

## JOURNAL

### PROJECT

CUP 4 CREATIVITY -  
Cultural Urban Platform  
to nurture creativity  
and fight digital  
loneliness

📍 Budapest Újbuda,  
Hungary

### TOPIC

Culture and cultural  
heritage

EDIT 30 MAY 2022

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# CUP4Creativity Journal #1

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Seeking to create new connections between cultural producers, creatives, technology initiatives, businesses and residents, the UIA-funded project CUP4Creativity provides locals with online and offline ways to participate in cultural activities and the cultural life of the district. This first journal by UIA expert Levente Polyak serves as an introduction: after exploring the history of the Bartók Boulevard neighbourhood and presenting the project consortium, collaboration methods and the activities of the first year, the journal identifies the main challenges of the project and the responses given to these challenges by consortium partners.

## 1 Executive Summary

In the past decade, many European cities have been facing the challenge of disintegrating local communities and increasing social isolation. A variety of tendencies ranging from the transformation of the everyday use of urban neighbourhoods, the explosion of e-commerce at the expense of local shops and the precarisation of labour to extended commuting, rising housing prices and gentrification led to the weakening of social ties among European adults. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated these tendencies and made them more explicit: in the midst of the various waves of lockdowns and even afterwards, many Europeans felt increasingly lonely.

Cultural life is often seen as a key ingredient to rebuild these social ties. If accessible and well-frequented, art venues, cultural events or educational spaces can act as social infrastructure, provoking encounters, fostering mutual support and strengthening collaboration among individuals and groups. If the 2008 economic crisis and the current pandemic weakened the position of many local cultural centres and social spaces, they also made it clear that they are crucial for the collective well-being of local communities. Meanwhile, culture is often accused of acting as an agent for gentrification. The enhanced visibility of a neighbourhood leads to increasing attractiveness and cultural organisations themselves are pushed out of these areas by more affluent economic actors.

In the late 2010s, the Budapest district of Újbuda found itself at a turning point. Aware of the dangers of gentrification, the local municipality began a discussion with local cultural, creative and tech operators, with the aim of creating better access to culture for the area's residents and building a stronger local ecosystem where

culture can be a protagonist of a broader social and economic transformation. CUP4Creativity is the result of this ambition. Seeking to create new connections between cultural producers, creatives, technology initiatives, businesses and residents, the project provides locals with online and offline ways to participate in cultural activities and the cultural life of the district.

During its three-year duration, CUP4Creativity will open Adaptér, a new cultural institution to bring together art and technology in a user-friendly manner, located in the cultural quarter of Újbuda. The new institution, with its multifunctional rooms, exhibition and workshop spaces, is designed to take its users on a journey from passive consumption of culture to active creation through stages of inspiration, education and creation. Adaptér will function as a hub in a broader network of spaces, an ensemble of workshop spaces acting as a kind of a decentralised set of Open Labs at the neighbourhood scale, completed by cultural outposts established in locations outside the regular cultural circuits. Besides these spaces, CUP4Creativity will also create INSERT, an online platform serving as a digital space for local residents, cultural and tech organisations and a programming framework connecting existing venues, organisations and initiatives into a more cohesive cultural ecosystem.

This journal by UIA expert Levente Polyák will accompany CUP4Creativity in its development. This first issue serves as an introduction: after exploring the history of the Bartók Boulevard neighbourhood and presenting the project consortium, collaboration methods and the activities of the first year, the journal identifies the main challenges of the project and the responses given to these challenges by consortium partners.



## 2 Project Overview

The UIA-funded CUP4Creativity project aims to build a more cohesive local society in the Budapest district of Újbuda, through providing online networks and offline events to participate in offline cultural activities. By encouraging increased interactions between existing cultural venues, technology organisations as well as residents and businesses, the project contributes to the development of a stronger local ecosystem that fosters synergies between local actors and enhances the creativity of residents, entrepreneurs and community initiatives.

### 2.1 The story of Újbuda's Cultural quarter

In the past years, the inner area of Újbuda's "high street", the Bartók Béla Boulevard, has become one of the most popular areas in Budapest. In 2019 and 2021, Újbuda was ranked by the readers and experts of Time Out magazine **among the best neighbourhoods in the world**. The area's success was not created overnight; it is the result of more than a decade's transformation fed both by bottom-up cultural initiatives and strategic municipal planning.

Újbuda's innermost neighbourhoods enjoy a **peculiar geographical and demographic position**. Squeezed



between the Gellért hill and the Danube river, the Bartók Boulevard's dense urban fabric reminiscent of Pest's inner city blocks is combined with easy access to the riverfront and the green slopes of the hill. This inner city-like density of urban spaces and services corresponds to the area's special demography. The presence of some of Hungary's biggest universities (BME – Budapest University of Technology, ELTE – Eötvös Loránd University of Sciences with the faculties of natural and social sciences) and their dormitories made the area popular among students, and it is by no surprise that many graduates of these universities opened their businesses, offices or associations in the area they knew most in the city.

Inspired by the concepts of creative and cultural urban transformation popular in the mid-2000s, the Újbuda Municipality created a programme to develop the Bartók Béla Boulevard into a **cultural quarter**. As part of this programme, the district renovated public spaces along the boulevard and developed a new competition concept to prioritise and subsidise the use of ground-floor commercial spaces by cultural and creative organisations. Though disrupted by the 2008 economic crisis that left the area with many closed shops, on the long run this policy attracted a number of new coffee houses, restaurants as well as art galleries in the early 2010s. A new cultural centre opened in a ground floor space owned by the municipality, and an umbrella organisation – the Bartók Boulevard Association – was created to represent cultural operators in the area and strengthen the neighbourhood's cultural brand. In the second half of the 2010s, with the arrival of design and architecture-related organisations like the KÉK–Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre and many design and tech-related offices, the area was gradually recognised as one of Budapest's key centres for the cultural and creative industries.

In the late 2010s, however, with real estate prices skyrocketing in the district, it seemed that the area might have gone beyond its zenith. The arrival of Starbucks to Gellért Square – the square acting as the gate of the neighbourhood – rang the alarm for many protagonists of the area. There was a growing awareness of the relative fragility of this success. Wary of the **potential overdevelopment of the area** to follow the decline of other cultural high streets across Budapest, the municipality began to reach out to cultural operators, local associations and representatives of the creative and tech sectors in the area to discuss how to avoid the saturation of the neighbourhood and mitigate the impact of gentrification and commercialisation in the area. This discussion, exploring the needs for creating **better access to culture** for the area's residents, weaving **stronger connections between the cultural and tech sectors** and building a **stronger local ecosystem** where culture can be a protagonist of a broader social and economic transformation, led to the CUP4Creativity project.



View of the Bartók Béla Boulevard. Photo by Levente Polyak

## 2.2 The CUP4Creativity approach

CUP4Creativity's main objective is to create new connections between cultural producers, creatives, technology initiatives, businesses and residents. On the one hand, in an effort to tackle (digital) loneliness in Újbuda, the project offers locals online tools to enhance offline socialisation and provide new ways to participate in the cultural life and activities of the district. On the other hand, the project aims to further build and develop the cultural and technological ecosystems of Újbuda, also creating a bridge between them through innovative solutions and through enhanced cooperation. Furthermore, the project serves as a pilot initiative, informing the future policy development of cities and municipalities both internationally and locally.

CUP4Creativity was conceived with two major outputs in mind. The first one is the **establishment of a new cultural institution** (Adaptér) to bring together art and technology in a user-friendly manner, located in the cultural quarter of Újbuda. This institution is inspired by Arts Electronica in Linz, Austria and will borrow from the festival's philosophy, adapting its model to the context of Budapest (Újbuda), as well as to the needs of local communities and the cultural and technology scenes. The new institution, equipped with a state-of-the-art technological infrastructure, will offer its community a wide range of tools and instruments and will host a variety of trainings, workshops as well as cultural events, exhibitions and social gatherings. Adaptér is designed to bring users on a journey through stages of inspiration, education and creation, helping them shift their attitude from being passive consumers of culture to active creators. The new institution will be open to businesses, galleries, public and private organisations, but will also be accessible by every-day local citizens.

Serving as an entrance point to the local cultural and technology ecosystems, Adaptér is positioned as a hub in a broader network of spaces, an ensemble of workshop spaces acting as a kind of a decentralised set of Open Labs at the neighbourhood scale. Some of these spaces that participate directly in the project by organising and hosting a variety of activities, will be renovated in the course of the coming years. Moreover, cultural outposts as "creative corners" will be established in locations outside the regular cultural circuits (a shopping mall, a corporate office building, etc.) to operate as a "decentralised network of service providers."

CUP4Creativity's second key output is an online platform and an offline programming framework called INSERT. The **online platform** will serve as a digital space for local cultural and technological stakeholders, as well as members of the local communities, businesses, service providers, organisations. Building on the fundamentals of inclusion as a way to reconnect people in the district, the INSERT platform will create direct links between individuals and the cultural (and technological) ecosystem of Újbuda. With a series of services for both individuals and organisations, the platform aims at playing a cohesive role in the district and contributing to the sustainability of the overall project.

The **programming framework**, involving existing venues, organisations and initiatives, will serve as a scheme to connect them into a more cohesive cultural ecosystem, encouraging cooperation between local cultural and technological actors and incentivising local residents, cultural workers, creatives and entrepreneurs to participate in the local cultural life. The framework is also conceived as a long-term (cultural) development strategy for the municipality that can take a facilitating role in the local cultural and technology scene, connecting bottom-up ideas and initiatives along thematic streams and designing grant programmes with the aim of supporting pilot projects, creating synergies, using the logic of collaborative commissioning, for instance.

In order to embed the project deeper in the local economic tissue, to engage a larger number of partners and to increase the project's financial and organisational sustainability, CUP4Creativity also envisions the development of a loyalty system connected to the digital platform and the programming framework, encouraging residents and businesses to spend locally and use local cultural offers.

*"The INSERT program helps in connecting the dots: it organises the area's cultural events and the online platform's activities into a narrative framework, a brand system."* Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager

## 2.3 Consortium

The CUP4Creativity consortium is led by the Municipality of Újbuda. Besides the **municipal office** coordinating the project, two **public companies** also participate in the consortium. Központ Kft. is the municipality's cultural service provider that coordinates the work of the district's different cultural centres and helps shaping the new cultural spaces and their programming. Újbuda SMART11 is the municipality's IT service provider that contributes to the development of the project's digital infrastructure.



From the **private sector**, five SMEs and a multinational corporation are members of the partnership. SOART innovations is an open innovation platform connected to various universities that mobilised students and researchers to feed their inputs into the project. Popcode Developments is a web developer, responsible to construct the digital platform. Burst is an urban policy consultancy, advising the consortium on strategic development for the area. MEET is a service design and market research consultancy, contributing to the design of Insert's identity and services. Allee is a shopping mall, offering the project a highly frequented test site that can accommodate cultural activities and establish a satellite cultural venue. British Telecom, whose Hungarian branch is also headquartered in the district, offers a test site for new cultural services and cultural-corporate collaborations.

The consortium involves **three NGOs** that are particularly active in the district. The Eleven Blokk Visual Art Foundation has turned a number of vacant properties into artist studios and maker spaces in the vicinity of Adaptér, that will organise and host events in the frame of Insert. The association Bartók Béla Boulevard brings together cultural venues and companies in the area; it has a key role in the ecosystem-building activities of CUP4Creativity. The KÉK – Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre, a think tank that also acts as one of the most active cultural venues of the area, contributes to the project with its mapping, research and monitoring experience. Adding to the work of these NGOs, the community-focused MU Theatre takes part in the consortium, developing and hosting activities in the frame of Insert.



Covid-proof consortium meeting in Újbuda. Photo by Levente Polyak

## 2.4 Work streams

Coordinating a consortium with partners coming from such diverse backgrounds requires bonding – connecting their professional languages and modes of working – as well as a structured coordination and an efficient organisation of tasks. In order to create a well-defined working dynamic within the consortium, the basic project governance modalities and responsibilities were established in November 2020. However, some of these arrangements have proven to be difficult to implement and many questions have remained open concerning decision-making procedures and ownership issues.

Besides establishing a **structure for decision-making and information flow** between partners, it was also important to create a regular meeting structure in order to follow up with the daily tasks as well as more strategic decisions. At the decision-making level, a Steering Group was created with the high-level representatives of project partners. At the operational level, weekly Board meetings are held with the

participation of core team members, with bi-weekly extended meetings with all working group leaders and key members of the partnership.

Daily work is coordinated through **six thematic working groups**, falling under the authority of the Board. These work groups focus on sustainability, monitoring, the IT platform, offline spaces, project communication and community building.

*“Board meetings and working groups have proven to be a well-working system. The most important role of these meetings is to ensure the flow of information concerning the project.” Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager*

## 2.5 The first year

CUP4Creativity began in the summer and autumn of 2020, with the detailed elaboration of activities and deliverables. Already in the early months, consortium partners began to meet regularly for strategic planning and in relation to some specific deliverables (e.g. stakeholder mapping of the local ecosystem, conceptual planning workshops of the future cultural venue, etc.). The first 6 months of work aimed to lay the **foundations of the collaboration** between partners, making the step from the initiating team towards the collective project. This project phase allowed partners to get acquainted with each other's language and working methods, and to create a shared understanding between them. The first six months also served at understanding the limits and latitudes of the municipal administration, learning how to manoeuvre to overcome administrative barriers that may hinder the project's implementation. Finally, the project's foundational research processes of the existing cultural ecosystem and local needs began by KÉK and MEET in this period.

By April 2021, all key processes were set in motion. Online space development began with establishing an IT development team and defining the platform's key functionalities in the early months of 2021. For the offline spaces, basic architectural concepts were created for the Adaptér, the Eleven Blokk workshops and the MU Theatre. These concepts served for the selection of an architecture office to design the renovations and launch the procurement process for the construction works. A co-design workshop held at the Technical University supported this process with a service portfolio and a vision for the Adaptér's "welcome experience."

Meanwhile, the **detailed conceptualisation of both online and offline spaces** took longer than planned: with an ever-increasing number of stakeholders involved and some divergence between the approaches of public officers and civic or creative partners to manage the development process, co-planning and co-design became more complex and in-depth processes than originally envisioned. Furthermore, the lengthened architectural planning and repeated validation needed from various municipal departments led to delays in the procurement processes as well.

In 2021, series of **research operations** were launched by consortium partners. Partners explored the supply and demand sides of cultural consumption: while KÉK examined the existing Cultural and Creative Industries ecosystem in the district through a mapping process and business database analysis, MEET identified key target groups and personas via surveys and focus groups among local residents, service providers and project stakeholders. In order to better embed the future cultural venues in the existing cultural and tech ecosystems, two workshops were conducted with local cultural providers about the needs and expectations towards the new spaces.

The ongoing pandemic did not only prevent project partners to meet and organise workshops offline but also impeded **public events** from taking place. In order to position the future Adaptér in the neighbourhood and invite neighbours to explore the future cultural venues, a community brunch outside the venue was inserted in the programme of the Eleven Autumn Festival (17-19 September) and a local meet-up with hot wine and activities was organised on 11 December 2021.

*“I think the most important thing that happened this year was to somehow understand this whole project conceptually and bring it down to earth.” - Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager*



Gathering outside Adaptér in December 2021. Photo by Levente Polyak

## 3 Challenges

### 3.1 Leadership

CUP4Creativity has firm political support within the political leadership of the municipality. District Deputy Mayor for Culture Richárd Barabás is strongly involved in both the strategic and operative management of the project, thus giving the project a voice at the highest political level. The project manager, Máté Ábrahám, works in the Deputy Mayor's cabinet, thus strengthening the connection between CUP4Creativity and the district's political direction. This connection, however, does not include all the political leadership and other political figures who are, for the most part, not involved in the project, nor are fully aware of its objectives.

The project's limited appeal among the municipal direction is partially due to the **relative disinterest of local politicians**. Despite having been approached individually at the start of the project and informed regularly about the state of its progress, politicians from other fractions did not develop a shared ownership of the project. In order to generate a broader interest in the project, the consortium will have to invest more into engaging the political and administrative branches of the municipality, with special emphasis given to building political support among local political actors and decision makers. The project itself can operate without this, but having all stakeholders on board would make the process smoother and more efficient.

*"It is difficult to feel ownership of the project if someone is checking in the project once in every six months. CUP4Creativity is too complex for this, and in order to be involved, one has to participate at the daily activities."* Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager

### 3.2 Public procurement

There are various types of public procurement items within the CUP4Creativity project. First of all, the **renovation of physical infrastructure**, mainly that of the space accommodating Adaptér, the rooftop of MU Theatre and the artist studios of Eleven Blokk. Here the architects have been selected and they have contributed to the preparation of the public procurement process. However, the renovation process has been significantly delayed, partly due to the complex technical content of the constructions in three different locations, specific building and utility requirements connected to the installation of advanced technologies in



some of the spaces, as well as to the rising material prices and construction costs brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic recovery. This transformation of the construction market has created a number of difficulties for the CUP4Creativity project as original cost estimations are now unrealistic and pandemic-related budget cuts make it impossible for the municipality to complete the construction budget to current levels. Therefore, renovation projects need to be simplified and limited in their scope, to match the available budget.

**Other procurement items** include the financial management of the project and smaller design, marketing and communication tasks. Given the highly centralised IT market where a few well-connected companies have monopolised public commissions, municipal officers saw a high risk of corruption in relation to developing the project's digital platform. Therefore, the task of creating the digital platform was assigned to the public company Smart11 that hired developers with the right competences.

Besides resulting in lengthy and tedious processes, public procurement in Hungary has strict and inflexible rules. New procurement rules establish that for items with a budget over 5 million HUF (around €14.000) the municipality has to start an open procurement process with all the specifications published online and the financially best offer wins if the applicant has apt references. Below the 5 million HUF threshold, however, the municipality can ask for a quotation and if the offer fits the task the contract can be signed.

While these rules are aimed to exclude arbitrary and corrupt conduct in granting contracts to bidders, they are often unable to ensure a transparent and fair system that is also capable of generating the best value for public administrations: this rather rigid procurement system means that it is very **hard to account for quality** during a tender process. The system is designed to favour the lowest priced offer within each public procurement bid, practically regardless of quality considerations. Because quality, be it with regards to physical quality in terms of construction or quality in organisation or management, is an extremely important consideration of the CUP4Creativity project, (public) procurement processes need to be designed with a lot of discretion and foresight. Procurement calls need to be very precise and specific in order to ensure that all bids that come in will put an emphasis on providing quality work and not only focusing on how to offer the lowest price and a low-quality service upon delivery.

*"I am not convinced that these procurement rules favour quality. When you open a call to develop a digital platform for community building, the outcomes can be so different that the price might not be the most important criterion."* Máté Ábrahám

### 3.3 Participative approach

Participation is at the core of CUP4Creativity. With the consortium involving thirteen different organisations, most aspects of the project are co-designed by a set of partners, coordinated by the Újbuda municipality. However, despite the commitment of all partners to develop a collaborative working process, **shared management** (i.e., separation of operative and substantive management) does in fact hinder the smooth delivery of the project through conflicts of the project's two aspects. A variety of internal boards and working groups (focusing on online and offline spaces, public procurement, sustainability, etc.) have helped structure the communication and cooperation among partners.

This structure allows a variety of individuals and organisations beyond the official partnership to be involved in **co-designing some aspects of the project**. For instance, a group of local artists, creative managers and technologists has contributed to shaping Adaptér, the future art & technology hub of the district. In the meantime, a university course has engaged a group of students to conceive the hub's welcome experience.

At another level, CUP4Creativity has explored a broader circle of potential partners in the area. Through the **cultural and creative industries mapping process** led by project partner KÉK, the consortium gained insights into various representatives of the CCI already active in the neighbourhood and the wider district. Furthermore, workshops around the future arts & technology hub explored the needs and capacities of cultural and creative actors in the district, helping identify the potential roles to be played by the future institution.

While these events have mobilised a part of the district's active organisations, **not all areas and sectors have been equally represented** in the process. Although the cultural sector has been well represented in the project, the science and technology sectors are relatively absent from these processes. The lack of representation of these actors poses a significant challenge: tech companies and organisations are potentially key partners for the area's future cultural-technological ecosystem, especially when it comes to the establishment and the operation of the future Adaptér. Similarly, there are inequalities in the cultural and



technological coverage of the district: the Bartók Boulevard area and the neighbourhood surrounding the future Adaptér is much better established and has better financial and other resources on demand than other parts of the district.

Besides a few events organised to invite the neighbourhood into the area's future cultural spaces, **the broader public has not yet had the opportunity to engage** with the new venues to be created in the course of CUP4Creativity. In order to help the conception and design of the Adaptér, a series of workshops were organised during the spring months of 2021 to bring together local stakeholders and learn about their needs and aspirations. While the pandemic forced organisers to move these workshops online, digital fatigue did not play in favour of broad participation in the workshops. Furthermore, participation in defining the future cultural venues was limited by design: to a certain extent, the process of conceptualizing and drafting the initial plans for the Adaptér was done by a select few organisations associated with the project from the very start (through being consortium members). Even though there was an explicitly formulated demand to cast a wider net and draw in more organisations and individual citizens (artists, business owners, local residents) through the Adaptér workshops, this inclusive ambition was not entirely fulfilled. The workshops reflected a certain informational asymmetry between more established local stakeholders (consortium partners) with already existing links to the cultural ecosystem of Újbuda and lesser-known or lesser engaged organisations that are open and willing to cooperate with regards to various project activities but are not invited to the entire process but to specific stages only.



Event in Adaptér in December 2021. Photo by Levente Polyak

### 3.4 Cross-department and integrated management and implementation

The team carrying CUP4Creativity inside the municipality has made a series of attempts to create a broader cross-department dynamic around the project. An initiative to establish a project team inside the municipality that would meet once a month did not bring the desired results while communication and cooperation with a variety of departments remains fragmented. Despite these difficulties, a number of departments are closely involved in CUP4Creativity: the financial, procurement, investment and legal departments are regularly consulted at various stages of the project. Cooperation with these departments brings its own challenges: the **risk-averse nature of the municipality's everyday operations** prompt civil servants to focus on administrative, financial and legal matters instead of innovation. That being said, there is a willingness on the side of local administrators and bureaucrats to help the implementation of the project. An important support to the project comes from the municipality's cultural service provider Központ that adds community engagement

experience to the project, building on the company's knowledge of the terrain and its innovative practice of organising cultural life in the district.

*"When we talk to municipal officers about where all this investment is going to, the first question is often 'good, but what should the invoices contain?' Is it so hard to find out how to engage more people to be interested in the actual content of the project?" Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager*

### 3.5 Monitoring, evaluation and measurement

In this early stage of the project, monitoring and evaluation activities have been in their design phase. A **designated working group** was created to oversee this aspect of CUP4Creativity and to plan and carry out monitoring activities of the project. A large emphasis will be put on monitoring the activities and regular operation of the online platform, as well as other aspects of the project, such as the development and operation of the ADAPTÉR and the facilitation of the further development of the Újbuda cultural and technological ecosystems. At this point, the monitoring group is in the planning phase of its operation, designing the monitoring and evaluation process as well as defining indicators for various areas of the projects and assessing data to be used for monitoring, in order to appropriately and accurately measure the performance and outputs of the project at later stages.

*"Many participatory aspects will be measurable at festivals, and the monitoring working group needs to define what we want to get out of it, what tools can we use and what kind of expert advice will be needed to be able to perform certain measurements." Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager*

### 3.6 Communication with local partners and beneficiaries

CUP4Creativity's local communication aims at engaging local partners for the project and building a broader community around the future online and offline spaces, as well as to inform the broader public about the project's proceedings. Meanwhile, as 2022 is an election year in Hungary, **all municipal communication takes place in a sensitive media environment**. In these circumstances, a media policy agreement has been drafted to ensure certain protocols are followed by consortium partners when communicating with the broader public.

So far, activities of CUP4Creativity have mostly been reported on by the local municipality-funded newspaper and have been announced on the social media channels of the project. In addition, two large banners promoting the CUP4Creativity project have been placed throughout the district, generating some public visibility. Naturally, more media attention will be generated at later stages of the project when its activities will become more visible to the public (e.g. when the new cultural venue ADAPTÉR and the online platform INSERT will become operational).

The engagement of local partners and stakeholders is fundamental for the project: it needs a critical mass of involved actors to "induce a self-sustaining system of continuously recreated bottom-up cultural content meeting the expectations of a large, active culture consuming and co-creating community." There are different strategies in place to address this challenge. Firstly, despite the cancellation of various festivals in the neighbourhood and the city, **a number of public events** enhanced the project's communication with the broader public. Engaged to support the consortium in local community-building activities, the association VALYO, in cooperation with the Let it be Art Agency has organised a series of festive public events at the location of the future ADAPTÉR, allowing neighbours and residents of the area get acquainted with the space and its protagonists.

Secondly, the project involves a number of large employers located in the district (Allee, British Telecom), that will introduce specific facilities in their premises to stimulate the cultural consumption and creativity of their staff, connecting them to the overall cultural and creative offer of the district and thus engaging them to use the area's new offline and online spaces.

For many potential beneficiaries, the new cultural venues, the digital platform and the events organised by various partners in the Újbuda district might not give a coherent picture. Therefore, the consortium has invested significant energy in developing a **narrative or brand that connects all the elements** into an easily recognisable programme.

*"The INSERT programme has an important role, it integrates different parts of the project into one narrative framework, into a brand system." Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager*

### 3.7 Scaling up

At this early stage of the project, no significant efforts were made towards the up-scaling of the innovative aspects of CUP4Creativity. Therefore, challenges of up-scaling have not yet surfaced. Partners nurture many ideas for scaling up the ecosystem approach of the project and its digital platform but no concrete proposals have been formulated, despite interest by other districts.

More specific ideas were discussed with the Budapest Municipality, exploring the possibility of **using the digital platform for the programming and communication of cultural events** at the city scale. The Budapest Brand, a public corporation operating under the authority of the Budapest Municipality, has already indicated its interest to potentially adopt part of or most of the IT infrastructure and information system supporting the INSERT online platform.

Adapting the platform to other districts or scaling it up to the city's scale here would create a series of additional **challenges related to intellectual property rights**, in order to make sure that a potential purchase will follow both EU and Hungarian legislation regarding intellectual property. Right now it is still unclear for consortium members as to who will own, and to what extent, the intellectual property rights of the IT infrastructure of INSERT.

*“Budapest needs a similar app or an IT solution. What we have been developing is, in fact, well applicable. Other local municipalities would then not need to develop a whole new thing, but to buy this service from us. But then the question arises, so who owns it?” Máté Ábrahám, Project Manager*

### 3.8 Other challenges

Besides the themes above, CUP4Creativity also raises other challenges in terms of the implementation of the project. A primary concern of partners is the **long term (financial) sustainability** of the ADAPTÉR and the IT platform, as well as challenges stemming from the uncertainties regarding the intellectual property rights of project outputs (in particular, that of the IT platform). There is a work group dedicated to develop a plan for sustainability, yet with no tangible results.

Therefore, at this early stage, it is still uncertain in what ways will the ADAPTÉR and the IT platform continue their operation after the conclusion of the CUP4Creativity project. It is crucial to come up with a plan on how to make both Adaptér and INSERT economically and institutionally viable in the medium and long term, once funding from the project runs out. It is also of concern to find a model in which these online and offline spaces will be able to operate on the long run at least somewhat independently from the Újbuda municipality. Business plans for both online and offline spaces will be drafted at some later date, which will explore potential alternative revenue streams, ensuring that these project outputs will remain an integral part of the cultural and technological ecosystems of Újbuda.

With regards to the ADAPTÉR, there are plans to **incorporate market-based revenue generating mechanisms** through e.g. providing technological tools and services (workshop space, equipment and expertise), catering to local businesses. Incorporating a market-based footing into the operational model will be crucial, as the municipality will not be able to cover all costs associated with the venue in the long run.

The long-term financial sustainability of the INSERT platform also poses a challenge. Although it will not cost as much to maintain as to cover the operation of the new cultural venue, the project still needs to find ways to generate revenue to at least partially cover its operational costs past the end of the project. One potential revenue source could be the licensing of its IT infrastructure to other municipalities or businesses, yet it is still unclear to the project leadership whether this would be feasible under intellectual property laws. Other plans to make the IT platform sustainable include a **loyalty-system or even the creation of the CUP coin**, a currency that could be used on the platform, also generating some revenue towards the operation and sustainability of the platform.

## 4 Conclusions

The first period of CUP4Creativity took place in a peculiar moment. With the Covid-19 pandemic returning in various waves, the basic assumptions of the project about (digital) loneliness, social isolation and disintegrating



communities were proven more valid than ever. Besides justifying a focus on culture as a means of strengthening social cohesion, this period also made discussions about new, **hybrid infrastructures** combining physical and digital spaces or offline and online events more urgent and significant. With many people familiarising themselves with digital tools and building a variety of digital relationships and online presence, the possibility of using digital means to build inclusive offline communities around a neighbourhood became all the more real.

If the success of these online and offline spaces depends on a critical mass of users, Újbuda is also the right place to experiment with these ideas. With a series of public policies implemented in the past decade and a half, Újbuda was capable to gradually transform the area's identity, collect knowledge and attract new initiatives in the area. Besides policies conceiving a framework for a thriving cultural life, the success of this transformation was due to bottom-up initiatives, cultural operators, creatives and artists engaging with the area and persisting with their ideas despite recurring administrative problems. For **accommodating civic innovation** (or generating innovation in-house) within local municipalities is by no means a simple task: as revealed by the difficulties of procurement processes, inter-departmental work or communication, one of the most important aspects of innovative urban projects could be to reform the modus operandi of public administrations and create **more direct channels of cooperation** with the civic and private innovators of the area.

A new initiative seeking to continue the area's transformation and expand the audience of the local cultural scene needs to **build on earlier results**, knowledge and achievements. Therefore, CUP4Creativity really began with a series of surveys to map supply and demand in culture, information technology and beyond. Understanding the profiles, needs and capacities of existing cultural initiatives and venues helps embedding new cultural venues and online platforms in the existing cultural and tech ecosystems, positioning them as key elements of this ecosystem that are **capable of supporting other spaces and initiatives** inside the cultural and tech scenes and beyond.

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Culture and cultural heritage

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See on UIA website

