

TIMIȘOARA | 23–24 OCTOBER 2025

Event organized by:



Deutsch-Rumänische
Industrie- und Handelskammer
Camera de Comerț și Industrie
Româno-Germană



econet romania

Cities of tomorrow

Liveable cities: People, Skills & Innovation



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Voices of '25 4,10, 15, 18, 23





“It was an interesting experience to explore together the pathways of transformation toward smart and sustainable cities during the “Cities of Tomorrow” conference in Timișoara, held on **23–24.10.2025**. I am confident that the **Swiss Guide for the implementation of Smart City initiatives** provides a solid knowledge base, offering useful tools, case studies, and best practices that contribute to improving quality of life and the efficient use of resources in future urban developments, through innovation and co-creation programs.

We are open to sharing our perspectives and to contributing our competencies and experience within European collaborative partnerships.”

Prof. Vicente Carabias-Hütter

ZHAW & City of Winterthur, Switzerland



Liveable cities: People, Skills, Innovation

Since 2013 for the cities of Romania!

CITIES OF TOMORROW has reached its 13th edition, establishing itself as a reference event and an essential meeting point for professionals from business, architecture, urban planning, and public administration. Over time, we have built solid expertise across the Romanian and German markets – knowledge that shapes the structure of the event, the topics discussed, and the innovative projects promoted, all adapted to the specific needs of the market.

Our goal is to boost Romania's competitiveness and support the transition toward a sustainable development model, based on smart solutions and cutting-edge technologies. In this regard, we promote cross-sector collaboration and effective dialogue between local and central authorities, the private sector, academic institutions, and civil society.

Only through genuine, responsible partnerships – built on a shared voice and sustained commitment – can we positively influence the development of communities and society as a whole. These alliances are vital for building a greener, more innovative, and more efficient future for Romania, making it a more attractive and modern country.

CITIES OF TOMORROW goes beyond the role of a simple event, becoming a catalyst for transformation – a space where ideas converge, creative solutions emerge, and the vision of sustainable urbanism materializes through joint efforts.



- ▶ panel discussions
- ▶ project competition for public administration, private sector, civil society
- ▶ exhibition area
- ▶ networking
- ▶ roundtables
- ▶ international examples of best practices
- ▶ B2B platform

General Overview over all Editions

3.100

participants

96

themes

13

editions

79

roundtables

261

speakers

81

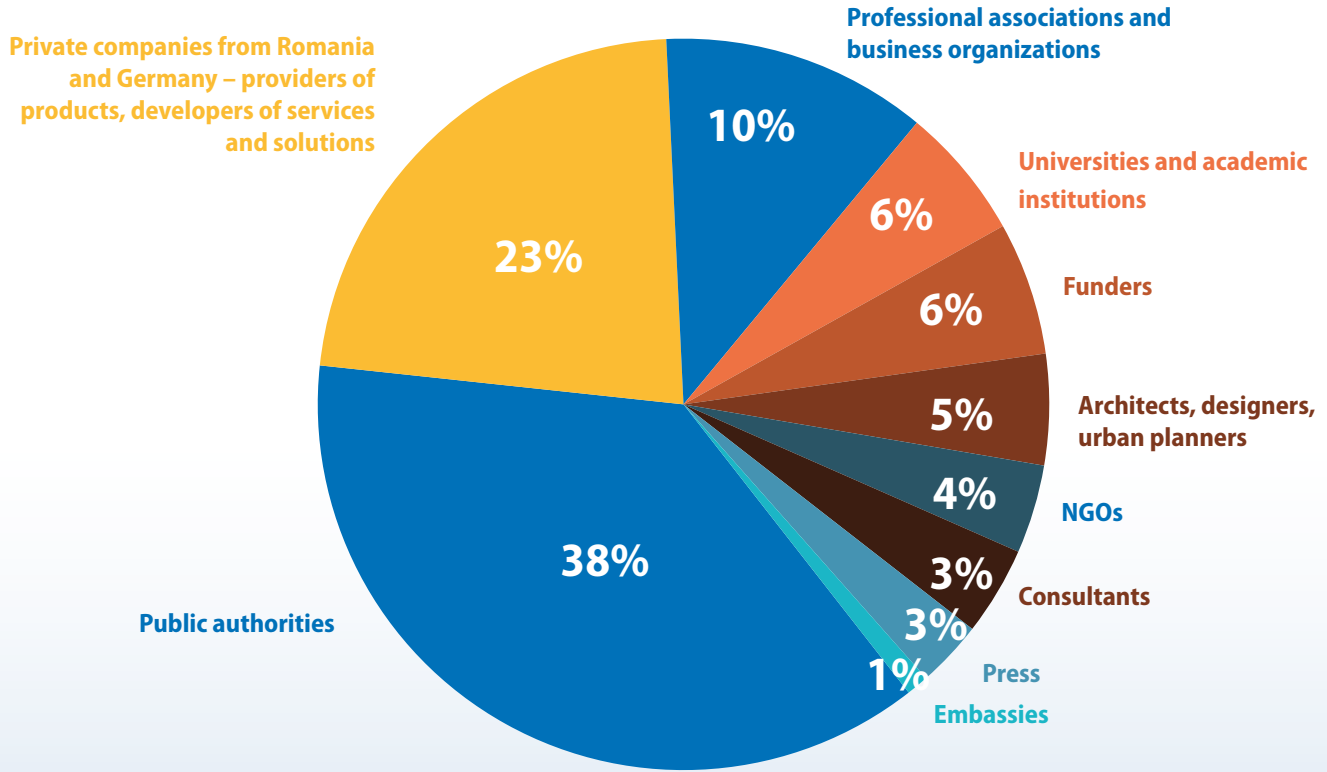
exhibitors

1590+

media appearances

30.200+

social media interactions





With the 13th edition, CITIES OF TOMORROW continues its nationwide tour. The time has come for Romania's most important cities to host this event, present a wide range of best-practice examples, and highlight their potential. The next destination after Oradea was **TIMIȘOARA**.

The triologue between public authorities, the business environment, and civil society moves to the heart of the Romanian city.



Roundtables
online & on-site



Top conference
for the business environment,
architecture, urban development,
and public administration.



Visiting projects
and companies from
Timișoara

TIMIȘOARA



Sustainable urban development is not limited to creating green infrastructure, but also involves fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration between authorities, the business sector, and citizens. Innovative urban planning does not only respond to current needs, but actively engages residents, giving them the opportunity to contribute to shaping a better urban environment.

Innovation, in turn, provides the tools and technologies needed to make cities smarter, more efficient, and more sustainable. It plays an essential role in creating functional and durable cities. The integration of technology – such as IoT (Internet of Things) systems, data analytics, and smart infrastructure – can increase urban efficiency in terms of energy consumption, waste management, and transport.

These digital tools contribute to greater citizen involvement in governance processes, facilitate the delivery of high-quality services, and encourage active participation in decision-making.



"For me, the municipality of Timișoara is a picturesque and innovative city, built on a rich cultural heritage – a true fusion of Central and South-Eastern European cultural influences.

Given that the city of Graz has been twinned with Timișoara since 1982, the event also represented an excellent opportunity to reconnect with colleagues from the local departments of urban planning and urban development, and to refresh our long-standing traditional ties."

Christian Nußmüller

Executive Office for Urban Planning, Development and Construction, City of Graz





Ivo Gönner
Mayor of the city of
Ulm (1992-2016);
President of the
Council of Danube
Cities and Regions



**Hilmar von
Lojewski**
Municipal Councillor
of the Association of
German Cities



Dr. Arnold Voss
Urbanist, Founder
Office for the Art of
Planning, Berlin



David Sim
Author "Soft City",
Partener Softer
Sweden



Andreas Kipar
Co-Founder, CEO &
Creative Director,
LAND - Landscape
Architecture Nature
Development



Ullrich Sierau
Mayor of the city of
Dortmund



Karmen Strahonja
Managing Director
of Stadtmarketing
Mannheim GmbH



**Dr. Ing. Michael
Horodniceanu**
President, MTA
Capital Construction



Prof. Jörn Walter
Chief Urban Planner
of the City of
Hamburg



Tilman Buchholz
Deputy Director
of the Urban
Development
Department, German
Federal Ministry for
the Environment



**Prof. Peter
Zlonicky**
Director of the
Munich Urban
Studies Office,
Professor at the
Technical University
of Dortmund



**Dipl. Ing. Hans-
Jürgen Best**
City Manager of
Essen and Member
of the Board of
Directors for Urban
Planning



**Arch. Dorothee
Dubrau**
Deputy Mayor and
Head of Urban
Development and
Construction for the
City of Leipzig



**Dipl. Ing. Thomas
Madreiter**
Director of Urban
Planning, Vienna



Prof. Arh. Stephan Braunfels
Director Stephan Braunfels Architekten BDA



Arh. Eugen Panescu
Architect & Urban Planner, MONTAG Studio



Ilinca Păun Constantinescu
Assistant Professor at UAUIM, Faculty of Architecture, Author of "Shrinking Cities in Romania"



Arh. Reinhard Joecks
Partner FOSTER AND PARTNERS



Ivan Patzaichin
President of the "Mila 23" Association



Emil Boc
Mayor of the city of Cluj-Napoca



Nicușor Dan
Mayor of the Municipality of Bucharest



Flavia Boghiu
Former Deputy Mayor of the City of Brașov



Astrid Fodor
Mayor of the City of Sibiu



Raluca Munteanu
Development Director, Iulius



Marius Perșenea
Chief Operating Officer, Iulius



Dr. Arh. Șerban Țiganaș
President of the Romanian Order of Architects



Dr. Marcel Heroiu
Urban Development Specialist at the World Bank



Dr. Rolf Heyer
Bochum Perspektive 2022 and MARK 51'7



Tatian Diaconu
Entrepreneur



Allen Coliban
Former Mayor of the
City of Braşov



**Prof. Dr. Arh.
Dorin Ştefan**
Director of Dorin
Ştefan Architecture
Office – D.S.B.A



Radu Mihaiu
Former Mayor of
Sector 2, Bucharest



Ciprian Ciucu
Mayor of Sector 6,
Bucharest



Leif von Nethen
Urban Planning
Department,
Düsseldorf



Ioan Popa
Mayor of the City of
Reşiţa



Dana Bordei
Commercial Country
Manager, VGP
Romania



**Ruxandra
Dragomir**
Head of
Development Nhood
Romania



**Burkhard
Drescher**
Managing Director,
ICM – Innovation City
Management GmbH



Dr. Georg Pammer
Director, General
Aspern Smart City



Judith Artmann
Urban Planning
Department,
Düsseldorf



Mihai Jurca
City Manager Oradea
& Interim General
Manager ADLO



Jens Hoffmann
Chief Operating
Officer LAND
Germany GmbH



Eva-Viorela Sfârlea

Urban Development Consultant, World Bank Group Romania



Prof. Wulf Daseking

Urban planner, Architect, Professor for city sociology and visiting professor for city & town planning at the University College London



Prof. Vicente Carabias-Hütter

Head of Research/ Focus Area Sustainable Energy Systems and Smart Cities at Zurich University of Applied Sciences & Smart City Responsible at City of Winterthur (Switzerland)



Christian Nußmüller

Executive Office for Urban Planning, Development and Construction at Graz City Hall



Matei Creiveanu

City Manager at Timisoara City Hall



Dr. Bettina Distel

Project Lead, Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development within the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning



Bogdan Aldea

Head of Business Development Nhood Romania



Carmen-Adriana Oțelea (Korşinszki)

CEO Reuben Brothers Romania



Verena Vlad

Associate Director, Senior Banker at BERD



Laurentiu Manea

Associate Director, Senior Banker at BERD



Andrei Marian

Business Development Director at CTP Romania



Alina Iosza

Partner / Leader Real Estate and PPP at Hategan Attorneys



Teodora Miclăuş

Plant Manager, DRÄXLMAIER Timisoara



Simona Belea

Plant Manager, DRÄXLMAIER Timisoara

Cities of Tomorrow Timișoara showed that a country's development potential is not located only in the capital, but also in other cities. Topics addressed included “liveable cities” – communities that offer a high quality of life, modern infrastructure, and efficient services – as well as the resilience of cities in the face of geopolitical, economic, climate, and technological challenges in the current, highly volatile context.

Local communities possess valuable resources, innovative ideas, and dedicated leaders who can significantly contribute to creating more attractive, resilient, and better-connected cities. These communities must respond to geopolitical and economic challenges such as labour migration, pressure on resources, and adaptation to climate change. Solutions are found through regional cooperation, local innovation, and closer connections between public administration, the private sector, and society.

Sebastian Metz

Managing Director, AHK Romania



The close collaboration between Romania and Germany in the field of Smart Cities is impressive in the way both countries join forces to address future challenges. Through innovative technology and sustainable solutions, we are jointly creating cities that are future-ready and worth living in. This partnership not only strengthens our economic relations, but also contributes to creating liveable spaces for future generations.

Anja Zougouari

Consul General, German Consulate in Timișoara

Thank you to AHK Rumänien for choosing Timișoara for the 2025 edition of Cities of Tomorrow. It was a very successful edition and an honour for our city to host an event that brings together ideas, solutions, and people concerned about the future of cities. I am confident that participants took with them some of Timișoara's inspiration – ideas that can make their own communities more liveable, more people-centred, and more innovative. For us, such meetings are a signal that Timișoara is relevant in the European conversation about the cities of tomorrow.

Dominic Fritz

Mayor of the Municipality of Timișoara

Prof. Vicente Carabias-Hütter

ZHAW (Zurich University of Applied Sciences) &
Representative of the City of Winterthur, Switzerland



The transformation of cities into “smart cities” and, further, into “cognitive cities” represents a complex and long-term process that combines technology, sustainability, citizen participation, and innovation. The ultimate goal is to improve quality of life and to manage urban resources more efficiently.

In this context, the dual experience of Prof. Vicente Carabias – both in academia at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences and in public administration within the City of Winterthur – offers a valuable and pragmatic perspective on real needs, as well as on the limitations cities face in the process of digitalisation.

Contemporary cities face numerous challenges – from climate change and urban mobility to the efficiency of public services. Technology, however, offers innovative solutions to address these issues. The use of smart phones, digital applications, sensors, and the Internet of Things (IoT) allows for more precise measurement and monitoring of various urban aspects, such as emissions, environmental quality, or losses in water systems. As a result, problems can be identified more quickly and managed more efficiently.

In addition, digitalisation is advancing rapidly through the integration of artificial intelligence. This supports public administration, for example by facilitating fast access to documents, decisions, and historical data. Generative artificial intelligence contributes to increased efficiency in administration, research, and the business environment, becoming an important factor for urban competitiveness.

The Smart City Concept

Building on these technological possibilities, the concept of the “smart city” provides a strategic framework for urban development. Approximately five years ago, with the support of the **Swiss Energy** programme of the Ministry of Energy, a guide dedicated to smart cities was developed, addressing primarily small and medium-sized cities with limited resources.

This guide defines a “smart city” as a way of providing citizens with a high quality of life while minimising resource consumption, through the intelligent interconnection of infrastructures – energy, transport, communications – and through effective collaboration among all stakeholders involved.

The development of a smart city is seen as a co-creative and innovative process, centred on people, dialogue, and the exchange of experience. This process can be applied at different scales – from buildings and neighbourhoods to the level of the entire city. It unfolds in three main phases: pilot projects, institutionalisation, and consolidation, also known as the “learning city” stage.

In practice, cities test technological and social initiatives, then develop sustainable strategies and organisational structures. Digitalisation and artificial intelligence play an essential role in managing resources, mobility, energy, and urban services, with concrete examples such as mobile applications for reporting issues, household energy feedback, electric mobility, or smart lighting.

Smart City Model: Winterthur

A relevant example of the implementation of these principles is the city of **Winterthur**. It has undergone a transition from an industrial city to one oriented toward culture, innovation, and sustainability, based on strong partnerships between public administration, universities, companies, and citizens. Winterthur

develops pilot projects at neighbourhood level, promoting sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, the use of electric vehicles, and the creation of public spaces adapted to community needs.

The city operates as an “urban living lab” – **WinLab** – where citizen participation and the co-creation of solutions are central elements. A key concept is that of the “5-minute district”, which assumes that most daily needs can be met close to home, reducing dependence on individual transport. However, this model does not eliminate travel for specialised needs, but rather focuses on locally relevant, sustainable, efficient projects oriented toward improving quality of life.

Cognitive Cities: cities of the future

Looking ahead, the concept of “cognitive cities” represents a natural evolution of smart cities. These cities do not merely react to citizens’ needs, but anticipate them and act pro-actively to meet them. The integration of artificial intelligence into urban infrastructures enables the optimisation of mobility, services, and resource use, without requiring users to manage complex details.

For example, a cognitive city could automatically recommend the fastest, most pleasant, or most cost-effective route from point A to point B, while simultaneously managing tickets and modes of transport. In this way, the urban experience becomes smoother, more efficient, and better adapted to the needs of each citizen.



“Timișoara, much like AUMOVIO, is ready to be at the forefront of automotive technology. We have a highly skilled workforce here, solid experience, and resources that allow us to take this field to the next level. I believe we have all the prerequisites to become an important automotive technology hub in Europe and even worldwide.”

Simona Belea

Managing Director AUMOVIO Timișoara



“Timișoara has many strengths: very good land and air connectivity with Western Europe; ethnic diversity, which naturally leads to diverse language skills that are not found in other secondary cities in Romania and represent a major attraction; the openness of universities toward the business environment and all the partnerships that already have a strong tradition – proof that graduates are capable of being integrated into complex projects. Timișoara has the longest history in Romania in the field of R&D in IT and telecommunications. Romania’s first computer factory was located in Timișoara, before 1990. Alcatel opened the first R&D centre here, followed later by Siemens. From this foundation, an infrastructure was created that developed senior professionals, and on this basis all the major companies that arrived later grew. Of course, Continental must also be mentioned, as it has generated senior professionals and managers for many companies. If we have **Timișoara Auto Valley**, this is also due to Continental’s contribution, which trained leaders and around which many automotive companies developed. We are pleased that the business hub in **Iulius Town**, which includes **65 companies**, has further consolidated Timișoara’s dominant position in the field of technology and innovation.”

Laurențiu Manea

Office Buildings Manager, Iulius Town Timișoara

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Smart Urbanism – Cities for People: Meaningful and Impactful Urban Development



Gerhard Rodler

Chief Editor, BELLEVUE
– Europe's Largest Real Estate Magazine

MODERATOR



Matei Creiveanu

City Manager, Timișoara
City Hall



**Christian
Nußmüller**

Executive Office for
Urban Planning,
Development and
Construction at Graz
City Hall



Dr. Bettina Distel

Project Lead, German
Federal Institute for
Research on Building



Bogdan Aldea

Head of Business
Development,
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Romania



Carmen Oțelea

CEO, Reuben
Brothers Romania



Verena Vlad

Associate Director,
Senior Banker at BERD

Smart Urbanism – Cities for People: Meaningful and Impactful Urban Development

The panel opened with a keynote speech delivered by Mr. Christian Nußmüller.

Christian Nußmüller, representative of the Urban Planning Department of the City of Graz, presented the philosophy of integrated urban development applied in Graz, Austria's second-largest city. Graz faces challenges similar to those of other European cities: population growth, pressure on infrastructure, lack of affordable housing, and development constraints caused by geographical conditions. The key ideas presented during the conference focused on the following topics:

1. Sustainable urban development and mobility

The city's strategy is based on densifying existing areas and redeveloping brownfield sites, with a strong focus on quality of life. The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan aims to reduce individual car traffic from 40% to 20% by 2040, through the expansion of public transport, cycling infrastructure, shared mobility, and park & ride systems.

2. Climate, decarbonisation, and resilience

Graz aims to achieve climate neutrality by 2040, in a context where only 3% of CO₂ emissions are directly controlled by the municipality. The solution lies in

collaboration with the private sector and citizens, complemented by concrete municipal measures: renewable energy on public buildings, energy retrofiting, the use of industrial waste heat, and the modernisation of the municipal fleet and public lighting.

3. Climate change adaptation

The city places strong emphasis on green and blue infrastructure to address heatwaves, droughts, and heavy rainfall. Measures include early protection of green areas, the "sponge city" principle, rain gardens, flood protection systems, and tools such as the heat vulnerability index.

4. Smart City and multi-level collaboration

In Graz, the smart city concept is not centred on technology, but on people, efficient resource use, and integrated urban development. Examples such as Graz Mitte and Reininghaus demonstrate the value of mixed-use neighbourhoods ("15-minute districts"), district management, and public-private partnerships.

Modern urban development is an interdisciplinary and multi-level process that requires close collaboration between public administration, investors, citizens, and other stakeholders, with the aim of building smart, sustainable, and resilient cities for the future.



Smart Urbanism – Cities for People: Meaningful and Impactful Urban Development

Panel 1 brought together representatives of public administration, academia, the private sector, and international financial institutions for a practical discussion on smart urbanism, urban regeneration, and people-centred development. The debate highlighted the central idea that cities are never “finished”, but are in a continuous process of reinvention, which must be guided by long-term visions that are flexible and adaptable to social, technological, and demographic change.



A key message of the panel was that smart city does not mean technology for its own sake, but intelligent solutions to real citizens’ problems. Technology is a useful tool only when it adds value to quality of life, sustainability, and social inclusion. Emphasis was placed on the importance of clear strategies, co-created with citizens and relevant stakeholders, which define the desired urban life in the medium and long term before deciding which digital solutions are needed.

The discussion highlighted cooperation between cities and the exchange of best practices, including through open platforms and open-source solutions, to avoid reinventing the same solutions in isolation. Examples from Germany and Austria showed that urban challenges are similar across Europe and can be addressed more effectively through inter-municipal and cross-border collaboration.

From a local perspective, Timișoara was presented as a city undergoing accelerated transformation, where major infrastructure projects are complemented by “granular” neighbourhood-level interventions with direct and visible impact on everyday life. Participants stressed that successful urban development depends on balancing large, long-term projects with small, fast interventions that build citizens’ trust.

The regeneration of industrial areas and brown-field sites was another central topic. Examples from Romania highlighted the need for clear and responsible land remediation procedures aligned with European best practices, as well as the role of developers as strategic partners of cities, not merely short-term profit-oriented investors. Successful urban development was described as the result of a balanced “triangle” between public administration, developers, and users.

From a financial perspective, representatives of the **EBRD** emphasised that funding is available for urban projects that are bankable, green, and well integrated strategically. The focus was placed on the real impact of projects – social, economic, and environmental – and on the support offered to cities not only through financing, but also through expertise, reforms, and alignment with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

In conclusion, the panel reaffirmed that smart urbanism is an integrated, collaborative, and people-centred endeavour that requires vision, data, cross-sector and multi-level dialogue, and the ability to transform cities not only through plans, but through concrete results experienced daily by citizens.

“Using technology to improve the liveability and sustainability of our cities is essential for our future. I enjoyed the event and seeing people from diverse backgrounds come together to share their projects, perspectives, and visions for creating just and sustainable smart cities. Exchanging experiences and concrete solutions – including across borders – is vital, because we all face similar challenges that must be addressed through collaboration.”

Dr. Bettina Distel

Project Lead, Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development within the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning



Smart Investments, Smarter Cities: How Business Shapes the Urban Future

The second panel of the conference addressed the perspective of the business environment on urban and regional development, through a dialogue between representatives of major companies in real estate, industry, automotive, and legal consultancy, all with long-standing and direct connections to Timișoara. The discussion started from the idea of “business neighbourhoods”, emphasising the role of companies not only as investors, but also as active actors in urban life and in shaping communities.



Laurențiu Manea

Office Buildings
Manager. Iulius Town
Timisoara



Andrei Marian

Business Development
Director, CTP Romania



Alina Iosza

Partner / Leader
Real Estate and PPP,
Hațegan Attorneys



Teodora Miclăuș

Plant Manager,
DRĂXLMAIER Timișoara



Simona Belea

Managing Director,
AUMOVIO Timisoara



MODERATOR

Ionuț Oprea

Dedicated B2B com-
municator & Brand
Manager Transilvania
Business

Smart Investments, Smarter Cities: How Business Shapes the Urban Future

A first shared message was the strong attachment to Timișoara as a city of people, communities, and continuous change. Speakers highlighted quality of life, developing infrastructure, proximity to Western Europe, cultural diversity, and the city's social and cultural vibrancy, amplified after 2023, when Timișoara held the title of European Capital of Culture. Timișoara was described as a family-friendly city, with an administration and local ecosystem focused on continuously improving the urban environment.

From an investment perspective, the focus was placed on adaptability and community integration. Urban regeneration examples such as Lulius Town showed that successful projects are those that start from real market and community needs, avoiding speculative developments. Successive crises – economic, pandemic, or geopolitical – have demonstrated the importance of project flexibility, partner communication, and the ability to adjust functions (retail, office, medical, hospitality, residential) according to demand.

The industrial and logistics sectors were presented as essential drivers of the regional economy, supported by infrastructure, e-commerce, and the emergence of a “middle class” of companies seeking modern, safe, and efficient spaces. Timișoara and western Romania are seen as growth poles, with additional potential



generated by road infrastructure development, future strategic projects, and Romania's role in regional production chains.

A cross-cutting theme was human capital. Representatives from the automotive and manufacturing sectors emphasised the role of universities, internship programmes, dual education, and continuous investment in technical and digital skills. Timișoara emerges as a place where technology meets talent, with a solid tradition in IT, research, and automotive that has generated mature ecosystems and leaders for international companies.

From a legislative and institutional perspective, the discussion addressed the need for predictability, debureaucratisation, updates to urban planning

documents, and the strengthening of public–private partnerships. Transparent communication and decision-making coherence were identified as key factors for maintaining investor confidence and accelerating urban projects.

In conclusion, the panel outlined the image of Timișoara as a competitive, open, and future-oriented city, where people, community, education, and collaboration between the public and private sectors represent the main advantages. Sustainable urban and economic development is seen as a shared process, in which long-term investment, innovation, and community engagement go hand in hand.

CITIES OF TOMORROW #13 once again hosted a project competition addressed to public administration, the business environment, and civil society. In selecting the finalist projects, the key criterion was sustainable development. The focus was therefore on initiatives that contribute to green cities, with an emphasis on improving residents' quality of life.

The Jury



Arch. Eugen Pănescu

Architect & Urban
Planner Montag Studio



Claudiu Butacu

co-Founder & Chairman
EFdeN



Arh. Maria Găvozdea

Architect & Urban
Planner A.Plan



Varinia Radu

Founding Partner &
CEO Energynomics,
Partner CMS



Horia Petran

President
Cluster pRO-Nzeb



Dr. Radu Răcășan

Head of Innovation
Management
Service, Strategy
and Innovation
Department at Delgaz
Grid



Sebastian Metz

General Manager
AHK Romania

AHK Romania awarded **3 prizes** to encourage further development of the projects.



The jury selected **9 finalists out of a total of 30 projects** submitted across the three categories.

All submitted projects can be consulted at: www.citiesofomorrow.ro.



Business environment:

Brave X Aero

Project: drones serving urban needs

www.bravex.aero

SPEEDWELL

Project: TINO – urban regeneration project in Braşov

www.speedwell.be

Routemix SRL **WINNER**

Project: AI assistant for smart mobility

www.routemix.com



Civil society:

Ateliere fără Frontiere

Project: a social enterprise committed to promoting an inclusive green and digital transition

www.atelierfarafrontiere.ro

Fundația Comunitară Timișoara

Project: RO Bike Valley

www.fundatiacomunitaratimisoara.ro

ÎntreVecini – Dear Neighbour **WINNER**

Project: civic initiative that transforms apartment buildings and neighbourhoods into sustainable and supportive communities

www.intrevecini.ro



Public administration:

Cluj County Council

Project: waste-to-energy

www.cjcluj.ro

Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest

Project: the sewerage system as part of urban infrastructure

www.utcb.ro

Municipality of Sibiu **WINNER**

Project: bicycle lane – Cibin River

www.sibiu.ro



The 9 roundtables, held both in person and online during the week preceding the Timișoara conference, provided a valuable opportunity for concrete, applied discussions on different topics and projects. Subsequently, the conclusions and identified solutions were briefly presented in a wrap-up session during the main conference on 23 October 2025.



Energy



**Urban
Regeneration**



**Circular
Economy**



**Construction
Law**



**Financing &
EU Funds**



Mobility



**Tourism, Lifestyle &
Culture**



Urban Safety



**Digitalisation & City
Governance**



Energy

Moderator:

Gabriel Avăcăriței

Speakers:

Radu Răcășan,

Head of Innovation Management
Service, Delgaz Grid SA

Dan Cupșa,

Director of Design, Development
and Infrastructure, Termonapoca

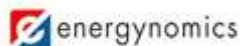
Andrei Ceclan,

Co-founder, SERVELECT

Mihai-Toader Paști,

Founder & Strategist, ÎntreVecini

Powered by Energinomics



The roundtable addressed the topic of energy communities, flexibility services, and the urban energy transition, from an integrated perspective that brings together energy distribution, decentralised production, digitalisation, energy efficiency, and citizen involvement. Discussions highlighted that Romania is at a critical transition point, where the rapid growth of prosumers, pressure on networks, and new European requirements demand structural solutions, not merely isolated measures.

The event emphasised the role of local authorities, grid operators, universities, industry, and civil society in building a functional ecosystem for energy communities and flexibility services, with direct benefits for energy system stability and consumers.





Energy

1. Energy communities and flexibility services

A central point of the discussion was the introduction and testing of flexibility services at local level, as a complementary tool to traditional infrastructure investments:

Flexibility is defined as the adjustment of local consumption or production to manage imbalances between generation and demand in distribution networks.

The voluntary and remunerated nature of participation in these services was underlined.

Energy communities are seen as key actors that can aggregate consumers, prosumers, and small producers, contributing to grid stability.

Emphasis was placed on testing low-, medium-, and high-stress scenarios to understand how these mechanisms function in real conditions.

Key message: flexibility does not replace grid investments, but complements them and can reduce pressure on existing infrastructure.

2. Digitalisation, data, and energy infrastructure

Participants highlighted that digitalisation is an essential condition for the functioning of energy communities:

- ▶ The need for digital platforms, smart meters, and access to real-time data.
- ▶ The role of **BMS (Building Management Systems)** in monitoring electricity, thermal energy, water, and gas consumption.
- ▶ The importance of data collection and use for optimising consumption, reducing losses, and increasing energy efficiency.
- ▶ The integration of digital solutions enables local or remote control and contributes to reducing consumption and operational costs.

Digitalisation was presented as **foundational infrastructure**, without which the energy transition cannot be managed effectively.

3. Urban decarbonisation and heating systems

A significant part of the discussion focused on **district heating systems** and their role in urban decarbonisation:

Recent investments have targeted network modernisation, loss reduction, and efficiency improvements. European funds and modernisation funds have been essential for implementing major projects.

The importance of renewable sources (photovoltaics, heat pumps, cogeneration) integrated into existing systems was emphasised.

District heating is seen as a more efficient and sustainable solution than individual micro-generation units, particularly in dense urban areas.

4. Prosumers, public perceptions, and social challenges

The discussion highlighted tensions surrounding prosumers:

- ▶ Dissatisfaction related to compensation mechanisms, regulatory unpredictability, and poor communication.
- ▶ Lack of trust in institutions and the impact of disinformation.
- ▶ Coordination difficulties at building or community level, where opposition from a small number of residents can block collective projects.
- ▶ The need for clear price signals and a predictable framework to encourage local consumption of produced energy.

The conclusion was that many of these issues can be mitigated through organisation into energy communities and through continuous dialogue with citizens.

Final message: energy communities are not a theoretical concept, but a practical solution for grid stability, cost reduction, and citizen involvement in the energy transition. Their success depends on coordination, education, and coherent public policies.



Urban Regeneration

Moderator:

Eugen Pănescu,

Architect, Montag Studio

Speakers:

Ruxandra Dragomir,

Head of Development, Nhood
Romania

Dana Mihet,

Chief Architect, Municipality of
Târgu-Mureș

Jan Demeyere,

Co-Founder and Partner,
Speedwell

Powered by Nhood



The roundtable brought together the main segments involved in urban regeneration processes: real estate developers, representatives of local public administration, architects, and urban planners. The event was designed as a platform for dialogue and exchange of experience, where each actor contributed perspectives on how cities can be transformed into sustainable, attractive, and resilient communities.

Participants analysed the impact of urban regeneration on cities and local communities, focusing on aspects such as quality of life, spatial functionality, and how future residents and users can benefit from these transformations.





Urban Regeneration

Examples of best practices presented

The Coresi Project (Braşov) – presented by nHood, the developer of this flagship project. The transformation of the former IAR and Tractorul factories into a vibrant and dynamic urban area demonstrated how disused industrial spaces can be revitalised by integrating diverse functions: housing, offices, retail, culture, and leisure. The project illustrated how urban regeneration can stimulate economic and social vitality and how thoughtful design can reshape community perceptions of an entire neighbourhood.

The eco-district in Târgu-Mureş – this Romanian–French pilot project aimed to transform an existing neighbourhood into a green and sustainable space. The project offers a clear methodology, both from a technical perspective and in terms of community involvement, demonstrating how continuous dialogue with residents and their integration into the planning process can increase acceptance and the success of urban initiatives.

Speedwell projects (Timișoara and Bucharest) – these interventions underline the need for close collaboration between developers and local administrations to create functional mixed-use areas that combine housing, services, and public spaces. Speedwell's experience shows that the success of urban regeneration depends not only on design

quality, but also on cooperation and coordination processes among all stakeholders involved.

Conclusions and lessons learned:

- ▶ **Urban regeneration is a complex process** – transforming an area is not limited to the initial plot or project; effects extend further, influencing the entire community and surrounding urban networks.
- ▶ **Partnerships ensure project quality** – formal or informal collaborations between developers, administrations, and architects are essential for coordinating projects and adhering to clear, agreed timelines.
- ▶ **Clear methodologies for urban transformation** – there is a need for standardised tools and criteria that allow assessment of the future quality of an area and its impact on the community.
- ▶ **Regeneration continues after implementation** – a successful project does not end once construction is completed; positive effects propagate throughout the area and can stimulate further transformations in the urban environment.
- ▶ **Focus on community** – projects must be designed around the people who will use them, offering a comprehensive package of services and options, not just basic functions. This involves

integrating education, healthcare, culture, leisure, and retail into residents' daily lives.

- ▶ **Valuing the history of places** – preserving existing buildings and infrastructure provides identity and urban continuity. Historic spaces can be adapted for modern uses, such as cultural, educational, or commercial centres, while maintaining a connection to the memory of the place.
- ▶ **Projects must be scalable and adaptable** – urban regeneration is not limited to large cities; all cities, regardless of size, can benefit from such interventions by adapting tools and strategies to the local context.

The roundtable demonstrated that urban regeneration is not only a technical challenge, but also a complex social and economic process that requires collaboration, innovation, and active community involvement. The examples presented showed that Romanian cities have significant potential for transformation and that, through cooperation between developers, authorities, and specialists, they can become green, resilient, and attractive spaces for residents and investors.



Circular Economy

Moderator:

Dan Pascu,

General Manager Economic-Marketing, RETIM S.A.

Speakers:

Mihaela Frăsineanu,

State Counsellor, Chancellery of the Prime Minister

Powered by Retim



The discussion within the roundtable focused on the impact of the circular economy on cities and companies, concentrating on three main aspects: identifying the role of each sector within the circular economy, developing human resources and citizens in this direction, and identifying the main barriers to the transition toward a circular economy, together with the solutions required to overcome them.

The importance of coordination between public authorities and the private sector was highlighted as an essential element for resource efficiency and the implementation of strategic measures.

Emphasis was placed on the need for a well-trained and continuously upskilled workforce, the application of the national circular economy plan across the **10 priority areas**, emission reduction and raw material efficiency, as well as the integration of sustainability objectives into everyday life and into Romania's economic competitiveness. Generating practical solutions, engaging human resources, and efficiently valorising biomass and other resources are essential for developing a functional and sustainable circular economy.

The challenge of the circular economy is both theoretical and practical, and its success depends on keeping resources within the active economy for as long as possible. Participants were invited to present the sector in which they operate, their role in the circular model, the main barriers to the transition toward a

circular economy, and concrete solutions for overcoming them, highlighting the interdependence between the public and private sectors and the essential importance of human resources in the effective implementation of this model.

During the roundtable, best practices were highlighted, with the example of the **Municipality of Sibiu** showcasing projects aimed at energy efficiency, pollution reduction, decreasing abandoned waste, and improving air quality. Although visible progress has been made in selective waste collection and recycling, the major challenge remains achieving national recycling targets of **55–65%**, primarily due to insufficient infrastructure: the lack of automated sorting stations, composting facilities, and biodigestion plants. In addition, the required investments for such facilities are very high, while current legislation assigns responsibility to public authorities, making public-private partnerships essential. At the same time, county waste management plans developed in **2020–2021** require updating to reflect paradigm shifts and European funding opportunities.



Circular Economy

The discussions underlined that the circular economy must be approached not only through recycling, but also through waste reduction and reuse, supported by innovation in economic processes, as well as through education and awareness – particularly among students – using interactive materials and public platforms. Prevention is essential, given that a significant proportion of waste, especially biodegradable kitchen waste (approximately **55%**), could be avoided through more attentive and responsible consumption. Coherent national campaigns supported by public authorities are needed to expand education and public awareness.

Technical and infrastructural challenges are substantial: the type, size, and composition of packaging influence real recycling potential, while Romania's effective recycling capacity remains limited, with many materials impossible to valorise, including textiles, which represent significant shares of waste. In the absence of adequate infrastructure, separately collected waste often ends up in landfills or energy recovery facilities, highlighting the need for investments in sorting centres, recycling facilities, and solutions for more complex or niche materials.

Thus, for the circular economy to be effective, both education and prevention are needed, alongside significant investments in collection, sorting, treatment, and recycling infrastructure, in order to close material loops and avoid unnecessary costs and losses.



The circular economy must be based on **reduction and reuse**, extending product lifespans and reparability, supported by applied research and public-private partnerships. Education and awareness – from children to professionals – as well as coherent campaigns and funding, are important steps in this direction. The management of biodegradable waste, clarification of composting standards, and the development of voluntary contribution collection centres were identified as priorities for prevention and efficient resource use.

A practical solution identified during the debates was the creation of **dedicated hubs for the circular economy and waste management**, integrating expertise from industry, public administration, and academia to develop efficient and sustainable

solutions. By combining bottom-up and top-down strategies, learning, resource alignment, and the application of best practices are facilitated. Public-private partnerships are essential, but require careful planning, resources, and coordination. Developing concrete proposals through collaboration between industry associations, ministries, universities, and chambers of commerce ensures effective responses to real needs, supporting professional training and strengthening institutional capacity in waste prevention and recycling.



Construction Law

Moderator:

Alina Ioza,

Partner, Hațegan Attorneys

Speakers:

Cosmin Vilcu,

President, Employers' Association of Construction Companies – Sibiu Branch

Ștefan Bâlici,

President, Order of Architects of Romania

Powered by Hațegan Attorneys



The roundtable dedicated to construction law focused on identifying the new rules of the game, analysing current trends and their impact on the sector, while also highlighting the need to modernise legislation, strengthen public–private cooperation and financing, integrate European sustainability requirements, and accelerate digitalisation and professional training in order to ensure a coherent and sustainable evolution of the construction sector.

Legislative and contractual framework

- ▶ **New legislative measures.** Until the adoption of the Spatial Planning, Urbanism and Construction Code, a series of measures (Emergency Ordinance no. 31/2025) were adopted to simplify procedures in the fields of urban planning and construction and to accelerate investments, as required under Romania's commitments within the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. These measures reduce deadlines and introduce tacit approval mechanisms, but do not resolve structural problems such as staff shortages or procedural bottlenecks. Moreover, tacit approval may eliminate important quality filters, affecting project compliance and bankability.
- ▶ **Flexibilisation of the contractual framework.** In long-term construction contracts, particularly private ones, adaptability is needed in order to maintain relatively stable profit margins (approximately 5%) for construction companies and to avoid significant disruption to technological flows and projected cash flow in the event of sudden market changes. Increased operating and financing

costs intensify pressure, and without adequate contractual adjustments, business interruptions may occur.

Public–private cooperation and ecosystem building

- ▶ **Common position of professional associations.** It is necessary for affected stakeholders to be involved in the legislative adoption process from the initial phase, not only after measures are adopted. A proposal was made for professional associations to present a common position in order to increase coherence and negotiating strength.
- ▶ **Importance of public projects.** Public projects financed through PNRR and Anghel Saligny provide stability, with public works representing an important share of construction companies' portfolios, especially in the context of international geopolitical uncertainty and increased market volatility, which have temporarily reduced private projects.
- ▶ **Predictability and action plans.** Ecosystem creation. Emphasis was placed on predictability and on the need for a clear action plan regarding



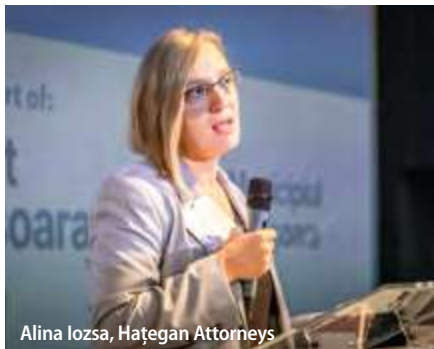
applicable regulations. The creation of functional ecosystems for accessing and implementing projects is also essential.

Financing

Construction activity financing is currently focused on own funds and bank financing. During discussions, the possibility was mentioned for some consolidated construction companies to access the AeRO market of the Bucharest Stock Exchange, which can provide additional liquidity but involves corporate governance requirements, more rigorous internal processes, and ongoing monitoring – being more suitable for companies also engaged in development activities. At the same time, investment funds are primarily interested in financing large, sustainable real estate projects, rather than directly financing construction activity.

European agenda

► **Design and construction standards are undergoing significant changes.** A series of criteria are becoming mandatory on a phased basis: the Nature Restoration Law, aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change and natural disasters; energy efficiency; ESG requirements; nZEB standards; use of renewable energy; circular economy strategies; traceability of construction materials and their reuse, in line with Romania's commitments under the EU agenda.



- **Green public procurement.** Green and sustainability requirements are promoted in public tenders to support the circular economy, material traceability, and reuse. To avoid mechanical application, there is a need for a deep understanding of the European agenda in order to incorporate criteria that are aligned with and useful for the proposed project.
- **Social and cultural components of projects.** While strong emphasis is already placed on the ecological dimension, less attention is given to the social and cultural components of cities and projects. There is a need for every project to also create cultural and social cohesion, with measurable impact in these areas.

Digitalisation and workforce

professionalisation

- **Digitalisation technical assistance.** It was proposed that Romania advocate for the inclusion, in the next EU financial framework, of funding lines for digital technical assistance that also cover initial costs for acquiring software required for design and operations. Such assistance programmes would facilitate the augmentation of human capacity through AI skills and advanced technologies.
- **Use of digital tools.** Widespread use of digital tools by the workforce is necessary: Building Information Modelling (BIM), Construction-Operations Building Information Exchange (COBie), digital twin solutions for monitoring and predicting building behaviour over time, digital site management, IoT, autonomous equipment, etc.
- **Data processing standards.** The adoption of data standards in design, execution, and operation was proposed, to be assumed by all actors involved in the construction process.
- **Workforce qualification.** Attracting young people to vocational schools and developing dual education are priorities, so that practical training is carried out in partnership with the private sector, not exclusively on the job. Implementing minimum performance criteria and additional incentives can support the entry of new generations into the field.



Financing & EU Funds

Co-Moderators:

Alexandra

Floriciă-Udriștioiu,

Head of Sustainable
Development, ProCredit Bank
Romania

Johannes Becker,

Partner, Stalfort Innovation &
Grants

Speakers:

Sebastian Popescu,

Partner, Grants and Incentives
Advisory Leader,
Ernst & Young SRL

Dorin Minea,

Foreign Direct Investments,
International Cooperation &
Communication, North-East
Regional Development Agency
(ADR Nord-Est, Brussels Office)

The discussion highlighted that the 2020–2030 period offers one of the largest volumes of European funding available to Romania. However, limited administrative capacity and the complexity of procedures make fund absorption difficult. A clear distinction was made between national funds (PNRR, Regional Programmes, Operational Programmes) and competitive funds managed directly by the European Commission, where Romania remains underperforming compared to Western states which, despite having fewer cohesion funds, are much more active in European competitions.



Johannes Becker, Stalfort Innovation & Grants



Recurring difficulties in fund absorption

Participants pointed to:

- ▶ Limited capacity within local administrations, particularly the small number of staff specialised in project writing and management.
- ▶ Lack of a coherent strategy, with many projects being built “around funding” rather than around real community needs.
- ▶ Insufficient information about funding opportunities, including instruments dedicated to the green transition, which in the past were barely used.
- ▶ The absence of a consolidated platform centralising all programmes and funding calls.
- ▶ Slow pace of central administration in publishing guidelines and launching calls – far more unpredictable than the calendars of programmes managed directly by the European Commission.

Relationship between municipalities and Commission-managed funds

It was emphasised that:

- ▶ These programmes primarily finance public policies, urban development, circular economy, planning, and innovation, rather than “visible” infrastructure.
- ▶ Strong English-language skills, complex applications, and international consortia are required.
- ▶ Romanian municipalities apply rarely, mainly due to lack of staff and the prioritisation of immediate infrastructure investments.

- ▶ Starting with small projects and gradually scaling up to larger initiatives was recommended.

Need for professionalisation and know-how transfer

A central theme was the development of administrative skills:

- ▶ Universities are willing to contribute technical expertise (including BIM, digitalisation, and urban policy), but more effective communication between administrations and academia is needed.
- ▶ European best practices show that local administrations can finance project department salaries through continuous participation in European programmes.
- ▶ Regional development agencies already provide training through regional programmes, but demand often exceeds capacity.

Planning and prioritisation strategies

Participants stressed:

- ▶ The importance of developing realistic strategies based on locally identified needs, not exclusively on funding availability.
- ▶ The need to align local strategies with the future Multiannual Financial Framework, still under negotiation at European level.
- ▶ The risk of projects being designed without long-term vision – for example, infrastructure purchases

without planning complementary infrastructure (such as vehicles without charging stations).

Future of cohesion funds

- ▶ Discussions addressed the European Union’s orientation toward:
- ▶ Greater centralisation in the future Multiannual Financial Framework.
- ▶ Strong emphasis on the green transition, digitalisation, and resilience.
- ▶ Possible implementation adjustments, but without the risk of eliminating cohesion funds – Central and Eastern European states remain strongly attached to these instruments.

Final recommendations:

- ▶ Development of a stable administrative infrastructure, including financing staff salaries through European projects.
- ▶ Closer collaboration between administrations and universities for digital and project-related skills.
- ▶ Standardisation and transparency in communicating funding calls.
- ▶ Strategic approaches with project pipelines developed before calls are launched.
- ▶ Increased participation in competitive European programmes to build experience and local capacity.



Mobility

Moderator:

Christian Macedonschi,
President, Association for the
Future of Urban and Interurban
Mobility

Speakers:

Ștefan Roșeanu,
Transport Specialist

Andrei Vlad,
CEO, Kharga Mobility

The roundtable addressed urban and metropolitan mobility, with a focus on the implementation of metropolitan rail systems and the transformations required in urban infrastructure to respond to public transport needs, the green transition, and regional development. The discussion covered both the current state of projects in Romania and relevant European examples, highlighting that metropolitan rail represents a paradigm shift for major cities.

Recent legislative developments enabling local authorities to become directly involved in railway projects were analysed, alongside funding opportunities, infrastructure limitations, and the need to integrate rail transport with urban and peri-urban road transport networks.

Role of metropolitan trains in urban and regional mobility

Participants highlighted that metropolitan rail systems are essential for:

- ▶ Reducing traffic and improving quality of life in major urban agglomerations.
- ▶ Providing fast connections between peri-urban areas and city centres, similar to models in Germany, Austria, France, or Spain.
- ▶ Connecting airports and industrial zones – key elements of daily mobility.
- ▶ Modernising stations and creating intermodal hubs with rapid transfers between rail and bus/tram/trolleybus.

It was underlined that national legislation has been amended in recent years to allow local authorities and inter-community development associations to become direct actors in railway projects, opening unprecedented opportunities.





Relevant international case studies

The discussion referenced European examples such as:

- ▶ **S-Bahn** (Germany, Austria), TER (France), Cercanías (Spain) – robust suburban rapid transit models.
- ▶ Cities such as **Cluj, Oradea, Iași,** and **Timișoara** are at different stages of adopting the concept, highlighting growing national momentum.

Major challenges in implementing metropolitan rail

Participants identified multiple obstacles:

Existing railway infrastructure

- ▶ Many lines are not electrified (Sibiu, Brașov, Bucharest), requiring alternative solutions: overhead electrification, battery-powered trains, or hydrogen trains.
- ▶ Existing stations are outdated and require complete reconstruction.

Institutional coordination

- ▶ Competition and interdependence with large projects financed through **CEF** or centrally managed European funds.
- ▶ Synchronisation challenges between long-distance transport, regional trains, and future metropolitan services.



Christian Macedonschi, Association for the Future of Urban and Interurban Mobility

Administrative capacity

- ▶ Projects are complex and involve extensive approval processes.
- ▶ Lack of precedents in Romania leads to delays in understanding and applying the legal framework.

Multimodal hubs and electric mobility: integration with new services

- ▶ Participants discussed the role of electric mobility infrastructure at metropolitan rail stations:
- ▶ Park & Ride facilities with slow charging stations – optimal for commuters leaving vehicles for **8–10 hours**.
- ▶ Smart charging scheduling systems to reduce grid pressure.

- ▶ Integration with office buildings, hotels, or local fleets through dedicated software platforms.
- ▶ Use of underutilised parking areas at night (e.g. retail) for urban charging.
- ▶ Modular platforms for automated parking, useful in dense urban areas or near railway stations.

It was emphasised that electric mobility is a **complementary element** of modern rail mobility, not a substitute.

General conclusions

- ▶ The roundtable showed that metropolitan rail can become the backbone of urban mobility in Romania if several key conditions are met:
- ▶ investments in existing railway infrastructure;
- ▶ modernisation and reconfiguration of stations as multimodal hubs;
- ▶ digital integration of all mobility services;
- ▶ coordination between local authorities, CFR, and ministries;
- ▶ smart use of European funds;
- ▶ development of electric charging infrastructure and last-mile mobility solutions.

Final message: the future of mobility in Romania depends on courage, cooperation, and integrated planning, and metropolitan rail represents one of the most effective solutions for the cities of tomorrow.



Tourism, Lifestyle & Culture

Moderator:

Cătălin Ile,

Partner, Horwath HTL România

Speakers:

Laura Boldovici,

Destination Manager, Visit
Timișoara

Alexandru Chira,

General Manager, Visit Oradea

Andrei Toniuc,

General Manager, Via
Transilvanica

Marius Șorănescu,

President, OMD Iași



Călin Ile, Partner, Horwath HTL Romania

The discussion focused on how destinations in Romania can better capitalise on their tourism potential through stronger local governance, professional destination management, and public–private cooperation. Speakers shared practical lessons on establishing **Destination Management Organisations (DMOs/OMDs)**, overcoming administrative barriers, and building coherent long-term tourism development strategies. The session aimed to offer replicable perspectives for other cities seeking to improve their tourism ecosystems.

Strengthening local tourism governance

- ▶ Participants agreed that tourism development must shift from a nationally centred model to one focused on local leadership, granting municipalities and destination structures strategic roles.
- ▶ A National DMO is considered essential, but it must be professional, depoliticised, and include universities, functional local DMOs, and industry associations.

Challenges in establishing DMOs

- ▶ Administrative processes remain complex – especially for organisations transitioning from older structures, as in the case of Timișoara. Requirements such as developing a complete destination strategy before operational capacities exist create unrealistic timelines.

- ▶ Consistency and perseverance were highlighted as critical factors in long-term strategies, given tourism's vulnerability to external shocks.

Public–private partnerships as a success factor

- ▶ Oradea presented a strong public–private partnership model, whose board includes: the municipality, the local development agency (industrial parks), metropolitan area administration, major hotel chains, spa & leisure operators, retail, and a hospitality industry association with approximately **70 members**.
- ▶ This structure ensures real-time market feedback and alignment between tourism, investment, and urban development.



Data-driven destination management

- ▶ Speakers stressed the importance of fieldwork, visitor interaction, and continuous data collection (photos, profiles, feedback). Digital data is important but must be complemented by “on-the-ground reality” – conversations with hikers, hosts, and hoteliers.
- ▶ Destinations need **KPIs**, monitoring tools, and professional evaluation systems.

Romania’s tourism potential & strategic vision

- ▶ All speakers emphasised Romania’s underutilised potential – which requires courage, continuity, and smarter positioning.
- ▶ National promotion remains weak and fragmented; participants called for a more unified and contemporary country brand.

Case studies and comparative models

Timișoara

- ▶ The recent experience as European Capital of Culture was highlighted as a major opportunity for long-term destination development.

Oradea

- ▶ Considered one of Romania’s most advanced tourism governance models, even without formal DMO status.
- ▶ Strong integration between economic development policies and metropolitan planning.

Iași

- ▶ Inspired by international best practices, such as Brussels’ dual-role model (serving both visitors and event organisers).

Via Transilvanica

- ▶ Presented as one of the most impactful tourism projects of recent decades in Romania – generating community activation, strong branding, and long-term destination value along a **1.600 km route**.
- ▶ Operates based on corporate-style strategic planning, KPIs, and professional management.

International destinations cited as inspiration

- ▶ Kraków, Helsinki, Vienna, Ljubljana, and several Nordic cities were referenced for their user-friendly digital presence, coherent branding, modern visitor communication, and strong DMO-type structures.

Main challenges identified:

- ▶ Heavy bureaucracy in establishing DMOs.
- ▶ Lack of a functional National DMO and unclear interaction between local, regional, and national levels.
- ▶ Insufficient national branding and fragmented international promotion.
- ▶ Need for professional staff, predictable funding, and long-term strategic alignment.
- ▶ Tourism’s vulnerability to external shocks – requiring resilience and continuity.

Recommendations and lessons shared by speakers

Strategic:

- ▶ Maintaining perseverance, continuity, and long-term commitment in destination strategies.
- ▶ Developing a coherent national tourism brand and ensuring alignment between regions.

Operational:

- ▶ Strengthening data collection – both digital and field-based – for evidence-based tourism policies.
- ▶ Using alliances and professional networks to learn from European examples.

Governance:

- ▶ Depoliticising the future National DMO and ensuring professional management.
- ▶ Including academia, functional DMOs, and the private sector in governance structures.

Community and stakeholder engagement:

- ▶ Strong partnerships with the private sector (hotels, attractions, retail, event organisers) are essential for realistic strategies and improving visitor experience.

Speakers encouraged Romanian destinations to be bold, coordinated, and data-oriented, and to believe in the country’s tourism potential. The moderator concluded by inviting concrete collaboration and the application of shared knowledge in each local context.



Urban Safety

Moderator:

Grigore Tătaru,

General Manager, ACO SRL

Speakers:

George Suciu,

General Manager, Beia

Irina Zamfirescu,

Lecturer, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest

Andreea Răducu-Lefter,

Landscape Architect

Powered by ACO



The roundtable on Urban Safety addressed two essential dimensions of urban safety: the effects of the *urban heat island* and high temperatures on cities and on vulnerable populations, as well as stormwater management and flood prevention. cities seeking to improve their tourism ecosystems.

Urban heat island and high temperatures

– analysing the effects of heatwave periods on cities and people, and identifying solutions to make urban life safer and more comfortable.

Irina Zamfirescu, Lecturer at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, presented the results of a study on extreme heat waves in the Municipality of Bucharest, focusing on the impact on the most vulnerable groups of residents, such as people experiencing homelessness, those living in informal housing, and workers who carry out activities outdoors (e.g. delivery workers, day labourers).

Extreme heat disproportionately affects vulnerable individuals, whose precarious living conditions, limited access to water and cooling, and unstable incomes amplify risks to health and quality of life. In the absence of adequate public solutions and effective use of green spaces and cooling corridors,

the socio-economic impact of heatwaves becomes increasingly severe for these groups. The study integrated field observations, interviews, and an analysis of local public policies for heatwave management, highlighting the need for integrated public policies that protect vulnerable populations and transform cities into environments more resilient to extreme heat.

Trees play an important role in cooling cities and ensuring residents' safety, especially in the context of extreme heat waves. In Bucharest, the current state of urban vegetation is problematic: there is no clear inventory of trees, and many are degraded or at risk of collapse, partly due to improper management over the past two decades. Practices such as excessive pruning, drastic reduction of tree pits, soil compaction, covering tree bases with inappropriate materials, and planting large specimens that are difficult to establish have affected tree health and their ability to provide shade.



Urban Safety

In addition, trees are often planted in unsuitable soils, while public works interventions add further pressure on root systems. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of coherent and preventive urban management, which is necessary to identify at-risk trees and prevent incidents. However, solutions used in other cities – ranging from proper planting with container-grown trees to creating minimum conditions for root development – could also be applied locally. This highlights the urgent need for coherent policies and professional arboricultural management to protect and develop the city's green assets – an essential element for safety, health, and community adaptation to climate change.

Solutions for monitoring air, soil, and water were presented, useful for managing green spaces and for the smart irrigation of trees in a city increasingly affected by heat. International and local examples of best practices were discussed, such as vegetation on buildings, urban gardens, and transport stations covered with greenery, demonstrating that such interventions are both feasible and effective.

Stormwater management and flood prevention – addressing risks generated by intense rainfall and rising water levels, with a focus on prevention and appropriate infrastructure.

Stormwater management and the protection of green spaces are essential for adapting cities to climate change and the increasing intensity of extreme



Grigore Tătaru, General Manager, ACO SRL

weather events. Concrete surfaces prevent water infiltration, leading to flooding and the loss of natural resources. At the same time, a lack of awareness of the value of green spaces limits the implementation of effective solutions.

However, effective strategies exist: water retention through Rain Gardens, drainage swales, and the use of natural materials at the base of trees help prevent flooding and maintain soil moisture. Urban vegetation, including resilient trees and urban gardens, cools cities, reduces overheating, and supports biodiversity. Collected water can be used intelligently for irrigation, while digital monitoring of environmental parameters allows interventions to be adjusted in real time.

Success depends on political will, public education, and coordination between institutions. Integrating technology with landscape architecture and urban management can transform stormwater from a challenge into a valuable resource, contributing to flood prevention, the creation of sustainable green spaces, and the development of a healthier urban environment.

The most urgent measures for urban safety identified following the discussions include:

- ▶ Implementing “**Green Garden**” systems for water retention and planting healthy vegetation, with a focus on creating shaded areas.
- ▶ Ensuring pedestrian comfort in cities, including during heatwaves – shade, access to water, and safe routes – to encourage walking and the use of public transport.
- ▶ Creating high-quality green spaces in cities to provide healthy outdoor recreation alternatives beyond enclosed commercial spaces.



Digitalisation & City Governance

Moderator:

Andrei Rădoi,
Senior Sales Executive, SAP
Romania

Speakers:

Edward Crețescu,
President, ANIS – Employers’
Association of the Software
Industry, and CEO, Regista

Gabriel Dinu,
Deputy Director, DNSC – National
Cyber Security Directorate

Victor Vevera,
Director General, ICI – National
Institute for Research and
Development in Informatics

Powered by SAP



The roundtable explored the *digital transformation of cities and public administration in Romania*, starting from the broader context of technological innovation and strategic digital infrastructure projects. The discussion highlighted both the rapid pace of technological advancement and increasing regulatory pressure, as well as the need to align innovation with sustainable adoption in both the public and private sectors. Recent progress was presented in *supercomputing and AI infrastructure, cybersecurity projects, and the development of national testing, certification, and evaluation capacities for emerging technologies*. At the same time, the debate underscored the pressures generated by new European regulations (*AI Act, Cyber Resilience Act, NIS2*) on both industry and public administration.

The discussion opened with the presentation of strategic national projects in advanced digital infrastructure. The following were highlighted:

- ▶ **Testing centres and platforms for emerging technologies**, used to validate digital applications, AI systems, and security solutions. These controlled environments facilitate the responsible adoption of new technologies.
- ▶ **Supercomputing and AI projects** – the development of a national infrastructure capable of running advanced models, ranging from climate and social applications to medical diagnostics and cybersecurity.
- ▶ **Cybersecurity capabilities** applied in both the public and private sectors, including:
 1. a national **SOC centre** for incident monitoring,
 2. sustainable services for entities unable to build their own internal structures,
 3. forensic laboratories and cyber ranges.

- ▶ **International technology transfer projects**, including cooperation with international organisations for protecting energy infrastructures and testing risk scenarios.

These initiatives point to a strategic direction: **digitalisation must be a tool for improving quality of life, not an end in itself**.

A major part of the discussion focused on the impact of **EU regulations** on Romania’s digital market:

- ▶ **AI Act and the classification of AI systems** – which will impose significant obligations related to documentation, evaluation, auditing, and security.
- ▶ **Cyber Resilience Act (CRA)** – affecting the entire digital product market, requiring manufacturers to implement:
 1. secure-by-design principles,
 2. software bills of materials,
 3. advanced technical standards,
 4. continuous vulnerability monitoring.



- ▶ **NIS2** – extending security obligations across central public administration, with direct impact on IT governance, human resources, and preparedness levels.
- ▶ **Overlapping regulatory acts**, which risk becoming a burden for small and medium-sized enterprises, highlighting the need for:
 1. a legislative “one-stop shop” for companies,
 2. harmonisation and simplification of norms.

The dominant message: **Europe is regulating faster than it is innovating**, and Romania must find a balance between protecting citizens and stimulating the IT industry.

Digitalisation of public administration and public sector challenges

The central theme here was **limited institutional capacity**:

- ▶ **Shortage of qualified human resources** – low salaries and the lack of attractive career paths significantly reduce the administration’s capacity to implement and maintain complex digital systems.
- ▶ **Lack of cybersecurity culture** – both at management level and among users. Critical infrastructures remain exposed due to: the use of personal devices in public networks, delayed updates, and outdated systems.
- ▶ **Insufficient IT governance** – in many institutions, IT or cybersecurity structures do not exist at the necessary decision-making level.
- ▶ **Need to update curricula for civil servants**, through continuous training programmes, including tools made available by European authorities.

- ▶ **Key risks identified**: data theft and loss, sabotage of critical systems, failure of public digital services, incidents caused by human error or lack of training.

Conclusion: public administration digitalisation cannot advance without investments in people, governance, and continuous application maintenance.

Role of the IT industry and development of the domestic market

Romania’s software industry is strong, but largely **export-oriented**, rather than focused on the domestic market.

Key topics discussed:

- ▶ **Public administration still does not procure enough software**, limiting internal innovation and the development of local products.
- ▶ **The lack of a strong domestic market** reduces the competitiveness of small companies in the face of increasingly strict regulations.
- ▶ **The need to increase public investment in digitalisation** – to generate local demand, innovation, and solutions developed in Romania.
- ▶ **Continuous collaboration between industry and authorities**, to adapt legislation to market realities and avoid excessive costs.
- ▶ Industry representatives consider Romania to be **“midway”**: significant progress has been made in recent years, but the pace must accelerate.

Digital education and preparation for 2030

Education was identified as fundamental to Romania’s digital future:

- ▶ Early introduction of computer science and programming, starting even in primary education, to prepare the next generation’s digital skills.
- ▶ The need for a modern curriculum adapted to emerging technologies and online protection.
- ▶ The importance of digital literacy, including among civil servants.
- ▶ Alignment of the education system with labour market needs, as the IT industry undergoes major transformations (including declining demand for junior roles in certain sectors).

Objective: building a generation capable of critically navigating a digital ecosystem dominated by AI and cyber risks.

General conclusions

The roundtable emphasised that Romania’s digital transformation depends on: continuous investment in advanced digital infrastructure, balanced regulation that protects without stifling innovation, the capacity of public administration to adopt and maintain digital systems, strengthening the domestic software market, solid digital education for citizens and civil servants, and ongoing cooperation between industry, government, and European institutions. **Final message**: the digitalisation of tomorrow’s cities must be built today, through coherent policies, adequate resources, and a shared vision that places the citizen at the centre.

This year's edition of CITIES OF TOMORROW also included a day of visits to companies and projects in the Timișoara region, covering the following themes:

- Digitalisation and city governance
- Urban regeneration – investments centred on citizens' needs
- Economic development – smart investments
- Tourism – from European Capital of Culture to a vibrant urban destination

The purpose of these visits was to highlight the economic and tourism potential of the host city Timișoara and its surrounding areas, as well as to facilitate the exchange of best practices among conference participants. Consequently, these on-site visits provided an ideal framework for know-how transfer, offering participants an in-depth understanding of the strategy and implementation process behind various economic and urban development initiatives.

The visits also offered the opportunity to explore the challenges encountered during the implementation of these projects, as well as to learn from success stories that have contributed to transforming the city of Timișoara into a benchmark for urban development. In this context, participants

engaged directly with local authorities and private sector representatives, learning how they successfully collaborated to implement projects that stimulated both the local economy and the region's tourism attractiveness.

At the same time, these visits placed particular emphasis on the importance of future development plans, both for companies and for cities, highlighting the need for a long-term vision that integrates innovation and technology alongside sustainability and urban quality of life. In this way, participants had the opportunity to better understand how to apply the lessons learned to support the development of their own projects and to contribute to the revitalisation and modernisation of urban centres in the regions they represent.





About the organizers



Deutsch-Rumänische
Industrie- und Handelskammer
Camera de Comerț și Industrie
Româno-Germană

AHK Romania is the largest bilateral Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Romania and the official representative of the German economy in our country. Through the services it provides and the events it organises, **AHK Romania** actively supports German companies entering the Romanian market and is also a partner for Romanian companies interested in the German market. In addition, it serves as an important platform for networking and for the exchange of information and experience, not only for its members but also for other interested companies.

AHK is active in fields such as **green energy, environment, and construction** through its **GreenTech initiative, econet romania.**

www.ahkrumaenien.ro

www.econet-romania.com

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AHK Romania's Green Tech Initiative

In recent years, **AHK Romania** has focused its attention on **sustainable development** and is continuously committed to bringing this topic to the attention of Romanian local and national public administration. The global market experience and expertise of **AHK Romania's staff** have provided a solid foundation for acquiring new skills and competencies, enabling topics such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, environment, and sustainable construction to be addressed professionally and effectively.

The close relationship with the aforementioned sectors in Romania – cultivated over time through participation in trade fairs, the preparation of market studies, and the organisation of AHK's own econet events, including conferences, workshops, information delegations in Romania and Germany, as well as through the Chamber's working groups – provides

us with a deeper understanding of the market and qualifies us as a reliable and serious business partner. For 10 years, AHK Romania has served as a central hub in the fields of energy, construction, and the environment, offering through its Green Tech initiative, econet romania, a bilateral platform for know-how transfer and the exchange of experience.

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