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CityLake

Transnational Network Meeting in Silla

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CityLake meets in Silla: European cities join forces to protect and sustainably enhance lake ecosystems

The European journey of CityLake, the Transfer Network funded by the URBACT IV Programme and led by the Municipality of Borgomanero, continues with a new transnational meeting in Silla, Spain, on 7 and 8 October 2026. The network aims to build local alliances for the protection and sustainable enhancement of lake ecosystems, drawing on the experience developed around Lake Orta in Italy.

CityLake builds on the experience of the Lake Cusio Contract, recognised as an URBACT Good Practice in 2024, with the objective of adapting its principles and tools to different European contexts. The model combines scientific knowledge of lake ecosystems, continuous monitoring and the long-term involvement of public authorities, businesses, NGOs and citizens, translating knowledge into concrete and shared actions for the protection and enhancement of water resources.

Led by Borgomanero, the network brings together Silla in Spain, Águeda in Portugal, Ioannina in Greece, the Tartu County Development Association in Estonia, Kolašin in Montenegro, Edineț in Moldova and Ternopil in Ukraine. The project runs from November 2025 to April 2028, with an overall budget of EUR 750,000.

Strengthening local participation

The Silla meeting places particular emphasis on one of the key elements of the URBACT method: the involvement of local stakeholders through URBACT Local Groups (ULGs).

On Wednesday 7 October, partners exchange experiences on how their local groups are developing and how stakeholders can be effectively involved in the CityLake transfer process. Peer-learning sessions, group discussions and practical activities provide an

opportunity for the partner cities to compare approaches, challenges and solutions emerging in their respective territories.

The programme also gives participants the opportunity to discover some of Silla's experiences and sites linked to environmental management and local development, including the Green Filter, the port, the tourist office and the archaeological museum. The international delegations have the opportunity to meet local stakeholders to address an issue shared by many lake territories: how can tourism development be balanced with the need to protect fragile lake ecosystems?

Representatives from different sectors of the local community, including nature conservation, fishing, agriculture, traditional sailing, local businesses, rowing and tourism, can contribute their perspectives, creating an opportunity to explore how environmental protection and sustainable economic development can be pursued together.

For Silla, participation in CityLake is closely connected to its experience in the Albufera Natural Park area and to local initiatives concerning environmental protection, sustainable management and community engagement.

From the Lake Cusio model to local Transfer Plans

On Thursday 8 October, the focus turns to the next steps in the CityLake transfer journey. Partners work on the transition towards the development of their Transfer Plans, exploring how the principles of the Lake Cusio Contract can be adapted to the specific environmental, institutional and social characteristics of each territory.

The programme also examines the contribution of local experimentation and URBACT Local Groups to this process, with the objective of moving progressively from learning and exchange to concrete actions at local level.

A study visit to the Albufera lake and its ecosystem offers the opportunity to explore the environmental characteristics and challenges of the host territory first-hand. Partners can reflect together on what they have learnt during the visit and identify ideas, approaches and practices that could be relevant to their own local contexts.

A European learning journey that started at Lake Orta, Italy

The Silla meeting marks another important step in a journey that began with the CityLake kick-off meeting in Borgomanero on 19 and 20 February 2026, when partners had the opportunity to explore the Lake Orta experience and better understand the scientific, institutional and participatory foundations of the Lake Cusio Contract.

Over its 30-month duration, CityLake aims to turn this experience into a shared European learning process. Through peer exchange, capacity building, study visits and the active involvement of local stakeholders and citizens, the network will support each partner in

adapting the Lake Cusio Contract model to its own context and developing a local approach to the sustainable and integrated management of lake areas.

The ultimate ambition is to strengthen the capacity of European cities and territories to build long-term local alliances around their lakes and inland water resources, combining environmental protection, scientific knowledge, community participation and sustainable local development.

CityLake is co-funded by the European Union through the URBACT IV Programme.