

NEWS

PROJECT

Kosice 2.0

📍 Košice, Slovakia

TOPIC

Culture and cultural heritage

EDIT 19 DECEMBER 2022

BY HARIS BISKOS UIA EXPERT

Embedding the culture of innovation - ZOOM IN (PART B)

See on UIA website



Kosice 2.0 project aims at introducing new dimensions to the routines of work of Kosice City employees stimulating a shift in the culture of doing things in the public sector environment. Through the "Creative City" capacity training program those new dimensions were crystalized into specific methods and tools that participant employees started embedding in practice.

PART B: From theory to practice

The second part of the zoom-in moves from the preparation and the design of the program to its specifics. It outlines the main elements that "Creative City" introduces to drive the advancement of public sector performance, how those elements have been translated into courses for City employees and how they have been penetrating the working routines affecting processes of work in the municipality. It then discusses what is needed to be done so that an ambitious pilot capacity training program can embed this new culture of innovation that Kosice 2.0 envisions.

A. Elements of the new culture

"Creative City" capacity training program was organized in 3 modules. Each one of those modules Design Thinking, Value for Money and Participation, reflects the different elements of the new culture that Kosice 2.0 is aiming to embed in its local government context. They all introduce new ways of thinking and acting in public sector. **Michal Hladký** states:

The idea of **Design Thinking** is a process that allows trials and errors, piloting, divergent thinking. Those are concepts which probably people working in the municipality don't have in their mindsets. It is not crucial only about innovation but also to cope with the new challenges met in public sector. It is also a tool or a method of thinking and doing through which we are able to bridge creative industries & culture with public sector. It is not about commissioning a pretty webpage or a nice architecture interior in a building but it is something which could let other sectors leverage from the creative sector. So that is why we chose design thinking. **Value for Money** is the change which needs to happen not because we need to save money but because Value for Money concept is more about analytical thinking. It is about understanding all the processes and the resources behind them and how to best deliver services. **Participation** is because the whole concept is about the citizens and if you

can't do participation, you can't really understand your customer. Participation is bridging the body of public service/institution with the target audience.

For every module 1 external expert was invited as a course leader who designed the syllabus and run its courses.

01. Design Thinking

Design Thinking courses were organized by **Aida Némethová**, the Design Thinking and scrum master coach in Deutsche Telecom IT Solutions of Slovakia. Aida started 8 years ago in the Deutsche Telecom Slovakia (DTS) as an assistant supporting the agile transformation of a company's major client account. There she came in touch with the agile thinking approach^[1] organizing training sessions for DTS and supporting as a facilitator in problem solving workshops. Aida states about the Design Thinking theory:

It is a new holistic approach in the ways we communicate and service our customers. This change of mindset starts at a personal level so we work with a different mindset to help our personnel be more open, shift to growth mindset and outward thinking and a more customer and user-centric approach. Because we are a big company our teams are not usually in contact with the end-customer so this process helps us not to lose the focus of who we are working for, who are the end-users and really to follow the philosophy that we need to still think and be aware that at the center of our activities should be the user who is going to use our services or products. Design Thinking is one of our agile methods to build our services and our new products around customers' needs.

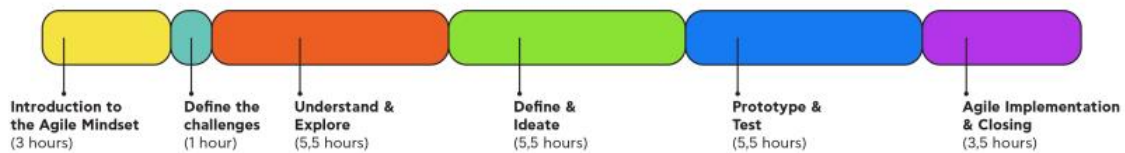
Designing and running the course for City Officials meant that Aida had to shift her own mindset (that of a private corporation approach) to fit in the public sector context:

I have to admit that the preparation wasn't easy. Designing the course for City Officials I had to bear in mind things that I had been hearing about the context of the municipality such as that there is a lot of silo thinking among the departments or that the officers do not usually think about the end-users (the citizens) when delivering services, or that they do not think out of the box or looking for innovation. So I thought that it would be inspiring to first share with them how a big private corporation is approaching the same issues in creative and interactive ways.

The training was not like a typical passive course but rather an interactive session where participants needed to be active and collaborate with each other or learning by doing in real time conditions interacting with the outer context and the end users.

From the very beginning, the Design Thinking course was a hands-on process. Participants had to bring to the table and work with the pragmatic challenges that they face in their working routines and all the training was based to find the solutions to those challenges. So, we started really from the beginning talking about the need to shift our mindsets, what does it mean when we talk about the growth or the outward mindset, why is this important and how this new mindset connects to our reality at the office. The training included many discussions and examples, it went slowly with the theory but flipping after each step of the theory diving into practice so that some of the ideas that would come up during the class could be tested on the ground. Another important element of the course was that participants had to find the end-users (citizens) and interact with them. So how do we approach our end-users and involve them in our work became our key question?

The Design Thinking course plan 24 Hours of Design Thinking



Apart from being a hands-on and participative process, the Design Thinking module was a quite dynamic process where warm-up sessions, field-work exercises, theory breaks, work-in-groups sessions and plenaries were following one another:

We started with forming a small playground to help participants get familiar with the digital space and the Miro board tool; then we had some team building activities to get to know each other providing some information about ourselves; then we always had some warm ups and funny moments; then we worked over the idea of the user map so when we have a challenge we know how to create this map of users or stakeholders; then the zoom-in method followed where we talked more precisely about a specific product or service; main challenge of participants was communication so our questions were formed around it and participants started placing their interpretation of communication, features or attributes; then they had to prepare and conduct an interview where they worked with real partners from real target groups representatives; then rules for a good interviews, the do's and the don'ts; then we showed how to collect the information and organise our data, then prioritisation identifying what was the one most important need of our users and what was the most important problem; we then created the profile of the user with real data; and then we jumped into the solution space with ideation exercises and finally the voting of the best ideas and prototyping; after the prototyping we had an exchange meeting among the two teams where we shared our experience and collected feedback from the group so to have the chance to improve our prototype; finally we invited a few testers from the interview sessions to give real feedback so to be able to elaborate our final prototype.

Top Tips by Aida Némethová

A dedicated space for the training has to be available. During our course, participants had the plan, they had the commitment, the approval from their managers but they did not have a dedicated space and this hampered their effort.

One of the key elements of the training was to create opportunities for participants to communicate with the real end-users. The public officers whose job is to be in contact with the clients (citizens) were the ones that had the biggest difficulties in both the tools and the processes of communication. Public officers find it really hard to make this connection. Having the opportunity to talk to the real users, understand their problems and get real-time feedback helped them become much better.

It is very important to work with the pragmatic challenges that the employees/participants face at the office. You should not though ask the participants to propose those challenges but instead the challenges should be ready upfront with input from the management board of the municipality. It is important that the management board is also aware of what is happening during the training. This way, participants will be ready to go further right after the training program ends. The capacity training is not only about ideas but about diving to the implementation immediately.

It is crucial to work with the model "Learning by doing". Instead of focusing on the learning modules of the training choose to work with pragmatic challenges and do problem solving in real-time conditions.

02. Value for Money

Value for Money courses were organized by **Eduard Baumöhl**, researcher at the University of Economics in Bratislava, at the Faculty of Economics of the Technical University of Kosice and president of the Slovak Economic Association. Eduard describes that what we call Value for Money (VFM) is a method introduced in Slovak central government in 2016 to measure the efficiency of specific government initiatives or in other words, the impact that a project brings in relation to the money spent.

It is more like a concept. There are many analytical methods to assess a project focusing not only on the financial perspective but also on the value it brings to the citizens. The idea behind the Value for Money is that first of all you have to specify clearly your objectives and your overall goals and then there are some analytical methods to help you find the best ways or actions to meet those objectives and bring more value. This is the underlying idea.

VFM was first introduced in Slovakia in 2016 by 3 very well-known economists. Martin Filko who was at that time director of the Institute of Financial Policy in Slovakia, Ľudovít Ódor who is the Vice Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia, and Štefan Kišš who is the head of the Analytical Unit at the Ministry of Finance called Value for Money Department (VFMD). Eduard adds:

The Value for Money perspective tells you that you shouldn't only compare actions only on the basis of the cost but also according to the impact. This is what we call a cost benefit analysis.

During the course participants attended lectures from both the Vice Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia who explained how the idea was developed and how it is implemented at the State level and then the people from the Analytical Unit at the Ministry of Finance discussed about the different methods with the participants.

Participants had the opportunity to witness some real-time projects that the Ministry of Finance is working at the moment and see how assessing through the approach of the VFM helps the Ministers to the decision-making process. So, the course was divided into an introductory seminar, then the Head of Implementation Unit at the government office focused on the implementation of the VFM approach providing some practical examples and case studies and finally we invited 2 people from the VFM Department of the Ministry of Finance. It was a 1-day event.

Besides the fact that VFM is a quite simple idea at heart, the City employees that participated in the course were lacking the analytical background needed to understand and be able to work with this new approach. As Eduard explains, although the people involved in his training were very active asking questions and participating, the class seemed to have nothing to do with their job.

The City does not have any analytical units so far. It was really difficult to talk about evidence-based policy making when there are no analytical units at the local and regional government and the officials lack the basic knowledge and background in the field. There are some analytical units in the ministries but those are also newly formed and lag behind comparing to other countries. On the level of municipalities, you don't meet any analytical units. Every decision is based only on the political will.

Eduard thinks that besides the lack of skills and the analytical background of City officers, the shift in mindset of the leadership is the most important challenge to overcome so this new approach could be applied in the municipality apparatus.

I had the opportunity to witness VFM happening at the highest government level when these analytical units came to life and we could actually see how it had been working at the state policy level. The main challenge was to convince political leaders that their decisions should be made on the basis of hard evidence. The same challenge applies at the municipality context. You have to find the way to convince political leadership and City officers to listen to the analytical approach and the hard data and move beyond the political decisions based on.

03. Participation

The third and final module of Creative City focused on Participation and was organized by **Milota Sidorová**, urbanist and head of the participatory planning department at the Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava^[2]. Together with her colleague, Lenka Kudrnová facilitated the workshop.



Participation module was led by Milota Sidorová (on the right), urbanist and head of the participatory planning department at the Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava.

What is the Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava (MIB)

Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava is a City owned organization made from public funds which was created in 2018 when the architect Matúš Vallo was elected as a Mayor of Bratislava. MIB was one of the main promises of the new Mayor through which he envisioned to change the face of the city and the ways Bratislava approaches architecture and urban design. Milota states.

Such Institutes exist in almost all developed cities and Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava took inspiration from the Prague Institute of Planning and other similar examples in Vienna or Amsterdam. The Institute started with 20 employees in 2018 and now it has around 90 and it focuses on topics like public space, architecture, planning, participation etc.

With the MIB and through the work done at the participatory planning department, Milota and her team created the handbook “How to understand the city and its people” which served as a manual for the courses on Participation for the “Creative City” program. Drawing from her multifaceted experience in her field, Milota describes the real challenges of participation and how time is a decisive parameter to the process.

Participation shouldn't be confused with direct democracy, social media inquiries or PR. When you choose to work with participation process it is crucially important that you are able to guarantee that what you open up to the community will happen. If you cannot then don't do it! Usually in participation processes initiators are not sure what they can offer to whom; or they have problem with the representation as they have only invited certain groups in the process. But what is the ultimate challenge in participation is the notion of time as you need at least 2 years on average to develop real trust in the community which also requires constant activity and follow up among parties.



“How to understand the city and its people” handbook served as a reference for the Participation courses.

Although participation requires great investment in time and energy, it is an invaluable process that facilitates the development of allies in the society and leads to the creation of vibrant communities.

What is also important for cities who pursue with participation is to look for those organizations that sit between government and society and who can specify who is the important person in the community without being formal leaders. If you can do this then you can have allies and it becomes more collaborative than coming with the authority of the City. This process sits on the intersection of community development and participation but I think that participation is a great process when you want to stir the community. After all community development should be the goal not participation. If we want better cities and vibrant communities then participation is a great tool to stir up something.

But how could it become possible for an urban authority to effectively stir up the community and what do the people who sit behind the desks in public sector need to do to cope up with this new culture?

I think that municipality departments should be very good in setting strategies or serving the basic functions and then they should have other bodies that can provide partnerships within the society. I think that creativity should happen a little bit outside the City structure as the system is very rigid and people will inevitably fall into its rigidity. So maybe organizations like CIKE or Metropolitan Institute Bratislava which are attached to the City but sit somewhere halfway can serve as small think tanks to bring creativity to the rigidity of the structure. But at the same time there is a danger that if you just create think tanks outside who do not communicate with the old structures then the think tank will be isolated as well creating tensions. You need to have something semi-permeable and agile that can work with both ends but also be independent.

At the same time people sitting behind desks need also to be taken out of their comfort zone. You cannot produce any creativity if you stay in the same space, with the same people and the same rules. But they have to be urged out of their comfort zone with sense and care so that they don't feel they are punished. Sometimes City officers get this feeling that people don't want them so they close themselves in their own rejection and they boycott you.

During the “Creative City” Milota and Lenka organized a 2 days session with the participant employees from Kosice municipality. Having the MIB handbook as a reference point, they focused on topics such as the use of data during the process of participation, strategies for mapping of places for interventions, tools for mapping of stakeholders' communities, different methods and processes of participation etc. Their course consisted of 5 modules and took place in 2 days:

[illegible]

For Milota, the course on Participation was the first step towards the establishment of the new mindset in City government. What should follow up is a real mission where participants can test the pilots they have learned:

[1] According to the IBM Institute of Business Value: Agile development is a nimble process that

[2] Since September 2022 she is the Vice Chair at the Office for Spatial Planning and Construction at the Ministry of

Environment - a new public authority that will digitize the way construction permits are given.

B. From theory to practice

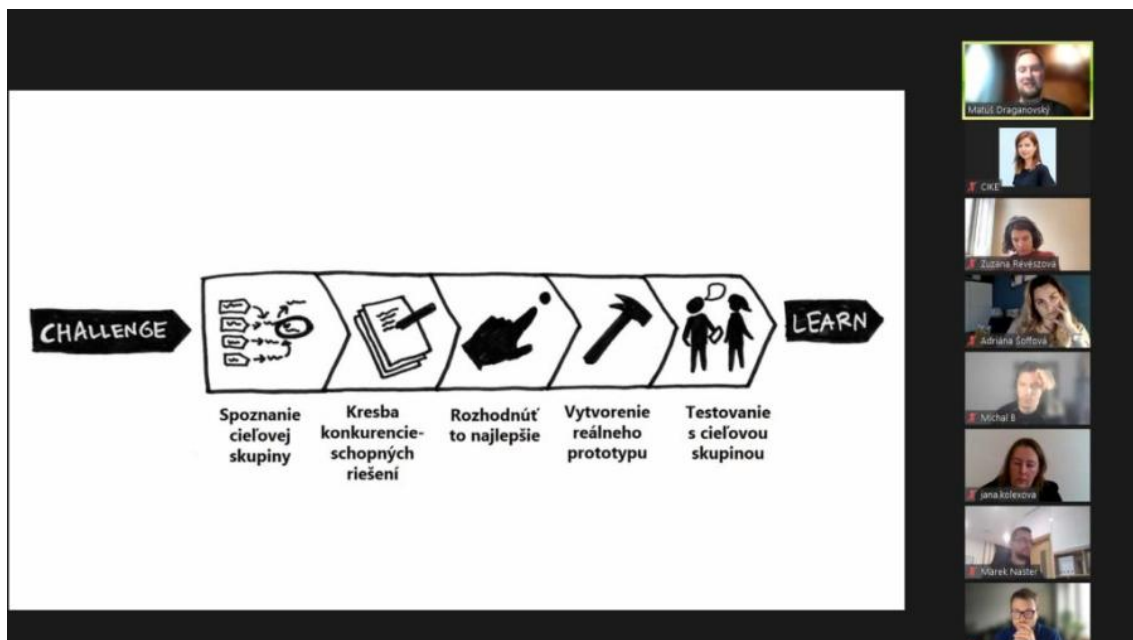
The elements that have been introduced by “Creative City” and are driving the way for City employees towards the new mindset of innovation that Kosice 2.0 assembles, have already started penetrating the working routines of the municipality in a parallel process. With the support of the Kosice 2.0 team and the Citizens Experience and Well Being Institute Unit, members of the municipality staff started participating in various structured collaborative activities that all aim to pilot new solutions for the improvement of existing public services provision. All those sessions had been using both the Design Thinking approach to put the citizen at the center when designing new prototypes of services, the Participation approach to be able to put different stakeholders to work together and the analytical thinking of the Value for Money approach to estimate the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives.



Design Sprints workshops were a great opportunity to test new processes and methods of work while developing solutions over pragmatic urban challenges. © Kosice 2.0

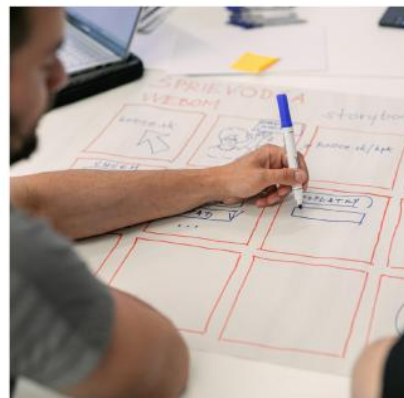
The sessions were organized in the form of **design sprints** which are intensive workshops that bring together people from different fields to look for solutions over certain challenges at a very limited time. The process consists of 5 steps:

1. Carefully mapping and understanding the existing situation
2. Ideating alternative solutions
3. Deciding which idea to is the best
4. Building a realistic prototype
5. Validate with real users



The 5 steps of a Design Sprint workshop © Kosice 2.0

Through the process of the design sprints, City officers found themselves collaborating with other stakeholders from the broader stakeholder community such as entrepreneurs, IT experts, social anthropologists, researchers, designers, citizens etc. to find ways to improve certain services of the municipality or even design new solutions to complex challenges of the city. 3 design sprints sessions have been organized so far tackling issues such as the improvement of specific Social Services of the municipality, solutions for a more efficient Office of First Contact and new pragmatic proposals to alleviate the phenomenon of urban heat islands in the city.



Moments from the Design Sprint workshops. © Kosice 2.0

Michal Hladky states that design sprints have been introducing a new process of thinking and working that helps bring the changes that Kosice 2.0 envisions in public services:

At the moment we are moving from the mapping phase to piloting prototypes of new changes in public services. For example, when working with the department of Social Care we first started with a deep analysis of the existing services through interviews and then we organized design sprints sessions where we put together City Officers with other stakeholders to propose and pilot new ideas that would improve public services.

Adriana Šebešová is one of the City Officers who participated in the "Creative City" courses and in some of the design sprint sessions. She joined the department of Strategic Development and Planning of the Municipality of Kosice 2 years ago. Her duty is to take care of strategic documents produced by the department such as the development of the Social and Economic Development Plan of the City or the participation of the City of Kosice to the EU Green Capital competition that involved several studies and plans for green infrastructure, biodiversity, water management etc. Adriana witnesses already small changes that start happening in the working processes of her office:

Recently there has been a change in the process of preparing our strategic documents. The Strategic Department used to outsource such missions to private companies which prepared all those documents on behalf of the City. Now the process has completely changed and the department has started organizing the work in house with its own resources and people. During this new process it engages with local stakeholders creating opportunities for participation for citizens, professionals, NGOs, academics etc. This is a new process of work that the department is already trying to establish.



Adriana Šebešová from the department of Strategic Development and Planning, is one of the City Officers who participated in the "Creative City" courses and in some of the design sprint sessions.

Adriana decided to join the workshops of the "Creative City" program so to be able to follow this new culture of collaboration and learn more about the tools and the processes that she could use to overcome challenges along the way:

We started working this way with one of our strategic studies last year and this year we are following the same process for two more master plans. What has been a very big challenge to me is to be able to handle this process efficiently and feel comfortable. Someone said that the key in participation process is to give people what you have promised. It is very difficult sometimes to work with 40 people and have all those different voices to be heard and work together to produce 1 or 2 suggestions for the municipality.

But besides the challenges that she faces when opening up the planning process of strategic missions to the broader community of stakeholders, Adriana enjoys this new culture of collaboration as it brings a new positive dimension in her work:

I enjoy mostly when having the chance to work with other colleagues or stakeholders on common challenges of our city. This new culture of collaboration is also supported by a great team of people that are active around the program. For example, I joined the design sprints that addressed the issue of climate change and urban heat islands. This was a really nice moment because many different people came together to discuss a common challenge. A common space was created for interesting discussions and ideas. After participating in the courses and the design sprints I feel that I can collaborate easier with other colleagues and stakeholders who can bring new ideas, new processes or even new technologies to our work.

Slavomir Bucher, who also took part in the Creative City courses, works for 6 years as a full time officer at the same department with Adriana. His role is to collect and monitor data and contribute to the strategic documents that the office is producing. As part of this work he carries out activities to support the Action Plan for Sustainable Energy and Climate for the Net Zero Cities program that the City of Kosice is participating. For Slavomir, putting the different departments of the municipality and City companies to work together and communicate for a common mission is quite challenging. Through his department he is responsible to create networks among the different offices of the municipality and stakeholders to get input and data that would support the strategic work of the office and help design new policies or services. Design Thinking courses and design sprint sessions are helping to come closer to this new mentality of collaborative working:

This process can work with any problem or challenge that we face in our everyday work at the office. For example, establishing better communication with our customers, citizens, is an issue that we all face in our everyday routine. How can we improve this? Through the design thinking method, we managed to analyze the topic with colleagues from different departments who shared their own experiences and design together a more citizen centric communication approach that helped our everyday work.

C. Towards a deeper culture change in City government

The Creative City program and the first practical applications of the elements and the tools that it introduces are the first seeds of a larger effort to bring broader systemic changes at an operational level and in the public policy-making culture of Kosice City. So how is it possible to ignite impactful changes at this level through a pilot training program for municipal officers? Is skills enhancement enough to embed innovation? What other elements or actions are needed?

Dina Karydi is an adviser and European representative at the Resilient Cities Catalyst and an adviser and high-level expert for multilateral entities and organizations, such as the European Commission's European Urban Initiative (EUI) and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Make Cities Resilient 2030 campaign. She has been the associate director and climate transformation lead for the Rockefeller Foundation's global 100 Resilient Cities initiative empowering City leaders across the globe through government leadership programs.

Dina believes that a capacity training program for City employees is a great start to drive culture change in the municipality. But in order to succeed in bringing deeper changes in the DNA of the City Government there are more that need to be done.

The mindset needs to shift at the level of change management. So, in the context of a capacity building it is not enough to find the individuals and give them the skills. If they don't have a place to apply these skills within the local government system then the training program is of no value and instead of helping, it creates more difficulties. For example, a very nice training program with design thinking methods can be organized for employees of a municipality. But if these employees are only from one department which happens to be more advanced than the others and if this department does not find the response, the partners or the access to information within the rest of the municipality then the aim of the training program is not achieved. If there are 10 of us in the City that have the skills to do participatory planning but our chief doesn't let us or no one asks or we do it and it doesn't really feed into the policy agenda because the political staff doesn't have that awareness then again the goal of the training program is not being met. So, for me the level of support that is needed

is first of all to train more people so that those who are acquiring the modern skills at the civil service level are not the minority. This will increase in absolute numbers the access to these new tools that are available to the staff of the municipalities and therefore raise the level of the workforce.

At the same time, however, there is a need for a systemic direction towards the utilization of capacity building opportunities that will contribute to organizational changes within the municipality. In this way, new departments will be able to exist which can act more horizontally and facilitate links with the various program running within the municipality and also with the local communities. The third and last point is that political support for this agenda should be provided in practice through capacity building and through possible external support. The technical staff should be strengthened especially in municipalities where the technical staff is very dependent on the political leadership. This gap should also be bridged in order to reach the final goal which is data driven project based forward looking policy making.

Working with 100 Resilience Cities initiative and today through Resilience Cities Catalyst Dina has been leading innovative practices that nurture the new change makers in City government contexts. Through her experience with 100RC where she led capacity training programs for global City leaders, Dina identifies a number of key elements that a capacity building program towards City officials should definitely have:

What we have been supporting in a very systematic way is the creation of a new permanent job within each municipality or within a department that we worked with. We set up a capacity building program which initially focused on selecting people to receive the training who would then create a new department within the municipality. On the occasion of a global competition and the gravitas of the Rockefeller Foundation we negotiated the position of this new department to be high on the organizational chart of the municipality and to have influence. The selection of the people involved was also very important and we were looking very carefully at their backgrounds, their resumes, their characteristics to lead such a cross-cutting initiative that would ignite changes within the City.

After all the screening and selection was done, we then offered ongoing coaching helping them to develop their skills on many levels while giving them access to a peer system. This system encouraged direct networking at the individual level so that employees working in certain areas had access to similar employees in the same area in other Cities where the same program was being implemented in parallel. We were thus creating a peer network in which everyone shared common problems and concerns. A very important and crucial element that determines the success of such programs is to have this system of exchange of change makers. This system creates what we call the community of practice of urban change management where people have the opportunity to communicate with each other and share common challenges and concerns.

Change makers in cities need different forms of support and a simple training is not enough. If we want there to be an impact in these trainings, we have to change the very philosophy of these trainings and go beyond the traditional learning process of top down downloading of information. And you do this by giving these people (1) access to real data and projects for the city and (2) access to a homogeneous international community of practice.

D. Conclusion

“Creative City” program run within a period of 6 months engaging a group of about 20 employees from Kosice municipality. The team of Kosice 2.0 who initiated this activity did not just aim at raising awareness among City officials of the new ways of doing things in modern public sector environment or at equipping municipal employees with new competencies or skills and theoretical background of best practices. They instead aspired to consolidate the new culture of innovation that Kosice 2.0 assembles both in society (IT sector, citizens initiatives, academia etc.) and the municipality advancing public sector performance towards data-drive, evidence-based, citizen-centric decision-making approaches and policies.

To fulfil this aspiration, the team of Kosice 2.0 delivered a forward-thinking capacity building program engaging with high-level experts from academia, private and public sector to its design and implementation bringing a range of fresh ideas and practices tested in practice that reflect the innovation culture that one meets in different contexts such as the private corporations, top-level offices of Ministries and high-end public institutions.

However innovative in its design and development, “Creative City” has a considerable journey ahead of it to achieve in order to make the transition from a pilot project to a horizontal sustainable program that would be able to drive the shift of mindsets in Kosice municipality. To increase its impact, “Creative City” should be able to take place at scale and not as a stand-alone initiative, it should be linked to specific objectives and delivered in parallel

at multiple points. It should also be able to engage more the City leadership in its training program agenda and work with real-time challenges while being connected to specific missions that the City undertakes.

Despite the long journey, this is a path worth taking. Providing a continuous capacity building program and investing in a progressive and creative training of the staff of the City is the only way to embed innovation and pave the way for a truly resilient city.

Culture and cultural heritage

See on UIA website

