



The Urban Lab of  
Europe!

THEORETICAL  
BACKGROUND  
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## Introduction

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Several months after the Covid-19 crisis hit, the UIA programme decided it was necessary to step back and learn from the challenges that had arisen and from the successful (or not) practices implemented by UIA cities to overcome them. In light of the secular uncertainty in which cities must now develop and implement policies, the adaptive measures implemented by UIA projects during the COVID-19 crisis should be valuable to other UIA projects and EU cities.

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The study therefore revolved around three core questions:

- What were the main challenges affecting the delivery of UIA projects?
- How exactly did UIA cities overcome these challenges?
- What lessons can we draw to increase preparedness and resilience in the future?

From a methodological perspective, the study was carried out in two successive phases:

1. Analysis of challenges and responses found based on a survey questionnaire designed in collaboration with UIA Project Officers, the analysis of the data submitted by 34 cities, the testing of the findings in a focus group with a sample of UIA cities, and the inclusion of all the lessons learned in this study.
2. Knowledge sharing and capacity building based on an online workshop format designed in collaboration with UIA Permanent Secretariat; the piloting (of a novel methodological approach for this topic) of a workshop process with a sample of 15 UIA and URBACT cities.

The outcomes of the survey and focus group discussions led us to cluster the main challenges and responses to the pandemic under three main themes related to project delivery: *Project & Partnership Management*, *Citizens & Stakeholders Participation*, and *Public Procurement & Finance*. The illustration below provides an overview of the challenges faced and responses adopted by UIA projects under each of the three headings.



Figure 1 – Challenges & Responses Modules

This resilience handbook for urban innovation projects is structured as follows:

1. First, it presents an overview of recent policy and policy research on cities & resilience, which provides an analytical context to the study.
2. The study then dedicates a section to each of the three project delivery themes: Project & Partnership Management, Citizens & Stakeholders Participation, and Public Procurement & Finance. Each of these three sections is divided in two sub-sections: a description of the specific challenges faced by projects and a focus on the most effective adaptive measures deployed, including several brief case study zoom-ins looking at specific projects and recommendations are suggested throughout.
3. The conclusions section presents the main findings and recommendations for each of the three themes analysed and provides a discussion on city resilience.

[1] This study is the final output of the UIA Knowledge & Capitalisation Activity on “Urban Innovation and COVID-19 - Coping with and Learning from On-field Practice through UIA Projects” carried out between April 2022 and March 2023.

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