BETTER
Interreg Europe

European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Final conference and partner meeting

May 23, 2023
Nyíregyháza, Hungary

COMUNE DI GENOVA

Birmingham City Council

Gävle kommun

TARTU

NYÍREGYHÁZA

Project summary

BETTER helps public authorities to stimulate regional innovation chains by developing e-government solutions.

The project encourages public authorities to develop regional innovation strategies to accomplish this and links e-government solutions with the innovation chain to create a **win-win initiative**.

- Municipalities and regions need to **improve** their **public services, while cutting costs**: e-government is one way to do this.
- In turn, adopting e-government solutions can be **used to stimulate the local or regional innovation chain**: e.g., the design, supply and maintenance of specialized services (such as AI technology).

Key issues are:

- **Physical and virtual infrastructure** to support innovation;
- How to develop and apply **new innovative products and services**;
- Processes to support **new business models and cross-sector** (private-public-community) **partnerships**; and
- **People and skills** to make it happen.

This short document summarizes the **final conference and partner meeting** where the **results** of the project were disseminated in Nyíregyháza on **May 23, 2023.**

WELCOME

The partners were greeted by the **Mayor of Nyíregyháza**, *Dr Ferenc Kovács*. He emphasized how much of an honour it is for the city to host the meeting as a recognition of the local team's work. **Nyíregyháza made a decision 10 years ago to become involved in European cooperation projects** - not randomly but focusing on a few urban development areas which are local and regional priorities: e.g., economy and business development, digitalization, and sustainable urban mobility. Now, almost 10 successful projects later, the city still has much to learn, but the citizens are already feeling the positive effects.

← *Enrica Spotti*, a representative of the **Lead Partner** (Genoa Municipality) introduced the BETTER project - and its 5 stages - to the audience. The conference itself is the culmination of a 4-year process, but especially **Stage 5** which was about **monitoring how the partners are implementing their Regional Action Plan** (RAP).

← In his presentation, *Alexis François* from the **Interreg Europe Programme** highlighted the unique nature of this funding instrument as a support tool that is **used specifically for the improvement of regional development policies**. He also emphasized the importance of the project topic, the high quality and broad geographical coverage of the partnership, and the partners' active involvement in the Policy Learning Platform.

→ *Nyíregyháza: a story of local urban & economic development*

The 2nd presentation in this block was more like a conversation between *Béla Kézy* (urban development expert) and *Dávid Bartók* (Managing Director of the Nyíregyháza Urban Development and Industrial Park Nonprofit Ltd.). They concluded that **with strong political commitment, local champions, internal expertise and a clear thematic focus,** transnational projects can trigger innovative processes in cities; as the (made-up) First Law of Urban Development says:

"The only acceptable organized crime is when cities steal ideas from each other."

"Digital innovation is a tool, not a goal."

KEY SPEAKERS

Digitalization in urban development & public services

Samu Szemerey, a thematic expert of the project, talked about the **Hype Cycle for Smart City Technologies and Solutions**: how everything in this regard inevitably goes through the (too) high expectations and crushing disappointment phases before reaching "enlightenment" - the optimal way to utilize the given technology. He emphasized that by defeating the power of habits, we can often find unexpected innovations - in fact, this is one of the main tenants of the **service design methodology** which was introduced by Gävle and adapted by several partners during the project.

PARTNERS' CORNER

GENOA

Giampiero Biamino talked about using technology to **build a bridge between the digital and physical worlds**, providing the users with unique interactive experiences. They used this concept **to revitalize their tourism sector and local businesses** through their new "Stargate" to the city: Phygital Genoa.

BIRMINGHAM

Heather Law introduced DIPS (Digital Innovation in Public Services), which targets **SMEs and service departments in the local authority to consider and address citizen challenges**. After creating 5 challenge briefs, they reached out to 528 companies via a targeted LinkedIn campaign - they have received a total of 21 applications.

GÄVLE

Annika Lundqvist shared the recent **capacity building** activities of the city in innovation management and procurement, while also talking about their new **"Idea box"** and future plans related to their **inventory and toolbox document**, an **Innovation Sprint** during the Swedish Innovation Week, and their **"Living Lab"** work.

TARTU

Anneli Säälik showcased how they improved internal skills through a **service design training programme** within the city (which included problem detection and prototyping) and improved **digital engagement through geoHUB**, a public collaboration and engagement platform.

NYÍREGYHÁZA

Zoltán Szenes discussed the results of
(1) evaluating and developing a municipal service using the **service design method**, and
(2) a cooperation with a Greek tech startup to develop an **information interface** capable of receiving, interpreting and displaying data.

Round table →

Stakeholders from every city participated in a structured discussion about not just the **main learnings** of the project, but also **emerging new technologies** (like ChatGPT) **that can be used to improve public services and drive regional innovation.**

PARTNER MEETING

After lunch, the partners had the chance to discuss the next steps in terms of both project management and professional cooperation. The picture below shows their **thematic interests** - overlaps will give them a chance to **work together again** in the future.