

PROXIMITIES

PROMoting accessible services, liveable spaces and sustainable connections in peripheral urban territories

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**Southern Regional
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Southern Regional Assembly launches EU Project exploring how best to redesign our urban peripheries.

The PROXIMITIES project kicks off with the Southern Region of Ireland at the forefront, aiming to enhance liveability and sustainability in Europe's peripheral urban areas.

The Southern Regional Assembly, together with partners from seven European countries, has successfully launched the ambitious interregional EU Project “**PROXIMITIES — Promoting Accessible Services, Liveable Spaces, and Sustainable Connections in Peripheral Urban Territories.**” This exciting collaboration aims to make peripheral urban areas across Europe more accessible, healthy, inclusive, and sustainable.

In the Southern Region of Ireland, the existing low-density, car-dependent suburbs suffer from poor access to services, public transport, and a limited range of housing options. As the population is expected to increase by 23% by 2040, Ireland's National Planning Framework highlights a shift towards "compact growth." The aim is for higher-density, high-quality development within existing urban areas to enhance quality of life, service accessibility, and efficient land and infrastructure use.

At the recent kick-off meeting in Reggio Emilia, Italy, partners emphasised the critical challenges faced by peripheral urban areas, including disparities in service and infrastructure, economic and social segregation, and environmental sustainability. These issues impact not only the quality of life in these areas but also their long-term resilience and economic viability.

"We are excited to kick start the PROXIMITIES project," expressed Paolo Gandolfi, Director of Territorial Development Area from the Municipality of Reggio Emilia. "This project is not just about improving urban peripheries; it's about transforming them into thriving, sustainable communities that enhance the quality of life for all residents. By working together with our European partners, we aim to implement best practices and innovative approaches to urban development."

Additionally, Áine Whelan from the Southern Regional Assembly shared their perspective:

"As the project manager for PROXIMITIES in the Southern Region, I am thrilled about the potential this project holds for our Region. The challenges we face in peripheral areas are complex and demand coordinated efforts and innovative solutions. Through PROXIMITIES, we will explore policies that can make substantial improvements in how our urban peripheries are perceived and lived in. Our goal is to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable urban environment that people are proud to call home."



The project, led by the Municipality of Reggio Emilia in Italy, has garnered support from the Erasmus Centre for Urban, Port and Transport Economics BV at University of Rotterdam as the advisory partner, along with regional and municipal partners from Ireland, Spain, Latvia, Romania, Hungary, and Sweden. Each brings unique expertise and perspectives that will contribute to the project's goals.

PROXIMITIES is part of the broader European effort to address urban peripheral challenges and promote sustainable development. The project will focus on several key areas:

- **Economy and Services:** Promoting local economies and services within walking distance to foster a proximity economy.
- **Sustainable Mobility:** Enhancing green transportation options and soft mobility connections.
- **Public Space Quality:** Improving the liveability and resilience of urban spaces.
- **Community and Social Integration:** Building stronger community ties and enhancing social interactions.
- **Governance:** Encouraging integrated and collaborative urban planning and policymaking.

Over the next four years, PROXIMITIES aims to set a benchmark for transforming European peripheral areas into model regions of sustainability and inclusivity.

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For further information contact:

Áine Whelan- EU Projects Officer, Southern Regional Assembly

awhelan@southernassembly.ie

+353 (0) 87 265 2193

