INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

2025

ACTIVITY REPORT

EMPOWERING CITIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Reporting period: 1 January - 31 December 2025

UrbanizeHub

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Founder's Message

For UrbanizeHub, 2025 was a year of consolidation, expansion and organisational maturity. We continued to develop European projects, launched a new public-facing format - the new Urban Habits festival, expanded UrbanLab for Green Cities nationally across four Romanian cities, and strengthened our partnerships with public administrations, universities and communities.

I believe cities change when good ideas meet the right people, in the right context. That is exactly what we set out to do in 2025: create spaces where expertise, civic energy and the desire for change could meet.

Thank you to everyone who stood alongside us - partners, funders, colleagues, volunteers, participants, local administrations and communities.

Together, we shape the future of cities!

Grațian Mihăilescu, Founder of UrbanizeHub and member of the European Commission Mission Board for 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities

About the Organisation

UrbanizeHub is a Romanian organisation dedicated to sustainable, participatory and innovative urban development.

Through its projects, the organisation supports cities and communities through processes of urban transformation, connecting public administrations, local communities, experts, universities, the private sector and international partners.

Mission

UrbanizeHub's mission is to contribute to building cities that are more sustainable, resilient, collaborative and people-friendly through projects, programmes and partnerships that activate communities, support public administrations, and circulate ideas and practices that are relevant to urban development. The organisation's slogan - "Shaping the Future of Cities Together!" - encapsulates this vision.

Legal Framework

The non-profit activity was carried out through the Institute for Local Development Association (Tax Identification Number: 32937522), the associative entity within the UrbanizeHub ecosystem, headquartered at 2A Timișoarei Street, Reșița, Caraș-Severin County, Romania.

Main Areas of Action in 2025

1. Climate transition and climate neutrality
2. Urban regeneration and nature-based solutions
3. Public participation and co-creation
4. Urban innovation and solution incubation
5. Urban education and behaviour change
6. International partnerships and transfer of good practices
7. Public communication and community activation

3

Programmes and Projects in 2025

The year 2025 brought a diversified portfolio of projects with local, national and European impact. The NGO's activity was organised around five main programme areas, supported by strategic partnerships and European funding.

3.1. EEA Partnerships for Climate Neutrality

In 2025, UrbanizeHub continued implementing two international partnerships funded through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Bilateral Relations, under the project "Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities: Planning, Piloting, Inspiring".

BUCHAREST SECTOR 2 × TRONDHEIM PARTNERSHIP	
Period	September 2024 - April 2025
Lead implementer	UEFISCDI
Partners	UrbanizeHub; Bucharest Sector 2 City Hall; Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest (UTCB); Institute for Economic and Social Climate Resilience (ICRES); Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU); Trondheim City

The project aimed to strengthen Sector 2's administrative capacity to achieve the objectives set out in its Climate City Contract, through peer exchange with the municipality of Trondheim. Activities included study visits to Norway in January-February 2025, institutional capacity-building workshops (Policy Labs), the development of governance mechanisms and a dedicated training programme for public administration staff.

Climate Neutrality Training Programme (January-April 2025)

Coordinated by UrbanizeHub for Bucharest Sector 2 City Hall, the training programme was one of the EEA partnership's key outputs. Structured into three distinct components, it aimed to strengthen the administrative capacity and human resources required for the green transition:

A. Interdisciplinary Climate Committee Capacity-Building Programme
Five four-hour workshops held between January and March 2025 for senior public officials. Topics included an introduction to climate-neutral cities, innovation for change, governance of collaborative processes, public participation and engagement methods, and public-private partnerships for impact.

B. Climate Neutrality Ambassadors Training Programme
Nine three- to four-hour workshops held between January and April 2025 with 50 operational-level public officials (heads of service and project officers). The programme included three stages: foundational knowledge (Climate Fresk), specialised modules (sustainable urban design, food systems, nZEB buildings, green project management) and practical modules (impact monitoring, public participation and carbon-footprint assessment).

C. Communication and Education Campaign
Dissemination of the Climate City Contract objectives and an introduction to the climate transition for all Sector 2 City Hall employees, through online materials circulated internally between February and May 2025.

According to a survey of management-level staff (n=35, November 2024), 86% considered climate neutrality important for Sector 2, while only 20% believed it was their responsibility to integrate the topic into their work. This confirmed the need for the programme.

SUCEAVA × STAVANGER PARTNERSHIP	
Lead implementer	UEFISCDI
Partners	UrbanizeHub; Suceava City Hall; Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava; ICRES; Nordic Edge; University of Stavanger; Stavanger Kommune

The partnership supported Suceava's climate transition through participatory urban-design workshops, communication campaigns, UrbanFest Suceava (March 2025, involving pupils from local communities) and the development of local policies aligned with climate-neutrality objectives.

A similar climate-neutrality training programme was also delivered for Suceava City Hall, using the same structure adapted to the local context.

3.2

UrbanWise - Urban Regeneration in Sector 2

Framework	NetZeroCities / European Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities
Pilot area	Tei neighbourhood, Sector 2, Bucharest

In 2025, UrbanWise continued as UrbanizeHub's main urban-piloting framework in Sector 2, combining urban regeneration, public participation and decarbonisation.

Key activities included:

- Organising an UrbanLab for Green Cities edition dedicated to decarbonisation solutions for the Tei neighbourhood
- Delivering a training and skills-development programme for public administration staff
- Supporting a multidisciplinary working group within the local community
- Developing a piloting framework for urban regeneration and green behaviours
- Communication campaigns, a podcast and awareness-raising events

3.3. ReGreeneration - Horizon Europe Project

Funding	Horizon Europe - Mission for Climate-Neutral Cities
Consortium	Nine European cities

Local partners	Bucharest Sector 2 City Hall, Climato Sfera, UTCB, Nhood

ReGreeneration aims to regenerate vulnerable neighbourhoods and increase climate resilience through nature-based solutions and participatory methods. UrbanizeHub's role focused on public participation and co-creation, advice for local decision-making processes, the organisation of co-creation workshops (including innovative Furban and VR tools), surveys and resident feedback sessions, and the international dissemination of results.

3.4

FAVORIT+ - Urban Regeneration in the Favorit Neighbourhood, Sector 6

Framework	European Urban Initiative - Innovative Actions (EUI-IA)
Pilot area	Favorit neighbourhood, Sector 6, Bucharest
Period	October 2025 - ongoing

FAVORIT+ is funded through the European Urban Initiative - Innovative Actions and focuses on the regeneration of the Favorit neighbourhood in Bucharest's Sector 6. The project combines innovative urban interventions with participatory processes, aiming to improve quality of life in residential areas facing specific challenges related to infrastructure, public space and social cohesion.

UrbanizeHub's role includes facilitating public participation processes, supporting the development of urban-regeneration concepts in dialogue with the community, and contributing to the dissemination of results and good practices at European level.

3.5. Partnership with NEPI Rockcastle

Framework	Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes
Strategic partner	NEPI Rockcastle
Status	Actions launched in 2025 and continuing implementation in 2026

Through its UrbanVision division, UrbanizeHub developed and began implementing strategic partnerships with NEPI Rockcastle in 2025 for the regeneration of public spaces in several Romanian cities. At different stages of development, these projects demonstrate the organisation's capacity to broker unconventional collaborations between the private sector, public administrations and communities in urban design, landscape architecture and sport. All NEPI projects were initiated in 2025 and continue into 2026.

3.5.A

Craiova: “The Garden of Ideas”

Location	Faculty of Physical Education and Sport campus, 146 Brestei Street, next to Promenada Mall Craiova
Period	April-October 2024 (Phase I), with Phase II planned for spring 2025
Partners	UrbanizeHub; NEPI Rockcastle; Promenada Craiova; Faculty of Physical Education and Sport; Oltenia Garden; Romanian-British School Local Association

The Garden of Ideas was an integrated concept for urban interventions on the university campus adjacent to Promenada Craiova. Its objective was to implement a participatory process leading to an integrated investment concept for the study area, in line with sustainable-development goals and New European Bauhaus principles.

The project unfolded in five major stages:

- Stage 0 (April 2024) - site visits and in-depth analysis
- Stage I (May-June 2024) - in-person and online public consultations on campus, with approximately 20 direct participants and more than 100 questionnaire respondents
- Stage II (July-August 2024) - development of preliminary proposals, including moodboards and layout plans for five intervention areas
- Stage III (August-September 2024) - consultations on the preliminary proposals, identification of final solutions and division into two implementation phases
- Stage IV (October 2024) - implementation of Phase I

Phase I was implemented between 9 and 12 October 2024 with the participation of students and university staff. It included modular urban furniture (15 mobile tree planters and 10 mobile benches), two pavilion structures, two deck modules for relaxation, refurbishment of furniture near the greenhouse, approximately 35 square metres of mural art on the annex façades, and the installation of hammocks, beanbags, solar lamps and string lights.

Phase II, planned for spring 2025, includes larger-scale landscape interventions: an irrigation system, gravel paths, development of the access route towards Promenada, tree planting and green islands, a complete lighting system, and replacement of the vine structure with a timber trellis.

The Garden of Ideas served as a reference model for later partnerships with NEPI Rockcastle, demonstrating UrbanVision’s ability to deliver landscape and urban-design interventions through public-private partnerships and complete participatory processes.

3.5.B

Ploiești: Multifunctional Wheeled-Sports Space in Municipal West Park

Status	Design started in 2025; implementation estimated for 2026

The Ploiești project evolved from an initial modular intervention (budget: EUR 70,000-120,000) into the ground-up design of a multifunctional public space for skateboarding, rollerblading, scooters, mountain biking and BMX, with an estimated construction budget exceeding EUR 500,000. The collaboration involved extensive consultations with skaters, riders, parents and coaches, followed by a complete administrative process: a collaboration protocol, a partnership agreement approved by the Ploiești Local Council, and a sponsorship agreement.

In 2025, the UrbanVision team completed geotechnical studies, including boreholes; an OCPI-approved topographic survey; technical approvals; infrastructure checks for drainage and stormwater; and the integration of all required disciplines - architecture, landscape architecture, structural engineering, electrical and plumbing systems, and microclimate analysis. The Feasibility Study reached approximately 90% completion and was due to be submitted to Ploiești City Hall for Local Council approval. Construction is planned for 2026.

Constanța: Public-Space Regeneration Projects

Status	Planning and design started in 2025; on-site implementation planned for June 2026

In Constanța, UrbanVision began analyses and site visits in 2025 for two locations: a playground requiring redevelopment, including the installation of a zip line, and Gravity Park. A January 2026 site visit with representatives of NEPI Rockcastle and the local administration confirmed the complexity of the projects, particularly the need for a building permit for the zip line and close cooperation with Constanța City Hall.

The 2026 implementation schedule for the playground project includes:

1. Planning and Documentation - collaboration protocol with Constanța City Hall and obtaining the urban-planning certificate.
2. Design - Concept phase (existing-conditions analysis, budgeting, identification of required interventions and Concept Plan) and Technical phase (building-permit documentation, technical design, execution details, a maintenance-recommendations manual and obtaining approvals).
3. On-site Implementation - promotion of the event, volunteer recruitment, construction and landscaping together with volunteers, and a community activation event.

The team completed a macro-level diagnosis, desk research and a time and schedule estimate. A landscape supplier database is also being developed, including Oltenia Garden, a partner in Craiova's Garden of Ideas project, and GardenShop in Constanța. Gravity Park remains under assessment, with an estimated investment of approximately EUR 1.7 million requiring local-budget funding.

3.6

new Urban Habits (nUH) - Urban Festival

Date	26-27 April 2025
Location	LOKAL, 57 Mihai Eminescu Street, and Erou Ion Călin Street, temporarily transformed into an active pedestrian space, Bucharest
Organiser	UrbanizeHub
Access	Free, with prior registration

The new Urban Habits festival was one of the most important initiatives of 2025, marking the launch of a new public-facing format at the intersection of sustainability, urban culture, education and behaviour change.

The programme was structured around three content pillars:

- The UrbanTalks stage, featuring presentations and conversations with urban innovators, opinion leaders and sustainability experts
- More than 20 interactive workshops on tactical urbanism, mobility, circular cities, design, artificial intelligence, collaboration, art and critical thinking
- Community activities, interactive installations, guided tours, exhibitions and artistic performances

The festival was informed by prior sociological research carried out with IZI Data, exploring urban perceptions among Romania's population and barriers to the adoption of sustainable behaviours. The findings shaped the programme content and were published on urbanizehub.ro.

nUH generated significant media coverage, with features in Romania Insider, Business Review, Ziare.com, NewsEnergy, Green Community, Visit Bucharest and dozens of other publications. Topics ranged from innovation, design and circularity to community, mobility, housing, art, emotion and urban wellbeing.

3.7. UrbanLab for Green Cities 2025

Period	November 2025
Framework	M100 Mirror Mission Cities Hub National Platform
National strategic partner	Nuclearelectrica

In 2025, UrbanLab for Green Cities delivered its most ambitious edition to date, expanding nationally across four Romanian cities and transforming them into laboratories of ideas for greener and more resilient cities.

Schedule

- Bucharest: 7-9 November
- Cluj-Napoca: 14-16 November
- Timișoara: 21-23 November
- Iași: 28-30 November

Key figures

- 165 participants in teams of three to five people

– 50 mentors and evaluators from the private, academic, public-administration and community sectors
– 39 concepts developed across the four cities
– 24 solutions selected for the next stage, UrbanLab Incubator 2026
– Three thematic categories: Technology, Urban Design and Community

UrbanLab 2025 partners: Nuclearelectrica (national strategic partner), IULIUS, Nhood Romania, Haufe Group, Aumovio, Civica Association, Iași NetZero City Coalition, PLAI Cultural Centre Timișoara and Cluj Cultural Centre.

The solutions addressed diverse challenges, from reducing pollution and mitigating urban heat islands to smart mobility, urban biodiversity and efficient resource management.

3.8

"Bucharest, the City of Parents" Debate

Date	27 May 2025
Partner	HILS Development

On 27 May 2025, UrbanizeHub co-organised the "Bucharest, the City of Parents" debate, dedicated to the challenges of urban life for families with children in the Romanian capital. The event brought together relevant actors from the urban-development, public-administration and private sectors.

4

Public Communication and Research

In 2025, UrbanizeHub maintained and expanded its public-communication activity, using it as infrastructure for urban education and community mobilisation.

Content production

– Thematic articles on urbanizehub.ro about urbanism, sustainability and participation
– Editorial content linked to active projects (EEA, UrbanWise and ReGreeneration)
– Awareness and information campaigns on social media
– Podcasts and media components within projects
– UrbanTalks - the conversation series featuring urban-development experts

Applied Research

The sociological study conducted with IZI Data to inform nUH was a relevant example of applied research with a strategic role. It investigated what residents want from their cities, urban priorities by age group, barriers to sustainable behaviours and the community contexts that need to be cultivated. The results were published at urbanizehub.ro/studiu-ce-vor-oamenii-de-la-orasele-lor/.

Media Coverage

In 2025, UrbanizeHub's activity received coverage in national and international publications, including Romania Insider, Business Review, StartupCafe, Romania Pozitivă, Green Community, NewsEnergy, Ziare.com and Visit Bucharest.

5

Organisational Development and Partnerships

In 2025, the organisation demonstrated a higher level of institutional maturity, reflected in its capacity to coordinate European projects, partnerships with local public administrations, self-initiated public-facing initiatives, sponsor relationships, and complex operational-management and fundraising processes simultaneously.

Types of partners and collaborators

- Local public administrations: Bucharest Sector 2 City Hall, Suceava City Hall, Bucharest Sector 6 City Hall and Ploiești City Hall
- Universities: UTCB, Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, NTNU Trondheim and the University of Stavanger
- European institutions and initiatives: UEFISCDI, the European Commission Mission for Cities and NetZeroCities
- Norwegian partners: Trondheim City, Stavanger Kommune and Nordic Edge
- Project partners: Climato Sfera, ICRES, Nhood and IZI Data
- Sponsors and private partners: Nuclearelectrica, IULIUS, Haufe Group, Aumovio and HILS Development
- Private CSR partners: NEPI Rockcastle (Ploiești, Constanța and Craiova)
- Partner organisations: Civica Association, Iași NetZero City Coalition, PLAI Cultural Centre and Cluj Cultural Centre

2025 Financial Overview

The financial data are extracted from the trial balance of the Institute for Local Development Association (Tax Identification Number 32937522) for the period 1 January-31 December 2025.

Revenue

Category	Amount (RON)
Revenue from aid / grants (European projects)	1,944,326.11
Sponsorship revenue	1,003,100.50
Donation revenue	299,141.00
Interest and other revenue	19,204.64
TOTAL REVENUE	**3,265,772.25**

Main Expenditure

Category	Amount (RON)
Salaries and related contributions	1,209,485.00
Third-party services	1,060,036.16
External collaborators	89,208.00
Travel, secondments and transfers	91,156.72
Advertising and publicity	37,327.00
Hospitality and protocol	25,006.82
Materials and consumables	37,366.84
Rent	2,221.92
Utilities: energy, water and gas	1,430.32
Transport of goods and personnel	16,460.61
Banking services	4,856.37
Donations and subsidies granted	10,800.00
Depreciation of fixed assets	13,345.79
Other expenditure: taxes, fines, etc.	2,616.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (ESTIMATED)	**~2,599,887.23***

* Total expenditure was calculated from the balances of the expense accounts in the trial balance.

Financial Result

According to the trial balance as at 31 December 2025, the Association recorded a surplus (credit balance of account 121) of RON 665,885.02, reflecting prudent and efficient management of financial resources.

Revenue Structure

Revenue from European grants (EEA and Norway Grants, Horizon Europe and NetZeroCities) represented 59.5% of total revenue, followed by sponsorships (30.7%) and donations (9.2%). This diversified structure confirms the organisation's capacity to attract funding from multiple sources.

7

Impact and Relevance

7.1. Impact on Public Administrations and Urban Policy

- Strengthening the administrative capacity of Bucharest Sector 2 and Suceava Municipality in climate-transition processes
- Facilitating interinstitutional collaboration through workshops, Policy Labs and study visits
- Contributing to governance structures for the Climate City Contract
- Developing a dedicated decarbonisation training programme for public administration staff

7.2. Impact on Communities

- More than 165 direct participants in UrbanLab 2025 across four cities
- Hundreds of participants at the new Urban Habits festival
- Creating opportunities for participation and co-creation around urban challenges
- Making complex sustainability topics accessible to the general public

7.3. Impact on the Urban-Innovation Ecosystem

- 39 solution concepts generated and 24 selected for incubation
- Connecting 50 mentors and evaluators with participating teams
- Consolidating UrbanLab as a national urban-innovation platform
- The example of Rastel.io - from an UrbanizeHub hackathon to an international startup

7.4. Visibility and Public Positioning

- Strengthening UrbanizeHub's profile as a reference organisation in urbanism, sustainability and civic engagement
- Significant national and international media coverage
- Founder Grațian Mihăilescu's membership of the European Mission Board
- Opening a new strategic communication channel through the nUH festival

Conclusions and Outlook for 2026

The year 2025 confirmed UrbanizeHub's capacity to operate as a bridge organisation connecting urban strategy, public participation, experimentation and communication.

The NGO succeeded in:

- Continuing relevant European projects and partnerships, including EEA, Horizon Europe and NetZeroCities
- Expanding UrbanLab for Green Cities nationally to four cities, with 165 participants and 24 selected solutions
- Launching a new public-facing format - the new Urban Habits festival - with significant media impact
- Strengthening strategic partnerships with public administrations, universities, the private sector and European partners

Priorities for 2026

- UrbanLab Incubator 2026 - accelerating the 24 solutions selected in 2025
- Continuing the ReGreeneration project and UrbanWise activities
- Preparing the second edition of the new Urban Habits festival
- Expanding the portfolio of European projects and the partnership network
- Consolidating UrbanizeHub's role as a national platform for urban innovation and community activation
- Developing the FAVORIT+ project in Bucharest Sector 6
- Continuing the NEPI Rockcastle partnership: completing the Feasibility Study and constructing the Ploiești skatepark; implementing the Constanța project on site in June 2026; and completing Phase II of Craiova's Garden of Ideas
- The Săsăuș project - developing a business incubator and digital-nomad hub in rural Transylvania

Through its work in 2025, UrbanizeHub confirmed its role as an organisation that does not merely discuss the future of cities, but contributes concretely to shaping it. The overall direction remains clear: building greener, more collaborative, more resilient and more people-centred cities.

URBANIZEHUB

TOGETHER, WE SHAPE THE FUTURE OF CITIES!

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