

IN-HABIT AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION

An article by M. Delgado,
Project Coordinator

This year, 2022, is the European Year of Youth, when the European Union has decided to put a special focus on younger generations, their great potential, and their new, innovative points of view. This is a great opportunity to build a better future – one that's greener, more inclusive, and digital – with plenty of chances to learn, share good and unexpected visions, meet people, and engage in activities and common interests all across Europe. Now that the year is coming to an end, we have asked our coordinator, Maria del Mar Delgado, to share her thoughts on why IN-HABIT is so important for the younger generations and how they can shape a better and more inclusive future.

"As the coordinator of an inclusive and innovative project such as IN-HABIT, I cannot but take into consideration the impact that young generations have on today's world and on the future of our planet. **The new generations are more sensitive to social, environmental, and economic issues, as shown by their positive and productive activism, especially in the last few years and in global yet peaceful movements.**



In the IN-HABIT project's four pilot cities, **the involvement of new generations, children, and youngsters is key to the success and fulfilment of the project's objectives.** They can adapt new lifestyles and positively influence their communities, starting with their families and expanding to local networks. In particular, the aim of increasing health and well-being can be fostered in younger generations through the use of innovative tools, and younger generations can also help decrease the digital gap between generations or population groups at risk of exclusion. **We want children and the younger generation to take this chance to be their cities' and local environments' first testaments to a possible, fruitful change in the places and neighbourhoods they live in.**

In 2023, a mentoring and coaching programme will be launched to which young people can apply in order to be supported by business experts. This will provide a great opportunity to increase youth entrepreneurship and help young people make their innovative business ideas a reality.

All the project's research partners are focused on co-creating innovative solutions for better and more liveable spaces in the four IN-HUBS, where the cross-

fertilisation of ideas and development of new initiatives are given space to take place. IN-HABIT's research partners are putting a lot of effort into involving local (young) populations as much as possible in a concrete way, tailored to the needs of small cities.

"We believe in the power of young people and their willingness to create positive change";

the European Year of Youth provides the perfect moment for moving forward with confidence and hope in a post-pandemic perspective. **We, as a project, will do our best to support the grassroots initiatives coming from young people, empowering them and making their visions possible.**

In general, the project will implement specific initiatives directed at young people and children: storytelling laboratories, for instance, and workshops in order to enable the local population to promote the changes they want to see in their cities and neighbourhoods, making them protagonists in leading the change, along with other groups at risk of disadvantage. Our goal is that the soft and hard solutions implemented in these four pilot cities during the five years of the project will lead to possible models to be implemented in other small and medium-sized cities around Europe, each with their own specificities.



In **Córdoba**, for example, the local community activators organise several workshops and events for families that help create a good social environment in the neighbourhood and build strong bonds. This can happen thanks to the presence of children and youngsters. What great teamwork!



Many unconventional hard solutions are being implemented in **Nitra**, in Hyde Park, which will become a green space and meeting point for the young population, where it's possible to organise events, rent bikes, and grow a food garden. Isn't it amazing for nature lovers?

Riga, on the other hand, gives space to young entrepreneurs to propose ideas and workshops, as well as providing them with a space at the Āgenskalns Market to sell their products: from organic grocery to vegan candles... and much more. Such a great opportunity to start new businesses!



While in **Lucca** the focus lies on the unique value of the human-animal bond, exploring new ways and spaces to spend time with pets while building a greener, more functional city with dedicated animal-friendly spaces."



IN-HABIT will keep working with children and youngsters throughout the project's remaining years and especially in 2023, which has been announced as the European Year of Skills. This will be a great chance to build the conditions that will enable the newer generations to undertake training and build high-in-demand skills that will make them successful adults."

AUTHORS

Maña Mar Delgado, Dpto. Economía Agraria - Agricultural Economics Department
Escuela T.S. de Ingeniería Agronómica y Montes - Higher School of Agriculture and Forestry Engineering. Universidad de Córdoba.