



## **HEIs as Innovative Triggers of Sustainable Development in European Cities in Post Covid-19 era**



### **REPORT FROM RIJEKA TRANSNATIONAL MEETING INCLUDING GOOD PRACTICE PRESENTATION**

**Host Partner: SmartRI**

**Participating Partners: LAMA, WSB University, MRU**

**Venue: RiHub, Rijeka**

**Dates: 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 2023**

## Content

### Part 1. Presentation of the study visit

#### 1. The purpose of the study visit

The study visit to Rijeka, held from November 7th to 9th, 2023, was organized to advance the collaborative efforts among the HEIsCITI project partners. The focus was on reviewing project progress, refining methodologies, discussing tool and pilot scenario development, and ensuring alignment on educational outcomes and participatory processes. Rijeka was planned as the site for this visit due to its exemplary participatory governance model, where citizen engagement plays a pivotal role in urban planning and revitalization projects. By experiencing Rijeka's approach firsthand, participants aimed to draw inspiration and practical insights that could be integrated into the HEIsCITI curriculum, ensuring that the methodologies developed are grounded in successful real-world practices.



Figure 1 RiHub part of the meeting

## 2. Agenda of the study visit and presentation of the entities visited/met during the visit

### **November 7th, 2023 (Tuesday):**

The day began at the RiHub venue with a series of presentations and workshops. The opening session included an introduction to SmartRI, followed by a project status update by WSB. MRU led a workshop to discuss and refine the draft methodology. After lunch, participants enjoyed a guided tour of Rijeka's city center. The day concluded with a summary discussion on student questionnaires at the Smart RI offices.

### **November 8th, 2023 (Wednesday):**

This day focused on workshops for tool and pilot scenario development. WSB and LAMA led discussions on tools, while WSB, SmartRI, and DaNang University presented and discussed pilot scenarios. After lunch, participants toured the City Museum and the Bencic complex, a new cultural center in Rijeka funded by EU funds. The day ended with a discussion on guidelines at the Smart RI offices.

The final day included a summary session to discuss the outcomes of the visit and plan the next steps. The visit concluded with a trip to the Peak and Poke Museum.



Figure 2 heiSciti in Smart RI

### Entities Visited:

- **RiHub:** Served as the main venue for presentations, workshops, and discussions.
- **Smart RI Offices:** Hosted key discussions on student questionnaires and project guidelines.
- **City Museum and Bencic Complex:** Provided cultural and historical context, showcasing EU-funded revitalization efforts.
- **Peak and Poke Museum:** Offered a unique cultural experience to conclude the visit.

### 3. Results of the study visit (outcomes/decisions/inspirations)

#### Outcomes:

- **Methodology Refinement:**
  - The methodology for the course was thoroughly discussed and refined, focusing on the inclusion of lectures, workshops, case studies, and consultations. Educational outcomes will encompass knowledge, skills, and social competences, with specific agreements on group sizes, attendance requirements, and the use of pre- and post-pilot questionnaires to evaluate student progress.
  - MRU committed to updating the methodology document based on workshop discussions, with an online meeting scheduled to finalize details and ensure all partners are aligned.
- **Tool and Pilot Scenario Development:**
  - Tools for the project, including scripts for lectures, workshops, and case studies, were discussed. LAMA proposed a comprehensive list of tools, which will be finalized and adapted to the project's needs by the end of 2023.
  - The structure of the pilots was solidified, with a focus on integrating participatory methods that engage stakeholders, including local authorities, companies, and citizens, in the learning process.
- **Emphasis on Rijeka's Participatory Processes:**
  - A key highlight of the study visit was the presentation and exploration of Rijeka's participatory processes within its governance model. The city of Rijeka has successfully implemented a governance approach that actively involves

citizens in decision-making, particularly in the revitalization of abandoned urban areas.

- This participatory approach, showcased during the workshops and site visits, provided valuable insights into how such methods can be integrated into the project. The process of involving various stakeholders—from local authorities to ordinary citizens—in the development and execution of urban projects was particularly inspiring.
- The Bencic complex, funded by EU resources, serves as a prime example of this approach, demonstrating how collaborative efforts can transform cultural and urban spaces. This model of participatory governance will be reflected in the project's pilot scenarios, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and empowerment.

### **Decisions:**

- Finalization of Methodology:
  - A final version of the methodology will be developed, integrating feedback from the Rijeka workshop, with a particular focus on embedding participatory governance practices. The document will be circulated to all partners by December, with the aim of finalizing the course structure and content.
- Tool Development and Implementation:
  - Tools proposed by LAMA, designed to facilitate participatory processes in urban governance, will be refined and made available to all partners by the end of 2023. These tools will be crucial in implementing the participatory models discussed during the visit.
- Pilot Implementation:
  - The pilots, scheduled across various locations, will incorporate participatory approaches inspired by Rijeka's model. This includes engaging local communities and stakeholders in the learning and decision-making processes, ensuring the pilots are not only educational but also practically applicable in real-world governance scenarios.

### **Inspirations:**

- Cultural Integration and Participatory Governance:
  - The exposure to Rijeka's participatory governance model, coupled with the cultural experiences during the visit, inspired participants to emphasize the importance of community involvement in urban development projects. This will be a cornerstone of the project's implementation moving forward.

- Collaborative Synergy:
  - The discussions and workshops reinforced the collaborative spirit among partners, leading to a stronger commitment to achieving project goals, with a shared understanding of the importance of participatory governance.

## **Part 2. Description of the good practice presented during the study visit**

### 1. The topic of the case study

The case study focuses on **Rijeka's innovative participatory processes in urban governance and development**, highlighting three key initiatives:

- **“Uključi se”/“Get involved”**: The development of active participation of residents in the community was one of the key elements of the Rijeka 2020 – European Capital of Culture programme.
- **Citizen Council**: A platform that allows citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes related to urban issues and municipal governance. Platform's origins stem from Rijeka's European Capital of Culture journey where the idea was born through the Get Involved initiative.
- **Urban Regeneration of Export Drvo**: A project focused on the revitalization of the Export Drvo site, a post-industrial area, through participatory workshops facilitated by the ReValue EU project.
- **Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project)**: A collaborative hub established under the CEKOM project, aimed at fostering innovation and co-creation between citizens, experts, and authorities to address urban challenges and develop sustainable solutions.

These initiatives reflect Rijeka's commitment to incorporating citizen input into urban planning, creating a more inclusive and sustainable city.



Figure 3 heiSciti in the city

## 2. Challenge addressed in the case study

The primary challenge addressed by these initiatives is the **integration of citizen participation into urban planning and development**. Historically, urban development in many cities has been top-down, often overlooking the needs and perspectives of the residents who live and work in these spaces. Rijeka faced the challenge of transforming its post-industrial areas, like Export Drvo, in a way that respects the city's historical heritage while meeting contemporary urban needs.

The challenge also included overcoming **public skepticism and disengagement**, where citizens might feel their voices are not valued in governmental processes. Additionally, the case study addresses the challenge of **bridging the gap between expert knowledge and local wisdom**, ensuring that urban development and other actions that are being carried out with the help of the participatory process, is both technically sound and socially responsive.

The central challenge addressed is how to effectively integrate citizen participation into various aspects of urban planning and governance. Each initiative targets different aspects of this overarching challenge:

- **“Uključi se”/“Get involved”**: The development of active participation of residents in the community was one of the key elements of the Rijeka 2020 – European Capital of Culture programme. In that context, the the programmes under the 27 Neighbourhoods flagship and participatory programmes (Civil Initiatives, Green Wave, and Citizens’

Assembly) represent the key component of the Rijeka 2020 programme since they aim at engaging citizens, just like the Volunteering in Culture programme. The culture of volunteering in the sector of culture was recognised as an area that has to be strengthened in Rijeka. The response to this challenge included activities to attract volunteers and raise awareness of the importance of volunteer engagement in the cultural sector.

- **Citizen Council:** Addresses the need for ongoing citizen involvement in municipal governance, ensuring that citizens have a formal avenue to influence decision-making processes.
- **ReValue Workshops:** Focuses on involving citizens directly in the urban regeneration process, particularly in the transformation of historically and culturally significant sites like Export Drvo.
- **Urban Laboratory:** Tackles the challenge of creating a space where new urban solutions can be co-created and tested with active citizen participation, ensuring that innovations are responsive to the needs of the community.

### 3. Main stages in co-creation of the solution and involved actors

Each initiative followed its unique process in co-creating solutions with the involvement of various actors:

“Uključi se”/”Get involved”



Figure 4 Rijeka 2020 Volunteers



- **Objectives**

- **Design and Implement a Volunteering System:** Develop a comprehensive volunteering system to support cultural activities in Rijeka, particularly in the context of the RIJEKA 2020 project.
- **Sensitize Cultural Organizations:** Raise awareness among cultural organizations about the benefits and importance of volunteer involvement in cultural initiatives.
- **Integrate New Volunteers:** Facilitate the integration of new volunteers into cultural projects, ensuring they are effectively matched with appropriate activities and roles.
- **Develop Existing Volunteers:** Provide ongoing development and training programs for volunteers who are already active, enhancing their skills and engagement in cultural projects.

- **Involved Actors**



Figure 5 Rijeka 2020 Volunteers

- **SMART Volunteer Centre:** Played a key role in designing and implementing the volunteering system, providing expertise and coordination for volunteer activities.
- **Croatian Cultural Centre Sušak:** Collaborated in the implementation of the volunteering programme, particularly in organizing and hosting cultural events that engaged volunteers.

- **RIJEKA 2020 Company:** Actively involved in raising awareness and training cultural organizations and their employees, ensuring alignment with the broader RIJEKA 2020 goals.
  - **Cultural Organizations from Rijeka:** Participated in the awareness-raising and training sessions, preparing to effectively integrate volunteers into their activities.
  - **Volunteers:** Both new and existing volunteers were central to the initiative, participating in development programs and contributing to cultural projects.
- **Stages**



- **Planning and Design:** Initial consultations between the SMART Volunteer Centre, Croatian Cultural Centre Sušak, and RIJEKA 2020 to design the volunteering system, development of detailed plans for volunteer roles, training, and integration processes.
- **Sensitization and Awareness-Raising:** Conducted 11 awareness-raising training sessions in 2018 and 2019, targeting cultural organizations and RIJEKA 2020 employees, Focus on the benefits of volunteer engagement and strategies for effectively integrating volunteers into cultural projects.
- **Volunteer Recruitment and Integration:** Launched campaigns and activities to recruit new volunteers for cultural projects, developed and implemented processes to integrate new volunteers into ongoing activities, ensuring a smooth transition into their roles.

- **Volunteer Development:** Provided targeted development programs for active volunteers, enhancing their skills and deepening their engagement in cultural initiatives, Continuous support and feedback mechanisms to ensure volunteers felt valued and effective in their roles.



Figure 6 Rijeka 2020 Citizen Assembly

- **Implementation and Monitoring:** Ongoing implementation of the volunteering system in cultural projects, with continuous monitoring and adjustment based on feedback from volunteers and cultural organizations, regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the volunteer program, ensuring it met the objectives set out at the beginning of the initiative.

#### Citizen Council:

- **Objective:** To create a formal structure where citizens can engage directly with municipal authorities on urban governance issues.
- **Involved Actors:** Citizens of Rijeka, municipal authorities, city council members, and local community leaders.
- **Stages:** Establishment of the council, regular public meetings, and integration of citizen input into municipal decisions.

#### ReValue Workshops for Export Drvo Regeneration:

- **Objective:** To involve citizens in the regeneration of the Export Drvo site, ensuring the project reflects community needs and preserves the area's cultural heritage.
- **Involved Actors:** Local citizens, ReValue project team, urban planners, cultural heritage experts, and Rijeka City Council.

- **Stages:** Initial public consultations, participatory workshops, collaborative design processes, and finalization of the regeneration plan.

#### Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project):

- **Objective:** To establish a collaborative environment where innovative urban solutions can be developed with input from citizens and experts.
- **Involved Actors:** CEKOM project team, citizens, local businesses, academic institutions, and urban development experts.
- **Stages:** Setting up the laboratory, engaging stakeholders, conducting pilot projects, and iterating solutions based on feedback.

## 4. Implemented solutions

The implemented solutions were a comprehensive, **multi-stakeholder participatory framework** that integrated citizen input into the urban regeneration and governance processes. This framework included:

- **“Uključi se”/“Get involved”:** The 2018 and 2019 Get Involved campaign encouraged the citizens of Rijeka to get actively involved in the Rijeka 2020 project, propose ideas at the Civil Initiatives and Green Wave tenders, become members of the Citizens' Assembly or volunteers. Campaign activities included neighborhood tours and the promotion of civil participation, enabling direct interaction and informing about engagement opportunities. Additionally, as a part of the campaign, an information leaflet was distributed to 65,000 addresses in the city of Rijeka together with monthly utility bills. In 2018 80 project proposals were submitted to tenders, while 94 applications were submitted for participation in the Citizens' Assembly. As a result, 22 projects were approved for 2019. In the second tender, for 2020, 61 applications for the Citizens' Assembly and 61 project proposals were received, of which 12 were selected. The structure of the Citizens' Assembly mirrored the demographic structure of the population of Rijeka according to age and gender. Members of the Citizens' Assembly, 60 of them, were chosen by lottery; they later evaluated the submitted projects for Civil Initiatives and Green Wave. Before project evaluations, all members received training on methodology, project values and the role of participatory decision-making, as well as on the importance of strengthening the local community. This initiative was the idea origin for the Citizens Council action.
- **Citizens' Council:** Rijeka has also established an informal body known as the Citizens' Council, which consists of randomly selected citizens. This assembly is tasked with providing recommendations on how to improve the local self-government system and enhance citizen participation. It represents a microcosm of the city's diverse population, with members drawn from various ages, genders, and residential areas. This assembly

worked closely with the City Council to ensure that the voices of ordinary citizens are heard in the decision-making process.



Figure 7 The Rijeka Citizen Council, 2023.

- **Participatory Budgeting:** The city has implemented a participatory budgeting model, allowing citizens to directly engage in the budgeting process. This includes proposing small municipal interventions, participating in the Local Partnership Programme, and engaging in [educational online budget games](#). These mechanisms empower citizens to have a direct impact on how the city's budget is allocated and spent.
- **Transparency and Open Data:** Rijeka is recognized as the most transparent and digitally advanced city in Croatia. The city administration emphasizes open communication with citizens and participatory management. Tools like the Open Data Portal provide a platform for collaboration between academia, entrepreneurs, and the local government. Additionally, initiatives such as the "Say it out loud" section on Rijeka's web portal allow citizens to actively contribute to the quality of life in their city.
- **Urban Regeneration of Export Drvo:** The site, once an underutilized industrial area, was transformed into a vibrant cultural and community space. The design and development of this space were directly informed by the ideas and feedback gathered from the participatory workshops facilitated by the ReValue project. The regeneration project is working on preserving the industrial heritage of the site while introducing new cultural and social functions that met contemporary needs.

- **Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project):** The Urban Laboratory functioned as a testing ground for new urban policies and practices, with a strong emphasis on participatory governance. It allowed for the continuous refinement of urban solutions based on real-time feedback from citizens and experts. The lab also acted as a model for other cities looking to implement similar participatory frameworks.

## 5. Short-term and long-term results of intervention

### Short-Term Results:

- **“Uključi se”/”Get involved”:** In the short term, the campaign effectively increased citizen engagement in the Rijeka 2020 project. In 2018, it resulted in the submission of 80 project proposals and 94 applications for the Citizens' Assembly. By 2019, this engagement had led to the approval of 22 projects. The following year, in 2020, the campaign continued to foster participation, with 61 applications each for the Citizens' Assembly and project proposals, ultimately selecting 12 projects for implementation. The campaign also focused on immediate training and evaluation processes, with members of the Citizens' Assembly receiving thorough training on participatory decision-making. This training was crucial for them to effectively evaluate the submitted projects, ensuring diverse and informed community input. Additionally, the campaign's outreach activities, such as neighborhood tours and the distribution of information leaflets to 65,000 addresses, significantly raised awareness about engagement opportunities, leading to heightened community involvement. A total of 5,440 citizens participated in 118 events organized through the campaign, demonstrating a strong initial connection between the community and the Rijeka 2020 project.
- **Citizen Council:** Increased transparency in governance and greater citizen trust in municipal processes.
- **ReValue Workshops:** Successfully gathered diverse community input for the Export Drvo project, leading to a design that enjoys broad public support.
- **Urban Laboratory:** Initial pilot projects demonstrated the potential of the lab as a space for innovation, attracting interest from various stakeholders.

### Long-Term Results:

- **“Uključi se”/”Get involved”:** In the long term, the campaign played a pivotal role in strengthening civil initiatives within Rijeka. It enabled informal citizen groups to apply for financial support, broadening participation beyond formally registered associations and establishing a new precedent for future participatory projects. This shift has had a lasting impact on the city's approach to civic engagement and funding mechanisms. The cultural and social

effects of the campaign were profound. The projects funded through the Civil Initiatives and Green Wave tenders contributed significantly to the city's cultural and social development. They created valuable spaces for education, entertainment, and creativity, and encouraged residents to actively shape their living environment. This has had a lasting influence on the quality and dynamics of everyday life in various neighborhoods. Furthermore, the campaign laid the groundwork for sustained civic engagement. The participatory model established through the Citizens' Assembly and the campaign's broader initiatives fostered ongoing public participation and influence in local governance and community projects. The long-term impact includes the creation of the Citizens Council action, reflecting the campaign's success in embedding civic engagement into the city's governance practices. Additionally, the Green Wave initiatives led to lasting environmental and urban improvements. The creation of urban oases and the promotion of environmental awareness have contributed to Rijeka's long-term sustainability goals, enhancing public spaces and fostering a greener city.

- **Citizen Council:** A sustained culture of citizen involvement in governance, with the council continuing to influence key municipal decisions.
- **ReValue Workshops:** A regenerated Export Drvo site that serves as a model for community-driven urban development, blending cultural heritage with contemporary functionality.



Figure 8 Export Drvo Hall

- **Urban Laboratory:** The lab established itself as a critical component of Rijeka's urban development strategy, continuously generating innovative solutions that enhance the city's sustainability and livability.

6. Description of the good practice to be multiplied based on this case

- **Citizen Council:** Other municipalities can replicate this model to ensure that citizen input remains a central part of urban governance, fostering transparency and inclusivity.
- **ReValue Workshops:** The participatory approach used in the Export Drvo regeneration can serve as a template for other cities undertaking urban renewal projects, particularly those with significant cultural or historical aspects.

The ReValue workshops utilize a method of a Impact Model Workshop: a gamified approach, with tools that help participants map out their resources, needs and limitations as well as opportunities for different areas of change. It being a very useful tool, SmartRi team asked ReVaule to share this practice with heiSciti. The files with the materials and process for a „impact model domino game“ have been shared with the heiSciti team on a <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tzT4oC5zyT384vu6YoiZzk8AzvoIuggC?usp=sharing>

The cooperation will be useful for both projects to further develop different participatory methods.

- **Urban Laboratory (CEKOM Project):** The concept of an urban laboratory can be adopted by other cities to create spaces where new urban solutions can be co-created, tested, and refined in collaboration with citizens, ensuring that innovations are grounded in real community needs.



Figure 9 CEKOM Multifunctional device - part of the Urban Laboratory