

# a NEB future:

## Insights from the EIT Community NEB 2024 gathering.



# Welcome note



On December 11th, the EIT Community NEB brought together project owners from four of our programmes for a day of in-person exchange, collaboration, and ideation. There's a unique power in coming together face-to-face: the realisation that we're not alone in our mission, and that our collective expertise and experiences can spark genuine breakthroughs. By uniting around shared challenges and opportunities, we foster true exchange of learnings and best practices—ultimately building a stronger, more supportive ecosystem.

The EIT Community NEB aims to democratise access to EU funds and make the New European Bauhaus tangible for small-scale actors and communities. Guided by the NEB's values of **Sustainability, Beauty, and Inclusivity**, we believe in turning innovative ideas into real-world solutions that benefit society at large. Our vision is to nurture a diverse network of changemakers, creating spaces for experimentation, creativity, and co-creation in line with the NEB's mission.

This booklet serves to consolidate the learnings and key takeaways from our December 11th gathering. Whether you're revisiting insights for future reference or discovering them for the first time, we hope these pages spark inspiration, reinforce connections, and lay the groundwork for continued collaboration. Here's to building a more sustainable, beautiful, and inclusive Europe—together.

# Event overview

11 DECEMBER 2024

## 📍 APOCAPOC, BARCELONA

The EIT Community NEB gathered at Apocapoc in Barcelona—a venue that naturally reflects the New European Bauhaus values by bringing nature back to the city, using NBS solutions and embracing circularity through different initiatives.

In total, 33 project owners representing 24 projects from four of our seven programmes (**Connect NEB, Co-create NEB, Enhance NEB, and Grow NEB**) came together to exchange ideas, celebrate achievements, and explore new pathways for collaboration.

The day opened with warm words from EIT director Martin Kern, emphasising the importance of the NEB for the EIT. We were honoured to host Guglielmo Di Cola from the European Commission as a special guest and Elisa Grafulla from the Joint Research Centre joined us to share invaluable insights on the NEB Facility.

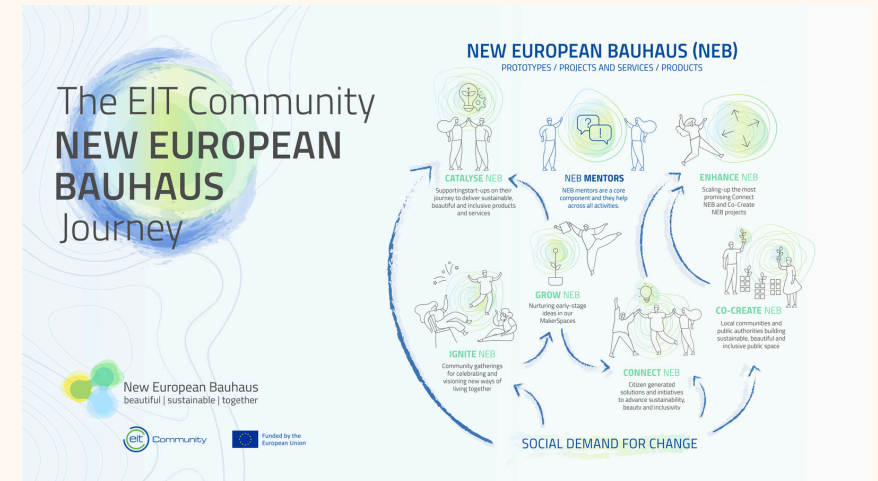
## PURPOSE OF THE EVENT

- To reflect & share.** Provide a space for project owners to reflect on their projects of the past year and to discuss challenges, successes, and lessons learned.
- To collaborate & ideate.** Foster cross-project brainstorming sessions and spark innovative solutions.
- To inform & empower.** Provide project owners with invaluable inside knowledge on the NEB ecosystem and NEB resources to guide them in their next steps.
- To strengthen community.** Encourage real-life networking and collaboration between project owners in the EIT Community NEB.

**33** PROJECT OWNERS

PROJECTS **24**

**4** PROGRAMMES



### CONNECT NEB

Single entities

Up to 15,000€ EIT funding

*Community-generated solutions to the range of challenges facing cities, peri-urban and rural areas.*



### CO-CREATE NEB

Consortia of 2-4 partners

Minimum 1 city/region/affiliated entity in consortia

Up to 45,000€ EIT funding

*Support for improvements in public space in collaboration with the community and public authorities.*



### ENHANCE NEB

Consortia of 2-4 partners

Minimum 1 city/region/affiliated entity in consortia

Up to 40,000€ EIT funding

*Scaling up the most promising Connect NEB and Co-create NEB projects – either increasing their impact or piloting the methodology in a new location.*



### GROW NEB

*An eight-month programme that supports Ignite NEB (our multi-day ideation events) winners to take their ideas to the next stage by refining, prototyping and testing NEB solutions.*

# Session Summaries

## 01

### SEEKING SYNERGIES ACTIVITY

This activity was designed to help project owners quickly spot common interests and overlapping themes across projects. By placing sticky notes around the room and identifying shared topics or challenges, participants could pinpoint potential areas for collaboration. Conversations flowed naturally as attendees discovered complementary expertise, leading to more meaningful networking and potential future project collaboration.

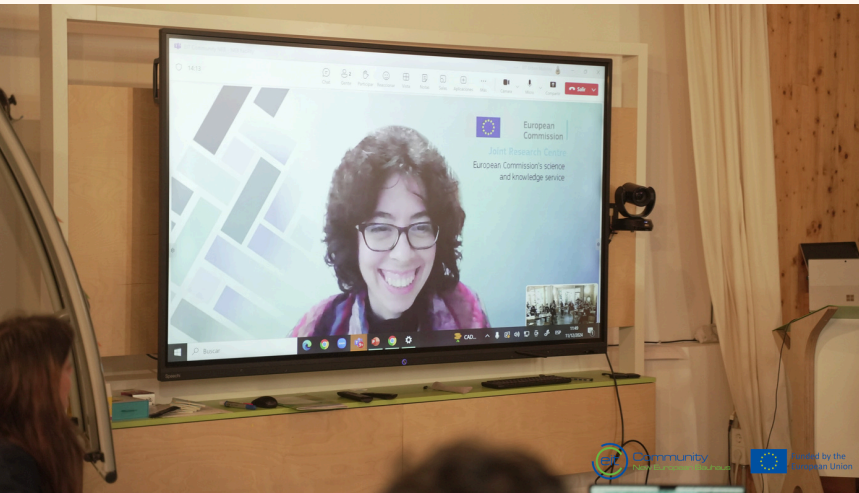


## 02

### LESSONS LEARNED WORKSHOP

Over the years—and across **75+ projects** in our **three citizen engagement programmes**—we’ve seen common challenges emerge time and again. This collective insight shaped our workshop, which harnessed the group’s experience and expertise around four core themes: **sustaining meaningful engagement, financial and project sustainability, metrics for impact, and communication & visibility**. By spotlighting these priority areas, participants exchanged experiences, lessons learned and best practices. They drew on collective wisdom, ultimately equipping them to address these hurdles more effectively in the future and achieve lasting impact.





## 03

### SESSION WITH THE JRC

In this virtual session, Elisa Grafullo from the Joint Research Centre (JRC) demystified the complexities of the EU ecosystem, offering valuable insights into the NEB ecosystem, its resources, and tools. Elisa provided a clear breakdown of EU mechanisms and introduced the newly launched NEB Facility, highlighting new opportunities for project partners to further their NEB journey.

Key takeaways from the session:

- NEB's positioning within the EU ecosystem: understanding how the NEB fits into broader EU initiatives.
- A deep dive into the NEB and JRC Activities: exploring their efforts to deploy and support the NEB vision.
- Opportunities for project owners: practical ways to leverage NEB resources for future growth.

If you need access to Elisa's slides from the session, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Useful links:

[The NEB Dashboard](#) | [The NEB Lab](#) | [NEB Tools and Resources](#)

## 04

### IDEATION GAME

To wrap up the day, project owners participated in an engaging **co-creation challenge**, drawing on NEB's guiding principles and the common elements of a typical NEB project. The activity encouraged teams to move beyond usual constraints—such as limited scope and budget—and envision bold NEB solutions and futures. By bringing together diverse backgrounds and expertise, teams collaboratively ideated around specific challenges. This dynamic game provided a creative space for participants to connect, work together, and lay the groundwork for potential future partnerships.



# Key takeaways

This section captures the key discussions and insights from the Lessons Learned and Best Practices activity at the EIT Community NEB Gathering. While not exhaustive, these notes reflect the themes explored in the 1.5-hour session, including **sustaining meaningful engagement, financial sustainability, impact metrics, and communication and visibility**. They highlight common challenges and practical strategies shared by project owners, serving as a foundation for strengthening future NEB projects.

## (1) SUSTAINING MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

### Challenge definition

- Sustaining meaningful engagement requires tailored strategies for a diverse range of stakeholders, including citizens, end-users, challenge owners, city officials, decision-makers, project team members, and online audiences. Each group demands different methods to ensure their involvement is impactful.
- Key challenges include:
  - How to sustain meaningful engagement must occur throughout the project lifecycle- before, during and after the project.
  - Often, the same active citizens participate in these projects—moving beyond the same active citizens to engage new individuals, particularly in rural areas, is crucial.
  - Passive local citizens: finding ways to spark interest and involve less-active community members is essential for inclusivity.
  - How to engage stakeholders in a project concept before something tangible exists?
  - In cities, frequent small-scale projects with little continuity can lead to disengagement among stakeholders. How do we address this participation fatigue?

### Best practices & key takeaways

- “Just start”- even a minimal proof of concept can help stakeholders to see the project’s potential- from key decision makers to sparking curiosity and interest of local community.
- The power of visuals – demonstrate previous projects and create models/illustrations of what’s possible to make the project visual and tangible.
- Involve stakeholders early- making it visual and tangible, demonstrating precedence from other projects.
- **Engaging with municipalities:** Foster one-to-one human relationships. Beyond municipalities as a large abstract concept there are individuals behind them- foster those individual relationships.
  - Involve smaller municipalities. Often, they are very excited to be involved in EU projects. Small municipalities also often have a stronger connection with their local community.
- “Match engagement level with the scale of the project”- Avoid repeating small-scale projects without real continuity. Aim for sustained growth that genuinely involves citizens.
- If you create a project FOR citizens and not WITH them, you will not engage them.
  - Project is **from them** and **for them**.
  - Project challenge must come directly from local community/target groups .
  - Think from the citizen’s perspective: how is this project **useful** or **beneficial** for them? Unfortunately doing a project which is “nice” often does not provide enough incentive for the local citizens to participate beyond the already active and engaged few. Be clear who this project is for and what the benefit, use and relevance is for them. Without this clearly identified you risk meaningful involvement.
- Avoid having all project elements already planned and finalised- design your project with flexibility and adaptability engrained, so the project has room to adapt and accommodate to new/changing/unexpected needs of the citizens. This ensures that the project outcome is a true reflection of citizen needs.

- **Outreach:**

- Tap into existing networks as a way to engage an already connected group and to reach a specific target group more quickly and effectively. However, keep in mind that these networks often exist of already-engaged members.
- Engage just one local key representative, a local ally or “champion” that can then organically, with ripple effect engage more community members.
- In rural areas, it helps to already be part of the community or invest time building trust through direct interaction.
- “Do the footwork”- Traditional, face-to-face methods (e.g. going door-to-door or attending local gatherings) are invaluable for genuine engagement.

- **Co-design/engagement methods:**

- Choose co-design activities intentionally—either clearly framed as future-oriented “vision building” or grounded in realistic, achievable goals. Communicate the process and expected results transparently, and avoid overpromising. If community members invest time in designing a solution that never materialises, it can create frustration instead of empowerment.
- Co-building: Going beyond co-design to co-building (even if its “just” planting a tree) is an extremely powerful and effective tool to foster a true sense of belonging and ownership.
- Local festivals as an attractive vehicle to engage with and excite locals around the project.
  - Art as a tool to engage
- Empowering citizens to educate each other – peer-to-peer learning and citizens as local expert.
- Give citizens responsibilities, roles and titles within the project to foster a sense of ownership and deep engagement.
- Citizen engagement needs to come hand in hand with policy change and systemic change. Citizens need to see that the effort they are contributing has long-lasting effects on a policy and structural level.
- Instead of a one-time workshop, repeated, regular and informal engagement to build sustained long term engagement and community building.
- Project transferability: who will maintain project outputs after the project ends? How to shift this from burden to opportunity? How to create revenue from project and not be dependent on EU funds?

“ True sustained engagement and project sustainability require transversal, multi-level and systemic change. ”

Without ongoing activities or systemic transformation, citizen engagement activities risk leaving communities feeling deflated and demotivated. Genuine collaboration between **citizens and city officials** is essential to achieve lasting impact.



## (2) FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY/PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

### Challenge definition

Broadly categorised into two aspects:

- Financial sustainability: for grant-funded projects, there is always the challenge and question of whether there is funding available to continue the project beyond the fixed-term funding period. This can be further broken down into sub-challenges, such as:
  - The timeline & budget are limited for the project anyway, meaning there's little time or energy to focus on fundraising and financial sustainability whilst the project itself is running.
  - Legal challenges which may be relevant particularly when it comes to public space.
  - For a physical intervention, you have the challenge of maintenance costs post grant funding that may not be factored into the budget.
- Project sustainability in the more social sense of the word, thinking of sustainability of stakeholders & community – how do you maintain the momentum that you've generated during the project to keep them engaged, and ideally transitioning into a feeling of ownership beyond involvement?
- In addition to this, it was also discussed whether in some cases we even wanted to focus on monetising/revenue generation, which depending on the type of project you are working on, could represent an ethical dilemma to some.

### Best practices

- Diversify funding routes to transition from reliance on project funding
  - Invest time & energy into exploring partnerships, private funding
  - A tailored communication approach for corporates
  - Events and festivals often represent an opportunity for private sponsorships
- Keep it simple!
- Mostly – to be able to diversify funding routes, you need to be able to:
  - Demonstrate impact (quantitatively, qualitatively)
  - Create a narrative (effective and creative storytelling)

## (3) METRICS FOR IMPACT

### Challenge definition

Measuring impact requires a structured approach and use of specific tools (such as the NEB self-assessment tool), frameworks, and indicators to assess how project activities are aligned with these. The objective of #3 Metrics for Impact was to understand how EIT Community NEB beneficiaries/project owners choose metrics to measure (social) impact and inform stakeholders about their progress (and NEB-ness).

### Best practices

- Clearly defined scope and impact metrics even if broader or systemic change often remains beyond the scope of the project activities.
- Data Collection: quantitative data (surveys and questionnaires, statistics, incl. participation and attendance) vs qualitative data (interviews, focus groups for in-depth discussions, and case studies).
- Identifying (key) stakeholders, also to be able to understand their "lived" experience and needs.
- Engaging the wider public to advocate for broader change. Eg. small-scale (1-2 days) interventions introducing the project/thematic to the local community and/or co-create/co-design sessions/on-site discussions with relevant stakeholders.
- (NEB-ness: the NEB Compass as a tool that connects project owners with the EIT Community NEB eco-system. Conduct baseline assessment before project implementation as well as measure change over time.
- Regularly updating stakeholders. Eg. A small request > another small request > eventual buy-in. Might also, however, result in "participation fatigue".
- Responsible (factually correct and comprehensible vs greenwashing) communication. Openly acknowledging the challenges of systemic change, while also highlighting the progress (NEB-ness) of the project and its impact on the ground.



## (4) COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY OF THE PROJECT

### Challenge definition

All projects combine online and offline sources. The rate of each depends on the nature of the project, i.e., in projects developed in rural-small places or with vulnerable groups offline sources are more suitable. There is consensus on the fact that both type of sources need to coexist, and that online sources are the ground where offline sources need to be built. Even if there is a relative consensus on the “more effectiveness” of offline sources, it is true that they need to be combined and built on top of online sources.

- Ordinary online sources: social media, website, whatsapp, videos.
- Ordinary offline sources: gatherings, workshops, flyers, photos, door to door.

### Tips

- Be creative: use original/creative comms tools, such as: walks, street theatre, cooking and eating pancakes together, having a party, summer festival, convene via RSVP for a specific activity etc.
- Use of existing local associations/local ambassadors and cultural associations, schools or other civic associations to reach out to target groups.
- Create specific comms for the project, ideally having a comms partner in the team.
- Do not use institutional/political/ideology logos for further outreach, especially with vulnerable groups.

### Learnings

- The quality of the comms sources used is appropriate/good, but more quantity of them would have helped to gain trust.
- It is more efficient to build on top of pre-existing comms activities/groups/efforts/associations/stakeholders.
- It enhances results to ally with likeminded stakeholders (e.g. Kopli 93).
- When tapping on already existing social organisations, a thorough filtering/selection needs to be done to ensure the planned outcomes.
- Keep comms simple and effective, not too sophisticated.

These insights emerged from a brief yet impactful 1.5-hour session, illustrating the power of coming together to share experiences and solutions. Across each workgroup, it became clear that these challenges—engagement, financial sustainability, metrics, and communications—don’t exist in isolation. In fact, each can become a tool to address the others.

How can compelling narratives or communications foster deeper engagement among diverse stakeholders? How might robust impact metrics convince potential funders and partners to invest in your project? And how can ongoing community support and stakeholder involvement help secure resources beyond the initial grant period? While we’ve only scratched the surface, we hope these reflections will spark further dialogue, inspire fresh ideas, and strengthen your future projects.



# Next steps



## CONNECT WITH YOUR PEERS

In the following pages, you'll find a repository of your fellow project owners from the event. Use it to continue the conversations and collaborations sparked during our time together.



## CATALYSE NEB CALL IS STILL OPEN

Our **business accelerator programme** is actively seeking early-stage startups working in NEB-relevant fields. If you're looking to develop, grow, and become an international gamechanger, don't miss this opportunity. Find out more and apply at: [www.climate-kic.org/open-call/catalyse-neb-2025/](http://www.climate-kic.org/open-call/catalyse-neb-2025/)



## 2 NEW NEB RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The JRC has released two valuable tools to help align your projects even more closely with the NEB. Find them along with all NEB resources, such as the NEB compass and the NEB toolbox on: [www.new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/tools-and-resources\\_en](http://www.new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/tools-and-resources_en)



## ENGAGE WITH US!

We're excited to stay connected and support you on your NEB journey. This year, we're focused on building a stronger EIT Community NEB network, complete with new communication channels and platforms to keep us engaged and connected. Stay tuned for updates as we roll out these exciting developments.

Thank you for being part of this journey with the EIT Community NEB. We hope these takeaways inspire and strengthen your ongoing work, and that this booklet marks the beginning of many more collaborations to come. In the following section, you'll find the participant repository, designed to help you stay connected with fellow project owners and continue building the collective momentum that drives us toward a more sustainable, beautiful, and inclusive Europe.



## PARTICIPANT DIRECTORY

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# Enhance NEB

### GENERation Nature (Barcelona, Spain)

Lead partner: Institut for Advanced Architecture Catalonia  
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### CoolCo's (Warsaw, Poland)

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### Collective for Gabrovo (Gabrovo, Bulgaria)

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### In Appennino (Appennino Bolognese, Italy)

Lead partner: Sineglossa  
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### Neiva Flows (Esposende, Portugal)

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### Our Taste (Gabrovo, Bulgaria)

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### FishArt (Anzio, Italy)

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### Gardens4Good (Paris, France)

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### FROM KNOW-HOW-TO-DO-HOW (Liepāja, Latvia)

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# Co-create NEB

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## ELDERS (Masquefa, Spain)

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## COHERE (Utrecht, the Netherlands)

Lead partner: Natuur En Milieufederatie Utrecht  
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## Sobrotherhood (Maia, Portugal)

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## GO AERSCHOT! (Brussels, Belgium)

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## Cultural Campus (Frankfurt, Germany)

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## Kopli 93 (Tallinn, Estonia)

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# Grow NEB

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## Citruses in Cyprus

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## Circular Challenge: BlueCity (Rotterdam, The Netherlands)

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## Participative Futures 4 Planet: Studio SHIFT srl SB (Arquino, Italy)

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New European  
Bauhaus 



Community  
New European Bauhaus



Funded by the  
European Union