



IN-HABIT - INclusive Health And wellbeing  
In small and medium size ciTies

## D2.1 - SUMMARY

# Inclusive Transformation Plan of Āgenskalns Market area in Riga

Riga's Pilot



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**Riga** is Latvia's capital and largest city. It is also the most economically developed city in Latvia, consistently accounting for over half of the Latvian GDP. Nonetheless, the population is slowly declining, and the city faces several issues that hamper the perception of Riga as an inclusive and safe place for all, leading to different experiences of the city's urban spaces. These issues require the development of **innovative solutions focusing on health and well-being** in a broad sense.

The Riga team will focus its attention on **Āgenskalns**. This historical neighbourhood is currently envisaged in Riga city development plans as a residential area and place for innovative businesses, to be developed by advancing green infrastructure, nature-based innovations, and developing science and education centres of national importance. However, investments currently being made need to be supplemented with cultural activities and healthy lifestyle opportunities for local residents.

The success of **Kalnciema Quarter (KQ)** in developing an urban quarter in Āgenskalns has shown the potential of sustainably produced and locally sourced food in inclusively revitalising social and cultural life, promoting health-conscious dietary habits. This experience is now being taken forward in a new project, the **transformation of Āgenskalns market into an intercultural and creative food hub** in collaboration with Riga City Council, Riga Planning Region (RPR), and Baltic Studies Centre (BSC).

The Riga team's main goal is **to promote healthy and inclusive communities** in Āgenskalns by developing the market into an open and creative food hub, focusing on sustainable food as the basis for healthy and inclusive well-being. Co-creation activities will be geared towards food education and the popularisation of sustainable diets and consumption habits, and social and cultural activities.

The Inclusive Transformation Plan (ITP) provides an overview of the initial vision for the development of Āgenskalns market, insight into how this vision was developed, and lessons that can be drawn.

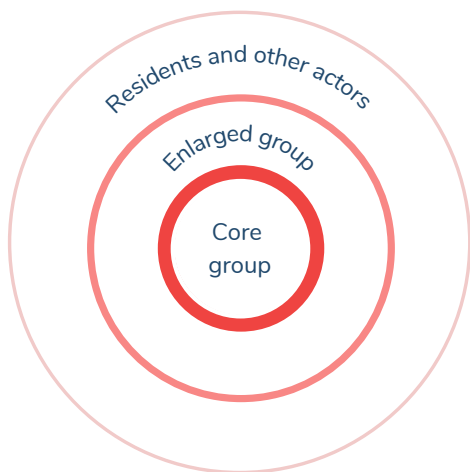
## IN-HUB establishment: organisation, methods, and achievements

The core project team consists of **Riga's three project partners: Kalnciema Quarter, BSC, and RPR**. In the core team's initial meetings, a **stakeholder mapping exercise** was carried out. It was agreed that the primary stakeholders who should be directly involved in the project are the residents of Āgenskalns and the neighbourhood association of Āgenskalns. These stakeholders have been and will continue to be approached to participate in IN-HABIT events and co-creation workshops. As well as the core project team, the Riga IN-HUB established a User Advisory Board (UAB), with members selected via an open call in January and February 2021, primarily circulated via social media. Local Community Activators (LCAs) were also selected from the core team and underwent training.

The organisation and governance of the Riga IN-HUB has been envisaged as **a set of three concentric circles of actors** who carry out their tasks by interacting with each other and networking with other stakeholders, while primarily being driven by the vision of the core team. The first circle consists of **the core group**. The second circle is **the enlarged group**, which also includes a small number of development specialists and activists, and representatives of various organisations and associations. The outermost circle refers to **the residents of Āgenskalns and other actors** interested in the future development of Āgenskalns market.

Interactions between the core team, the UAB, and other interested parties have been irregular and primarily organised around specific IN-HABIT

activities. The core team generally takes the initiative in proposing an activity or event, while the UAB and other stakeholders are heavily involved in developing the substance of the vision for Āgenskalns market.



### **Co-design of visionary and integrated solutions (VIS): top-down driven and bottom-up participative processes**

The overall approach for developing VIS in Riga is heavily influenced and shaped by the **Toolkit for Stakeholder Engagement with a Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (GDEI) perspective** developed for training LCAs. The toolkit provides guidelines, methods, and tools for the wider engagement of stakeholders in the people-public-private partnerships that will be developed in the Riga IN-HUB.

The core team selected two of its members to participate in an online training programme developed for LCAs that took place in March and April 2021. The aim was to equip participants with the skills necessary to act as community leaders and facilitate change in their local context, primarily via exposure to the principles of co-design, citizen engagement, GDEI, mindset change, communication, and impact assessment methodologies and tools.



During the project's initial phase, IN-HABIT partner ISIM developed a **set of context-based inclusive health and well-being indicators** for Riga in cooperation with local researchers and residents. The selection followed an iterative and participative process which allowed for the combination of a theoretical perspective with the context-based perspective of local researchers and residents.

The **co-design** started with a literature review and the theoretical conceptualisation of inclusive health and well-being. The initial results were refined and validated through an iterative co-design process. The results of each step were used to revise and validate the previous choices and to refine knowledge on the local context and expected changes in terms of inclusive health and well-being.

The IN-HABIT baseline study on inclusive health and well-being was coordinated and carried out by ISIM. This study aimed to identify and describe the starting point of the condition of local target groups in terms of health and well-being. The analysis was based on qualitative and quantitative key impact indicators pre-identified and co-designed with local partners, citizens, and GDEI organisations. As part of the impact assessment, ISIM analysed secondary data with the help of BSC and RPR.

The Riga team organised three online co-design workshops aimed at co-articulating a vision for the development of Āgenskalns market with a GDEI perspective. The first two were public events organised in a hybrid format. The third was attended by members of the UAB. In addition to the workshops, the core team organised **two community surveys** to gather input and suggestions.

The choice of methods has largely been determined by the public health situation in Latvia and the fact that the planned VIS are still at an early stage of development. The choice has been in favour of traditional methods though they have had to be modified to adjust to the circumstances. Specifically, workshops and surveys involved a significant online component, though effort was made to ensure that people who do not use online tools could also participate. Nonetheless, a more pronounced effort will have to be made in future to ensure the participation of different groups.

## City-specific VIS to boost IHW

The initial plans for Āgenskalns market involved both hard and soft solutions. In particular, the plan was to concentrate on improvements to the physical public infrastructure in and around the territory of Āgenskalns market, and the promotion of food-related educational and consumption practices. While some key components of the solutions had been clearly defined at the outset, it was intended that many elements of the transformation plan would be co-designed with local stakeholders to ensure a variety of perspectives would shape the development of Āgenskalns market.

While creating the vision for the direction IN-HABIT would take in Riga, the local context and the needs of the local community were considered. Different options were explored through community surveys and public workshops with residents in the neighbourhood. The overall vision created is that **Āgenskalns market needs to be a multifunctional, open, and inclusive public space**. It will primarily function as a market with a focus



on making **locally sourced food** more easily accessible. However, it will also provide **cultural and educational opportunities**, acting as a community or cultural centre in the neighbourhood. By taking this approach, the market can have an impact on the community in several ways, such as inclusive health,

environmental awareness, educational and cultural opportunities, economic growth, and innovative solutions through interdisciplinary cooperation.

## Emerging lessons and recommendations

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One **key challenge** has been in ensuring the GDEI perspective despite the limited involvement of some target groups, such as elderly people and ethnic minorities. This will be addressed in subsequent work that aims to

develop concrete strategies for engaging the relevant groups in a more targeted way, thus ensuring their participation and contribution to the overall goals of the Riga pilot.

The team has occasionally noted that the purpose and value of some activities is not sufficiently clear, requiring a creative re-interpretation of the description of these activities to make sure people are willing to attend. Furthermore, it is likely the IN-HUB will encounter issues in the co-deployment and co-management stages and will require assistance from transversal partners to address these.

Emerging recommendations include the following:

- It is important to ground IN-HUB work in the city context in terms of the well-being situation, needs of the population, and the agenda around the city's development plans and policies.
- It is equally important to build on the development legacy, relevant development projects and initiatives, and create synergies to maximise the relevance and impact of the IN-HUB.
- The IN-HUB is an open structure meant to stimulate and drive co-creation. It requires continuous effort in terms of mobilisation, facilitation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- The desired effect and impact of the IN-HUB depends on its enlargement according to the principles of PPPP. This can be achieved by purposeful networking.
- The dynamic co-design and co-deployment of sustainable hard and soft solutions alth and well-being of citizens are dependent on the skilful management of the IN-HUB.

This is an abstract of D2.1 Inclusive Transformation Plan of Āgenskalns market area in Riga (2022), by project partners BSC, KQ and RPR.

