainstormed ideas for the event included self-composed music and various creative formats proposed by the young participants. For larger structural projects, consultations with local key stakeholders (local authorities, local associations) are on the agenda. However, it's crucial to acknowledge the existing frustration among the youth.

Many organizations have sought their ideas and dreams without fulfilling their promises in the implementation phase. Therefore, special care and consideration are needed in making commitments within the CROSS project.



ITALY_Livorno: in-process

In Livorno, the identification of the intervention area is currently underway, with three potential options:

1.Transform and Beautify a Former Bank: The proposal involves the transformation and beautification of a former bank, now functioning as a community space managed by the local authority.

2.Regeneration of the Park: Another option under consideration is the regeneration of the park in the identified area.

3.Refresh Graffiti at Casa del Popolo/Circolo ARCI: An alternative idea is to refresh the graffiti at Casa del Popolo/Circolo ARCI.

The success of these interventions relies heavily on the active engagement of the local youth. Building trust is a critical element in this process. Local youth must be convinced that their involvement can indeed bring about positive change, leading to the transformation and improvement of the neighborhood.



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Access to urban spaces for young people in Europe

In numerous urban settings, the absence of dedicated spaces for young people results in a lack of opportunities for social interaction, recreation, and personal growth. This dearth contributes to a sense of isolation, hindering the youth's ability to connect with peers, participate in constructive activities, and express themselves creatively. The lack of safe and accessible spaces might lead them towards unproductive or risky behaviors, impacting both their physical and mental health. Through the CROSS Project we wish to addressing that this scarcity of urban spaces for youth is pivotal in constructing a resilient and vibrant community. It necessitates collaborative efforts from urban planners, policymakers, and communities to allocate resources and design spaces tailored to the specific needs and interests of young individuals. Investing in such spaces not only improves the quality of life for the youth but also enriches the overall social fabric and vitality of our urban landscapes.

Urban environments, as central hubs for social interaction, cultural exchange, and personal development, urgently require spaces that cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of the youth. Ranging from recreational areas to communal gathering spots, these spaces serve as essential platforms for fostering creativity, dialogue, and a sense of belonging. Prioritizing access not only addresses the physical well-being of young people but also contributes significantly to their mental and social health. In a world dominated by technological connectivity, urban spaces provide a tangible and vital arena for face-to-face engagement, skill-building, and community building.