

Releasing local creativity - CANVAS project launched to transform public places by co-creating beautiful, sustainable and inclusive street furniture

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The Horizon Europe project CANVAS is launching its mission to **transform and reimagine public spaces**, by prototyping and demonstrating beautiful, inclusive, and sustainable street furniture solutions. The Kick-Off meeting was held from 14th-16th October 2026 in Vienna (Austria) at DOCK, an architectural highlight for knowledge transfer at the Danube canal.

Across Europe, communities face challenges of infrastructural decay, **unequal access** to or even lack of essential public amenities, and **safety concerns** arising from insufficient lighting or hazardous spatial conditions. Urban furniture, including benches, lighting, and other fixtures of public space, is often treated as a **purely functional, industrial product** in public procurement. Its design, material selection, and production are generally detached from local needs, climate adaptation, and cultural context.

“Design practices and public procurement should harness the potential of urban furniture as a driver of sustainability, inclusion, and place-based identity. CANVAS aims to accelerate the transformation of European public spaces by co-creating a new European quality standard for street furniture, that bridges design excellence, community participation, and environmental performance.”

Gudrun Haindlmaier, CANVAS project coordinator (AIT Austrian Institute of Technology)

Guided by New European Bauhaus principles, the project seeks to strengthen local identity, inclusivity, and resilience while addressing societal and environmental challenges. By enhancing 5 implementation themes (namely safety & comfort; art & cultural identity; environmental performance; inclusion; social interaction & multifunctionality) the project will foster interaction, a sense of belonging, well-being and respect for common spaces.

To achieve this, CANVAS will implement a strong collaboration between local support partners such as municipalities, local NGOs, creative or business actors, and the project’s research and innovation partners. Through 21 implemented solutions and 7 novel resilient and low-maintenance design models, CANVAS will positively impact local placemaking and placekeeping, as well as the relationships of the local communities with nature.

Across eight pilot sites in diverse European cities – **Ajdovščina (Slovenia), Izmir (Türkiye), Longford County (Ireland), Reșița (Romania), Reykjavík (Iceland), Upper Austria, Wolin and Wrocław (Poland)** – the project will prototype and demonstrate inclusive, sustainable solutions that improve comfort, safety and accessibility year-round, integrate nature-based shading and planting, circular materials and low-maintenance design rooted in local heritage, and offer modular, adaptive features that serve diverse users.

These pilot sites are representing diverse socio-spatial contexts and a range from small urban areas to larger cities and capitals with up to 4.5 million residents. Through innovative public procurement processes, co-created solutions, and infrastructure investments, they aim to not only implement experimental street furniture projects but also ensure their long-term maintenance.

The pilots will act as living canvases that strengthen local identity, foster social cohesion and enhance environmental performance. Each pilot site will launch a series of co-creation activities addressing specific local challenges, collecting innovative solution pitches that bring the **creative and experimental spirit** of street furniture to a new level.

The project will also integrate artistic elements and heritage-sensitive designs into public spaces, boosting cultural vitality and creative tourism, as well as supporting local economies through **design contests** and participatory processes.

In addition, CANVAS will make use of **digital tools for decision-making and co-design**, adapted to each site's conditions and stakeholder landscape. All sites will blend permanent street furniture solutions and strategies in addition to temporary prototypes and tactical urbanism.

Blending lessons from pilot sites, **CANVAS on Tour** will be created as a physical intervention in public space in Upper Austria based on rapid assessment and implementation.

CANVAS will also develop an actionable framework and toolkit to guide municipalities and stakeholders across all stages of the **public procurement process**, from procurement design and co-creation with local crafts to sustainable material selection and climate adaptation features.

These deployable prototypes, open design guidelines, and recommendations for public procurement and urban policy will be supported by a comprehensive **monitoring framework and replication roadmaps**, as well as the CANVAS-on-tour platform, focusing on scaling and new partnerships.

By bridging design excellence, community participation and evidence-based assessment, CANVAS will establish an EU benchmark for street furniture that transforms shared spaces into **vibrant, equitable and climate-resilient public places**.

The CANVAS project started in September 2026 and will run for 4 years. The consortium connects 18 partners from 10 countries and is coordinated by the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT). You can keep up with project progress on the project [LinkedIn page](#) and [project website](#).

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Project information

- Grant agreement ID: 101308703 – [Cordis page](#)
- Call topic: HORIZON-NEB-2025-01-PARTICIPATION-03
- Full name: CANVAS: STREET FURNITURE AS A CANVAS - BEAUTY, INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN PUBLIC SPACE
- Budget: 5 110 817.50 EUR (EU contribution)
- Duration: 48 months
- Partners: AIT AUSTRIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GMBH (Austria); BUSINESS UPPER AUSTRIA - OO WIRTSCHAFTSAGENTUR GMBH (Austria); RISE RESEARCH INSTITUTES OF SWEDEN (Sweden); REYKJAVIKURBORG (Iceland); OBCINA AJDOVSCINA (Slovenia); GOSPODARSKA ZBORNICA SLOVENIJE (Slovenia); WROCLAW MIASTO (Poland); AKADEMIA SZTUK PIEKNYCH IM. EUGENIUSZA GEPPERTA WE WROCLAWIU (Poland); ASOCIATIA PENTRU PATRIMONIUL ACTIV - PACT (Romania); MUNICIPIUL RESITA (Romania); NON-ARCHITECTURE S.R.L. (Italy); TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN (Ireland); MEDIA DIZAJN (Poland); IZMIR EKONOMI UNIVERSITESI (Turkey); IZPA ARASTIRMA SEHIRCILIK DANISMANLIK VE EGITIM HIZMETLERI ANONIM SIRKETI (Turkey); GMINA WOLIN (Poland); LONGFORD COUNTY (Ireland); GREENOVATE! EUROPE (Belgium).

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