



D9.4: Common Action Plan on clustering activities

VARCITIES | Work Package 9, Task 9.5

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Abbreviation list

Term	Description
H&WB	Health and well-being
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NBS	Nature-Based Solutions
GDE&I	Gender, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
DE&I	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AINOW	Artificial Intelligence NOW Institute
GPS	Global Positioning System
STK	Stakeholders



Executive Summary

The Deliverable 9.4 describes the common action plan on clustering activities, based on the relevant task (Task 9.5 VARCITIES Clustering activities with the other NBS projects).

After two common meetings with the sister projects (GOGREEN ROUTES, euPOLIS and IN-HABIT) a list of decided joint actions that have been decided, are presented concerning the common health and wellbeing indicators as well as activities referred to Gender, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Moreover, a description of joint deliverables and actions in dissemination and communication is presented.

This deliverable will be updated after the periodical meeting with the sister projects. It should be noted that the Steering Committee and the General Assembly of VARCITIES will be informed in detail for every scheduled meeting and every action that will be decided with all the partners.



1 Introduction

The vision of VARCITIES is to implement real, visionary ideas and add value by establishing sustainable models for increasing the health and well-being of citizens: children, young people, middle aged, and the elderly, who are exposed to diverse climatic conditions and challenges in and around Europe. The project consists of 25 partners under the lead of Telecommunications System Institute (TSI, P1). Eight Pilot Cities will test and implement a series of innovative nature-based actions.

VARCITIES sets the ambitious target to advance innovation across at different urban scales by fully exploiting nature-based solutions from a digital, social and cultural perspective. Public spaces are envisioned as people-centered areas that support creativity, inclusivity, health, and happiness for the citizens.

In collaboration with WP 9 (Healthy Cities Helix) and WP4 (Stakeholder Mapping), TSI will be responsible for leading networking activities with relevant European fora and cities working on similar issues, health and wellbeing in cities and nature-based solutions. VARCITIES will be actively involved through the work performed in ThinkNature to all Task Forces for NBS and especially in the Task Force Impact Evaluation Framework. Moreover, VARCITIES will be linked to Smart Cities network through project mapping including initiatives that its partners are already involved in (e.g., Crowdhelix, Smart Cities, EKLIPSE, etc.).

The Deliverable 9.4 consists of 4 Chapters and deals with the common action plan on clustering activities that will be developed in common with the sister projects (GOGREEN ROUTES, euPOLIS and IN-HABIT). It should be noted that the structure of this deliverable is based on the actions suggested by the EC and have been agreed with the sister projects during the second clustering meeting held on 27th February 2021. More specifically, Chapter 1 is a small introduction, Chapter 2 states the actions that concern the Well-being and the Health at the local level, Chapter 3 represents a description and the relevant actions concerning Gender, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and finally, Chapter 4 states the joint Dissemination and Communication activities with the sister projects.



2 Well-Being and Health at the local level

2.1. The Cooperation Manifesto

After the 2nd Online Clustering Meeting held on 27th February, the representative partners of the sister projects agreed to develop a Manifesto with a common narrative on the subsidiarity principle applied to wellbeing and health. How can we define health and wellbeing at the local level? What is “locality” in this respect? Are we considering the whole city, just a district, or a neighbourhood? Could we use GPS coordinates? This Manifesto could complement the work that the [OECD](#) is doing on wellbeing at regional level.

VARCITIES project will contribute to the co-definition of the term ‘locality’ and to the alignment of the Manifesto with the OECD approach to wellbeing at regional level. This project will also provide examples of the “local dimension” in terms of health and well-being, categorizing the indicators in a comparable way.

In VARCITIES project, 116 indicators have been considered to identify the key impacts of specific NBS actions, as well as a range of methods for assessing each indicator. Geographical scale has already been identified for these indicators, dividing the scale into macroscale, microscale and mesoscale in order to illustrate the potential for interconnections between the different challenges.

Besides, it is crucial to identify and take into account those characteristics that create a holistic approach to the concept of “locality”. In this direction, VARCITIES project may contribute to identify residents’ perceptions of the locality taking into account the relationship between citizens and built and natural environment, or the relationship among them. The sense of belonging, the safety and community cohesion and the social relations may be some examples of a holistic locality approach. The selection of these characteristics, could also be upgraded with the citizens’ contribution giving feedback through pilots’ activities (STK engagement, co-creation, etc).

2.2. A joint deliverable based on a list with common indicators

A joint deliverable based on a list of common indicators (defined together also taking into account the current NBS Handbook on Indicators and Assessment), was decided to be created in the second clustering meeting. This list should also include the definition of “bottom-up” and “place-based” indicators resulting from the co-creation process with citizens. When defining these indicators, one could envisage the creation of a matrix for the 4 projects. For instance, such a



matrix could be based on the type of solution (not only NBS but also social, digital and cultural ones); general impacts on health; general impacts on wellbeing; place-specific impacts.

Within VARCITIES project, an updated set of indicators that will map the current situational position will be delivered. In addition, monitoring methods will be created to report how these indicators will be changed over time and during the project’s duration to make predictions for the future. To derive these, the consortium plans to use situational analysis tools, a sequential exploratory mixed methods research design and a mixed methods research approach which draws on both qualitative and quantitative lines of inquiry. In order to be ensured the alignment of VARCITIES KPIs structure with the Task Force 2, Handbook, a list with 116 indicators has been created and categorized following the EKLIPSE structure:

- 1) Climate mitigation and adaptation
- 2) Water management
- 3) Coastal resilience (not included)
- 4) Green space management (including enhancing/conserving urban biodiversity)
- 5) Air/ambient quality
- 6) Urban regeneration
- 7) Participatory planning and governance
- 8) Social justice and social cohesion
- 9) Public health and well-being
- 10) Potential for new economic opportunities and green jobs.

The same structure has been followed during the Task Force 2, Handbook development. Moreover, it should be noticed that in this list, indicators from the EKLIPSE Framework are included. New indicators, have also been added from VARCITIES partners.

VARCITIES will contribute to the production of the above-mentioned deliverable, taking into account the current status of NBS Handbook. In this direction, VARCITIES will create a revision plan for the KPIs in order to highlight the similarities and the overlaps, in comparison with the Task Force 2, Handbook.

2.3. Representatives per Project

As agreed in the second clustering meeting, in order to be updated on the work carried out on NBS Indicators and Assessment, one representative per project should participate in the existing Taskforce 2. VARCITIES participates in Taskforce 2 meetings and the contact persons presented in Table1 below.



Table 1. List of contact persons

Name	Organization	Email
Dionysia Kolokotsa	TSI	dkolokotsa@enveng.tuc.gr
Konstantinos Gobakis	TSI	kgobakis@isc.tuc.gr
Katerina Lilli	TSI	katerina.lilli.a@gmail.com



3 Gender, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (GDE&I)

The VARCITIES project is committed to promoting and mainstreaming GDE&I principles throughout its activities, including those with stakeholders. We want to continuously achieve diversity in terms of demographics (based on gender, age, racial identity, sexual orientation, etc.) as well as perspectives (differences in thoughts, ideas, interests, etc.). Ensuring both will be essential for generating better project inputs, and for ultimately improving the quality of the outcomes of the VARCITIES pilot sites and the project as a whole.

The project will therefore actively and systematically identify, seek out and include diverse groups of stakeholders from different backgrounds and identities, including those – wherever applicable – based on gender, age, (dis-)abilities, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, and sexual orientation. This will be integrated in all our co-creation activities: from the way we map our stakeholders; how we select IT tools for accessibility; how we facilitate co-creation workshops (enabling discussions and avoiding dominance hierarchies); to collecting equality data (on sensitive data categories, including sexual orientation, racial identity, etc.).

3.1. GDE&I manager and other roles

VARCITIES has appointed the role of GDE&I Manager to the Project Coordinator Prof. Dionysia Kolokotsa, who will oversee the following:

- provide strategic input and advice on GDEI across the project tasks
- ensure that GDEI is mainstreamed within the tasks
- ensure that the project is implemented in line with the GDEI goals set and results envisioned

The GDE&I Manager will be in close collaboration with the leading partner on co-creation that is Prospex Institute (PI, P18).

The GDE&I manager and the lead on co-creation will define common modalities for the VARCITIES pilot sites to engage a diverse set of citizens and remotely due to the current COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. They will formulate basic documents and templates for the pilot sites to use (e.g. a diversity & accessibility statement, an equality data collection form, etc.), as well as distil results, findings and lessons learned from pilot site leaders, which could be reflected in a joint deliverable on co-creation.

The VARCITIES pilot sites will implement the GDE&I strategy, including mapping and liaising directly with stakeholders, collecting relevant data, etc. Implementing the strategy will allow them



to address the digital divide not only in terms of rural/urban cleavage but also in terms of different abilities that citizens have when using online technologies and tools. As a first step, during the first progress meeting, a preparatory exercise was conducted in order to motivate the pilot leaders towards considering the possible barriers that might exist in reaching and engaging remotely the diverse stakeholders as well as brainstorm on possible solutions to these barriers.

The VARCITIES data protection officers Pat O’Sullivan (patosullivan@inlecomsystems.com) and Jenny Rainbird (jenny.rainbird@inlecomsystems.com) of Inlecom Innovation (INLE, P20) will play a critical overseeing role in setting up procedures towards safeguarding participants’ data protection rights and privacy, and that this is done ethically (see VARCITIES deliverables D1.1, D1.2). This includes the implementation of informed consent procedures in particular for children and elderly people. In addition, in order to evaluate our progress in this GDE&I endeavour, collecting ‘equality data [1] will be essential. This will need to be conducted in compliance with the applicable legal framework, and in particular the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[2]. The GDPR specifies a higher protection for, and a general prohibition of processing sensitive personal data related to e.g., racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, etc., while allowing for certain derogations e.g., when explicit consent is given by the data subject. This therefore has critical practical implications for our approach below.

The VARCITIES Ethics Panel, chaired by the Legal and Ethics Manager and Project Coordinator Prof. Dionysia Kolokotsa and composed of legal advisors, experts on ethics, privacy, data management, and legal issues, will also be advised as needed, for optimum alignment of the GDE&I activities with the GDPR.

3.2. Common strategy to define the set of personal characteristics

A common strategy to define the set of personal characteristics (i.e. sex, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, etc.) to be included when engaging diverse groups of citizens will be developed. The work carried out in this respect could result in a joint deliverable on GDE&I toolkit for health and well-being in cities. This toolkit could reflect similar work done by other international organisations on DE&I for the labour market [3][4].

In terms of defining and mapping citizens and stakeholders to engage with, as well processing their data, VARCITIES adopts a two-fold approach, based on the applicable data protection framework we need to comply with as mentioned above:

A) A proactive ex-ante mapping approach focused on non-demographic or non-sensitive personal data categories



As per the Prospex-CQI method, a common set of mostly non-demographic topical (e.g. health & well-being) or non-sensitive (gender, age and geographic location) criteria has been defined for all pilot sites, with respective differences in sub-categories for each pilot site based on their needs and stakeholder landscape.

The common topical criteria to guide stakeholder mapping and selection, defined by all VARCITIES pilot sites are:

- Health & Well-being (includes e.g. public/private hospitals, sports associations, etc.)
- Nature-based solutions (NBS) & Environment (includes e.g. environmental NGOs, urban/landscape planners, etc.)
- End-users & Consumers (includes e.g. family, citizen and cultural associations, etc.)
- Social Development (includes e.g. social justice organisations, charities, etc.)
- Education, Research & Communication (includes e.g. media, teacher / students associations, etc.)
- Government (includes e.g. local administrations, public agencies, etc.)
- Economy (includes e.g. business associations / investors, etc.)

All (sub-) categories are described and defined in the VARCITIES mapping report (deliverable D4.1).

The pilot site leaders have started to compile stakeholder mappings based on these criteria, which do not include any sensitive categories of data, which would need a priori consent. For example, and more specifically, pilot sites will identify organisations / individuals working on anti-discrimination, or LGBTQI+ issues, rather than 'mapping' individuals for their sexual orientation or racial identity, which would be prohibited without prior informed consent. This is one way to achieve the cognitive and in part the demographic diversity.

B) A reactive ex-post equality data approach, collecting sensitive / special categories of data, on a voluntary and anonymous basis at the end of each co-creation format

Given the above general prohibition of processing special categories of data under article 9 of the GDPR, yet the need to collect equality data to track our progress in GDE&I, we will collect this type of demographic and sensitive data (e.g. on sexual orientation, ethnicity / racial identity, etc.) on a voluntary and anonymous basis after each co-creation format (e.g. workshop, survey, etc.).

This ex-post, voluntary and anonymous approach has several distinct advantages, i.e.:

- Improving the quality and quantity of the self-reported data



- Avoiding any obstacles / concerns with citizens we engage, e.g. registration processes before a workshop inquiring about personal (non-anonymous) and sensitive data would create a significant barrier
- Avoiding impressions of tokenism and going beyond representation
- Practical: avoiding need to receive informed consent for each stakeholder to be mapped

As a next step, we will define the set of demographic and sensitive categories of data VARCITIES will be collecting in an ex-post, voluntary and anonymous fashion.

Towards the definition of the set of personal characteristics, an exercise was conducted during the first progress meeting of VARCITIES project. Through this exercise the pilots were prompted to evaluate the current status of GDE&I in their cities, reflect on which types of characteristics might currently pose a risk of exclusion and consider which types of characteristics have to be or can be included for GDE&I engagement.

3.3. Joint deliverable/ positioning paper on AI and GDE&I

As also agreed in the second clustering meeting, a joint deliverable/ positioning paper on AI and GDE&I (i.e., AI to tackle unconscious bias, AI for emotion recognition, biosensors, etc.) will be prepared. Such a deliverable should also take into account the current debate on AI and discrimination, for instance AINOW (2019) Discriminating Systems: Gender, Race and Power in AI [5].



4 Joint Communications and Dissemination Activities

4.1. Common glossary

A common glossary has to be consistent both for internal communication between the 4 projects and for external communication. In the 1st VARCITIES Progress Meeting that was held on March, where the sister projects were invited to represent their projects, it was commonly decided the glossary developed by IN-HABIT project, to be shared. VARCITIES partners will contribute to this common glossary providing feedback, in order for this document to be updated.

4.2. Joint deliverables

VARCITIES partners will participate in the joint deliverables (i.e., the ones mentioned above) and positioning papers that might be developed in collaboration with sister projects.

4.3. Timeline for joint events

A timeline for joint events (at least 2/3 conferences/workshops) is to be developed. A calendar with main events for 2021 will be shared on Teams to prepare the joint events of the projects.

The VARCITIES consortium has created a calendar which is constantly updated with relevant events in which the project partners can get involved. The calendar is available for all consortium members and contains a variety of events such as: workshops, conferences, summits, exhibitions, local and national events.

Moreover, as part of the Healthy Cities Helix, the VARCITIES project will organise a yearly event which will target key stakeholders to disseminate the results and, nearing the end of the project, facilitate the exploitation/post-project next steps.

4.4. Synergies with cluster of projects H2020 SC5-20-2019

Synergies with the cluster of projects H2020 SC5-20-2019 on Transforming historic urban areas into hubs of entrepreneurship and social and cultural integration are sought. Table 2, presents these sister projects.

The Healthy Cities Helix, was established on the Crowdhelix open innovation platform as part of the VARCITIES project with the aim of creating an active pool of stakeholders. The H2020 SC5-20-2019 projects will be invited to join this online community which could become the base of a



common global outreach strategy for a European level. Moreover, the Healthy Cities Helix will also be actively involved in supporting a bi-yearly Networking Webinar designed to maximise synergies and inter-project knowledge sharing in an effort to optimise EU resources by avoiding duplication of efforts on similar topics. These webinars will be a forum for open and participatory debate that allows the VARCITIES partners to engage with associations and relevant bodies across Europe, clustered under the Helix.

The VARCITIES partners will also coordinate with other clustering projects communication WPLs on a regular basis through the meetings organised by Task Force 4. These by-monthly meetings are a chance to share common knowledge about best practices in general, to develop a common toolbox and to engage multipliers (online and social media communication, coordinated) exploitation of project outcomes.

Table 2. List with the sister projects

Sister projects
T-FACTOR
HUB-IN
CENTRINNO
GoGreenRoots

4.5. Synergies with new projects

Synergies with the new projects funded under the H2020 SC1 Health, demographic change and wellbeing will be sought. A list with the new projects is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. List with the new projects

New Projects	Description
ENLIGHTEN ME 48 Months	Innovative policies for improving citizens' health and wellbeing addressing indoor and outdoor lighting
URBANOME 48 Months	Urban observatory for multi-participatory enhancement of health and wellbeing
RECETAS 60 Months	Re-imagining environments for connection and engagement: testing actions for social prescribing in natural spaces



<p>HEART 48 months</p>	<p>Healthier cities through blue-green regenerative technologies: the heart approach</p>
<p>WELLBASED 48 Months</p>	<p>Improving health, wellbeing and equality by evidenced-based urban policies for tackling energy poverty</p>



5 References

- [1] European handbook on equality data; 2016; ISBN 9789279640087.
- [2] Parliament, (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC.
- [3] Work economic Forum, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 4.0 A toolkit for leaders to accelerate social progress in the future of work.
- [4] GREEN PAPER ON AGEING - Fostering solidarity and responsibility between generations European Commission, **2021**.
- [5] West, S.M., Whittaker, M. and Crawford, K. (2019). Discriminating Systems: Gender, Race and Power in AI. AI Now Institute.
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