

ALBA IULIA MUNICIPALITY

Institutional Profile | URBACT Programme Experience | European Projects

1. GENERAL PROFILE

Alba Iulia Municipality is the capital of Alba County, located in the heart of Transylvania, Romania. With a history spanning over two millennia, it is the most important symbolic centre of the Romanian nation — the city where the Great Union was proclaimed on 1 December 1918. Today, the municipality is a modern hub for urban innovation, cultural tourism and sustainable development, with approximately 74,000 inhabitants.

County / Region	Alba, Central Region, Romania
Population	~74,000 inhabitants
Historical significance	Location of the Great Union Proclamation — 1 December 1918
Mayor	Gabriel Plesa
European projects platform	proiecte.apulum.ro (157 projects, ~EUR 300 million)
Strategic documents	Integrated Urban Development Strategy 2021-2030; Smart City Strategy 2021-2030

The proiecte.apulum.ro database documents a total of 157 projects funded from non-reimbursable sources, with a combined value of approximately EUR 300 million, covering domains from infrastructure and mobility to urban innovation, culture, social inclusion and European cooperation.

2. EXPERIENCE IN THE URBACT PROGRAMME

Alba Iulia Municipality holds one of the most extensive and consistent URBACT track records in Romania, with continuous participation across all generations of the programme — from URBACT I through URBACT IV. According to the official proiecte.apulum.ro database, the municipality has participated or is currently participating in 12 URBACT networks, covering a wide range of urban themes.

Why URBACT matters for Alba Iulia

Participation in URBACT is not merely a source of funding — it is a school of urban best practices. Through each network, the municipal team has built expertise in participatory planning and produced community co-created strategic documents that have guided concrete public investments. Alba Iulia has been repeatedly cited by the URBACT Secretariat as a best-practice model for Romania and Central and Eastern Europe. The highlight: in 2020-2022, Alba Iulia became the first Romanian municipality to act as PROJECT LEAD in a URBACT network (Find Your Greatness).

2.1 Full Portfolio of URBACT Networks (source: proiecte.apulum.ro)

Generation	Network / Project	Role	Period	Theme
URBACT II	CoNet – Exploring current approaches to strengthen social cohesion in neighbourhoods	Partner	2008–2010	Social cohesion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods; exchange with Berlin, Palermo, Liverpool, Sofia, Vaulx-en-Velin, Apeldoorn, Zabrze, Malmo, Gijon, Brussels
URBACT II	Gastronomic Cities – City Strategy on Gastronomy as a tool for Tourism and Employment Development	Partner	2013–2015	Gastronomy as a tool for economic and tourism development; Local Support Group established; 1 Local Action Plan drafted. Lead: Burgos (Spain). Partners: Hospitalet de Llobregat, Fermo, Korydallos
URBACT II	TUTUR – Pilot network on Temporary Uses as Tool for Urban Regeneration	Partner	2013–2015	Temporary use of abandoned spaces for urban regeneration; Local Support Group established (architects, NGOs, University '1 Dec 1918', Chamber of Commerce); 1 Local Action Plan drafted. Lead: Rome (Italy). Partners: Bremen (Germany)
URBACT II	CityLogo – Innovative Place-Brand Management	Partner	2013–2015	Innovative local brand management; Local Support Group established; Alba Iulia City Branding Manual (2014) produced. Lead: Utrecht (Netherlands). Partners: Coimbra, Zaragoza, Genova, Warsaw, Dundee, Aarhus, Vilnius, Oslo
URBACT III	Interactive Cities – Digital, social media and user-generated content improving urban governance	Partner	2015–2018	Using digital media and user-generated content to improve urban governance; Integrated Action Plan adopted. Partners: Varna, Murcia, Palermo, Tartu, Ghent, Lisbon, Paris, Debrecen
URBACT III	Int-Herit – Innovative Heritage Management	Partner	2016–2019	Innovative heritage management in small and medium cities; URBACT III Implementation Network; Local Transfer Plan drafted. Partners: Baena, Armagh, Cahors, Mantova, Dodoni, Espinho, Leiedal, Sigulda
URBACT III	Rumorless Cities – Prevent Discrimination, Strengthen Cohesion	Partner	2018–2021	Transfer of anti-discrimination best practices; specialised training; local campaign 'OM cu OM'; collaboration with

				schools and institutions. Lead: Amadora (Portugal). Partners: Messina, Warsaw, Cardiff, Hamburg-Altona
URBACT III	Food Corridors – Empowering Territorial Food Corridors within the European Union	Partner	2019–2022	Integrated urban-rural food systems; 1 Local Action Plan drafted; 1 pilot action tested; 5 local permaculture and organic farming events organised. Lead: Coimbra (Portugal). Partners: Kranj, Larissa, Bassa Romagna, Szecseny
URBACT III	Find Your Greatness – Europe's first strategic brand building program for smart cities	PROJECT LEAD	2020–2022	Alba Iulia as EUROPEAN PROJECT LEAD of the first smart city branding programme; transfer of city branding and smart city know-how to 7 European cities; investinalbaiulia.city platform developed; international promotional video produced. Partners: Braganca, Candelaria, Limerick, Budafok, Perugia
URBACT IV	Residents of the Future – Finding solutions to influence the urban shrinkage	Partner	2023–2025	Combating depopulation and attracting residents; 10 European cities; Integrated Action Plan finalised (2025); online residents hub; direct link to 2026 Youth Capital programme. Partners: Sibenik, Mangualde, Saldus, Plasencia, Kalamata, Iisalmi, Saint-Quentin, Mantova, Trebinje
URBACT IV	EcoCore – Green Transition in Small Cities along Transport Corridors	Partner	2023–2026	Green transition in small cities along transport corridors; promoting energy efficiency and innovation in urban transport. Lead: Balbriggan (Ireland). Partners: Dubrovnik, Ormoz, Kekava, Santo Tirso, Parnu, Villena, Tuusula
URBACT IV	Youth Space Link – Transfer Network for youth spaces	Partner	2025–2028	URBACT IV Transfer Network; replicating the Lublin Youth Spaces Network model; 7 Local Action Plans in progress. Lead: Lublin (Poland). Partners: Forli, Odense, Sofia, Torres Vedras, Plasencia

2.2 Analysis by URBACT Generation

URBACT I (1 network)

- CoNet (2008-2010): The municipality's first participation in the URBACT programme, focused on social cohesion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Experience exchange with 10 European cities (Berlin, Palermo, Liverpool, Sofia, etc.)

URBACT II (3 networks)

- Gastronomic Cities (2013-2015): Gastronomy as a tool for tourism development and job creation. Active Local Support Group; 1 Local Action Plan; cooperation with Burgos (Spain) and cities in Italy and Greece
- TUTUR (2013-2015): Temporary use of abandoned spaces for urban regeneration. Local Support Group with diverse local actors; 1 Local Action Plan produced. Rome (lead), Bremen — first URBACT networks with top European partners
- CityLogo (2013-2015): Innovative local brand management. Active Local Support Group; Alba Iulia City Branding Manual (2014) produced; cooperation with Utrecht, Coimbra, Zaragoza, Genova, Oslo and 5 other cities

URBACT III (5 networks)

- Interactive Cities (2015-2018): Digital media and urban governance. Integrated Action Plan adopted; cooperation with 9 European cities
- Int-Herit (2016-2019): Innovative heritage management in small and medium-sized cities. Implementation Network; Local Transfer Plan produced; website <https://int-herit.eu>
- Rumorless Cities (2018-2021): Transfer of anti-discrimination best practices and social cohesion. Specialised training delivered; local campaign 'OM cu OM' implemented; cooperation with Amadora, Messina, Warsaw, Cardiff, Hamburg-Altona
- Food Corridors (2019-2022): Integrated urban-rural food systems. 1 Local Action Plan produced; pilot action tested; 5 local permaculture events organised
- Find Your Greatness (2020-2022): ALBA IULIA AS PROJECT LEAD — Europe's first strategic city branding programme for smart cities. investinalbaiulia.city platform developed; know-how transferred to 6 partner cities (Braganca, Candelaria, Limerick, Budafok, Perugia); international promotional video produced

URBACT IV (3 active networks)

- Residents of the Future (2023-2025): 10 European cities; combating depopulation; Integrated Action Plan finalised in 2025; online residents hub; direct connection to the 2026 Youth Capital programme
- EcoCore (2023-2026): Green transition in small cities; sustainable transport corridors; Lead: Balbriggan (Ireland) + 8 European partners
- Youth Space Link (2025-2028): Transfer Network; replicating the Lublin Youth Spaces Network model; 7 Local Action Plans in progress; Lead: Lublin (Poland) + 6 partners

2.3 Key Link: Residents of the Future and the 2026 Youth Capital

A UNIQUE PILOT PROJECT AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

The 'Alba Iulia — Romania's Youth Capital 2026' programme (#yoUthNITED) functions as an integrated pilot project of the URBACT 'Residents of the Future' network. This unique connection transforms the national title into a real-scale testing instrument for URBACT strategies against depopulation. URBACT explicitly published this connection on its European platform in November 2024, presenting Alba Iulia as an example of perfect alignment between transnational European cooperation and concrete local action. It is a rare case of total integration between a European project and a national programme.

2.4 Cumulative Benefits of URBACT Participation

- 12 URBACT networks across all programme generations (URBACT I, II, III, IV) — Romania's longest track record in the programme
- 1 PROJECT LEAD role (Find Your Greatness, URBACT III) — first Romanian municipality to lead a URBACT network
- Multiple Local Action Plans / Integrated Action Plans adopted and integrated into investment decisions
- Active URBACT Local Groups (ULGs) — institutionalised multi-stakeholder participation mechanisms
- Extensive network of European partners: Utrecht, Coimbra, Zaragoza, Genova, Oslo, Burgos, Bremen, Rome, Amadora, Lublin and many others
- Alba Iulia featured as a best-practice model on the European platform urbact.eu
- URBACT Monitoring Committee convened in Alba Iulia — formal recognition at European level

3. ROMANIA'S YOUTH CAPITAL 2026 — URBACT PILOT PROJECT

In autumn 2024, Alba Iulia won the title 'Romania's Youth Capital 2026' with the #yoUthNITED programme, in competition with Brasov. The title is awarded by the Youth Organisations Consortium (CTR, Cluj Youth Federation, PONT Group and BCR).

Winning concept	#yoUthNITED — young people as 'co-architects of the city'
The 5 Pillars	Health Professional Development Community Engagement Non-formal Education Infrastructure
Financial award	EUR 50,000 (BCR) + additional public and private funding
Official launch	10 December 2025, Princes' Palace; start: 6 March 2026, Union Hall
URBACT connection	IAP 'Residents of the Future' + Youth Capital programme = shared actors, tools and objectives
Strategic rationale	Reversing the trend: -8% youth in the previous decade; 'roots and wings' for young people

- Youth Hubs — lounge and co-working spaces with a 'No Consumption Obligation' principle
- Single digital platform + gamification system + young person's 'digital passport'
- Romania's Youth Summit 2026 and Romania's Youth Gala 2026 — hosted by Alba Iulia
- Youth Space Link (URBACT IV, 2025-2028) — a third simultaneous active URBACT project, dedicated to youth spaces

4. EXTENDED EUROPEAN PROJECTS PORTFOLIO (selection)

Beyond URBACT, according to the proiecte.apulum.ro database (157 projects, ~EUR 300 million), the municipality has accessed funding from diverse sources:

Project	Programme	Role	Description
ASCEND - Positive Clean Energy Districts	Horizon Europe	Partner	Clean energy districts; Alba Iulia as a multiplier city; partners Lyon, Munich, Charleroi, Porto, Prague, Budapest, Stockholm
MONUPED - Energy efficiency in protected monument areas	Horizon Europe / DUT	Partner	Energy solutions for listed buildings; pilot project in Alba Iulia (alongside Leipzig and Prague); presented at Alba Green Energy 2025
GROW - reGovery and Resilience through cOhesion frameWork	EU Cohesion Policy	Lead	Generated the proiecte.apulum.ro platform; 7 EU partners; national cohesion policy communication
Stereotype Trap	CERV	Partner	Combating gender stereotypes in schools; 7 partner countries (Spain, Slovenia, Italy, France, Portugal, Cyprus, Bulgaria)
EcoCore (URBACT IV)	URBACT IV	Partner	Green transition in small cities; transport corridors; active 2023-2026
Urban public transport rehabilitation + cycle lanes (Lot 1+2)	ROP 2014-2020	Beneficiary	EUR 24+ million; 8.9 km dedicated public transport lanes; 6.5 km cycle lanes; bike-sharing system; 24 stops modernised
Electric buses (13 units + charging stations)	ROP 2014-2020	Partner	EUR 7 million; electric fleet; partnership with Buzau, Constanta, Ploiesti
Alba Iulia — Smart Administration (SIPOCA 637)	AOCP 2014-2020	Beneficiary	Smart City Strategy 2021-2030; IUDS 2021-2030; participatory budgeting platform
CRESCENDO — Integrated dual-education campus	NRRP	Lead	EUR 31 million; regional consortium; University + technical high schools + economic operators
NRRP — Energy efficiency in schools, kindergartens and residential buildings	NRRP Comp. 5	Beneficiary	10+ active NRRP projects; 10+ residential blocks and educational institutions retrofitted
Restoration of the Alba Carolina Citadel (multiple projects)	ROP 2007-2013 + 2014-2020	Beneficiary	EUR 40+ million; largest Vauban-style citadel restored with EU funds in Romania; 500,000+ visitors/year

5. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND RECOGNITION

5.1 International Recognition

OECD (2025)	The only Romanian city evaluated as a reference intermediate city; selected for performance in urban innovation and smart city
European Energy Award	Swiss distinction; the only municipality in Transylvania with this certification; 79 indicators / 6 domains
URBACT — Project Lead	First Romanian municipality to lead a URBACT network (Find Your Greatness, 2020-2022)
Romania's Youth Capital 2026	National title won competitively; pilot project of the URBACT 'Residents of the Future' network

5.2 Transparency and Participation Tools

- proiecte.apulum.ro — dedicated platform, 157 projects documented from 2007 to the present, developed within the GROW project
- Participatory budgeting — 3+ editions; EUR 200,000+ invested from citizens' proposals
- Institutionalised URBACT Local Groups — multi-stakeholder mechanisms active in every network
- Youth Capital 2026 co-management mechanism — replicable national governance model

6. CONCLUSIONS

Alba Iulia Municipality has built, over two decades, an authentic and consistent European profile. The 12 URBACT networks, covering all generations of the programme, do not represent a simple accumulation of projects — they represent a path of institutional maturation: each network added a new layer of expertise and European partnerships.

The defining milestones of this journey: first participation in URBACT I (CoNet, 2008), first project lead role in a European network (Find Your Greatness, 2020-2022) and the organic connection between 'Residents of the Future' (URBACT IV) and the national 'Youth Capital 2026' programme — a rare case in Europe of perfect alignment between transnational cooperation and concrete local action.

The total portfolio of 157 projects (~EUR 300 million), visible on proiecte.apulum.ro, confirms that Alba Iulia is ready to be a trusted partner in any European urban cooperation initiative for the period 2025-2030 and beyond.

Contact person:

Maria Seemann (Public manager) – maria.seemann@apulum.ro

Ioana Baba (Concilor) – ioanasbaba@gmail.com

Dana Naghiu (Concilor) – naghiudana@gmail.com

Alba Iulia Municipality

Department of International Relations, Partnerships and Urban Innovation

proiecte.apulum.ro | www.apulum.ro | Alba Iulia, Romania