

European Union International Urban Cooperation (IUC) Asia Programme

EU-China Cooperation on Sustainable and Innovative Cities (IUC C1)

Background and Introduction

Work Continues Despite COVID Pandemic

Faced with travel restrictions implemented at the beginning of the year, the IUC Asia team transformed all of their planned in-person missions into **online video conferences** as of February 2020. This enabled the work of IUC Asia to continue seamlessly throughout the year. So far, more than **70 online sessions** have been held.

Back in March 2020 — at the outset of the COVID pandemics — the IUC Asia team started a series of online exchanges that led cities to help each other in the acquisition of medical, personal protective equipment. Also, cities' responses to the crisis were exchanged and the **EU Coronavirus Response Invest Initiative** was presented as a speedy and comprehensive support package from untapped EU Cohesion Policy resources.

Some **highlights** offered by European cities participating in these sessions were: **Mannheim's** "Cope with Covid" portal; **Granada** Cluster's OnTech developing of tools, surgical masks and respirators with 3D printers; **Nice** deployed drones to inform people of containment rules; **Barcelona's** development of an "app for the elderly"; **Rome** enabling library catalogues online for free; **Bologna** developing smart working approaches to enhance e-services for citizens; **Stuttgart's** Corona hotline for local companies and freelancers.

Early responses provided by Asian cities to mitigate the impact of the pandemic included: **Liuzhou** (China) in converting a car assembly plant into a mask production line; **Guangzhou** (China) providing protective equipment to guarantee safe-work environments; **Gwangju** (Korea) early alerting, anticipatory countermeasures as well as transparent information on COVID-control and setting an emergency fund for the livelihood of the vulnerable; **Penampang** (Malaysia) support measures for the local economy.

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Supporting the EU-China Regional Policy Dialogue

The IUC Asia is a programme of the European Union's [Foreign Policy Instruments \(FPI\)](#) promoting **multi-city** cooperation on sustainable development, building partnerships between EU and Chinese cities, via thematic workshops and field visits. Cities identify and implement concrete **pilot projects** in pertinent areas of sustainable urban development (*triple-helix* approach – see below). The IUC supports the [EU-China Regional Policy Dialogue](#) between the EC Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy ([DG REGIO](#)) and China's National Development and Reform Commission ([NDRC](#)). **Examples** of cooperation are contained in the following pages.



European Pilot Cities

Burgas (Bulgaria)
Bologna (Italy)
Barcelona (Spain)
Málaga (Spain)
Granada (Spain)
Rome (Italy)
Nice (France)
Barnsley (UK)
Greater Manchester (UK)
Reggio Emilia (Italy)
Stuttgart Region (Germany)
Mannheim (Germany)
AAK (Greece)

Chinese Pilot Cities

Chongqing, Longyan,
Zhengzhou, Shantou,
Haikou, Changchun,
Kunming, Liuzhou,
Yantai, Weinan,
Tianjin, Chengdu,
Wuhan, Guangzhou,
Panjin, Ningbo,
Hohhot, Yangzhou



Delivery of 34 Summary Urban Action Plans

Via the IUC Asia programme, cities and regions from Europe and China have entered into 34 Urban Cooperation Action Plans (UCAPs), entailing partnerships on sustainable development, comprised of:

- 13 European pilot cities 2017-2020
- 18 Chinese pilot cities 2017-2020
- 4 thematic clusters

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IUC—Supporting Sustainable Urban Development

The IUC is based on the *Triple-Helix* cooperation model, encouraging the public & private sectors to work together with research & educational institutions to develop pilot projects. The cooperation themes include the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EU Urban Agenda priority themes. Cities carry out practical cooperation in relevant fields to sustainable urban development, including: smart city, mobility, energy transition, biotechnology, life sciences, culture, education and tourism. Activities are based on a *win-win* perspective for the EU and China.

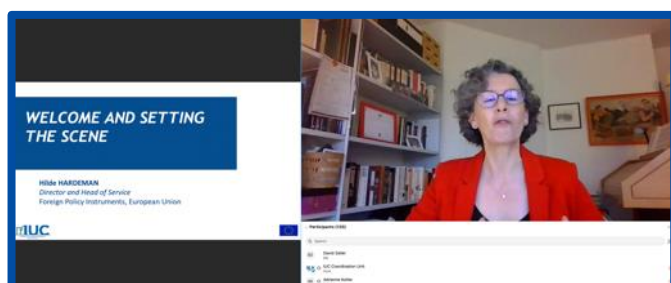
2020 Pilot Projects - Progress Review of Selected Cases

Smart Cities & Digital Transition	Cities	Results
Concept Design for Liudong New Area	Barcelona, Liuzhou	Barcelona has developed an action plan for cooperation with Liuzhou involving partners from academia and private sector. Joint venture planned between GINA Architects Barcelona and CCDI China .
EU Cities' Garden Pavillions / Participation at Yangzhou Horticultural Expo 2021	Barcelona, Bologna, Rome, Stuttgart, Yangzhou	Pavilions developed by Barcelona, Bologna Metropolitan and Rome are currently under construction. They showcase sustainable urban development concepts & best practices. Stuttgart Region to participate in the event. Financial support provided by Yangzhou City.
Summer School in BIM (Building Information Modelling) and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) for digital integrated design. Platform.	Rome & several Chinese pilot cities	Sapienza University involved students and practitioners from China and Europe in the GIS BIM Summer School . Creation of a winter school programme. Launching a GIS-BIM platform including the summer school proceedings, an e-learning module, a video and a digital twin.
Mobility and Connectivity		
Hydrogen infrastructure for e-Mobility - sharing experiences / promoting the internationalisation of relevant start-ups	Guangzhou, Liuzhou, Chengdu, Rome, Stuttgart, Manchester	Manchester Fuel Cell Innovation Centre signing MoU with Chengdu Energy Institute EIRI . Stuttgart Nanjing Fair & Baden-Württemberg International in China exploring cooperation of Stuttgart's fuel cell ecosystem with Guangzhou GDD & Chengdu EIRI .
Cargo Railway Connectivity	Mannheim. Chongqing	The railway was opened in October 2018 . The railway connection saves CO2 emissions as compared to shipping and enables faster delivery.
Health Care & Biotechnology		
Blockchain cooperation . Establishing representation offices of Granada's ICT and Biotechnology clusters in China	Granada, Rome, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Yantai	Webinar held in November 2020. Follow-up projects include setting up a Biomedical Technology Cooperation Center at Guangzhou Biotech Island . Cooperation include smart city and circular economy .
Test digital solutions and innovation for medical equipment in China. Follow-up to Nanjing Techweek 2019	Rome, Nanjing	Coaching and matchmaking session between Lazio UBT and two Nanjing Venture Capital Funds as well as connection made with Nanjing-based Medical Equipment Manufacturer Perlove .
Energy Transition & Circular Economy		
Energy storage & energy grid optimisation: Joint research, academic exchange, incubation & acceleration of start-ups	Rome, Manchester, Chengdu, Yantai, Liuzhou	Framework agreement between Sapienza University and Yantai University for joint research and exchange activities on Energy Efficiencies in Buildings; Energy Planning and Smart Positive Energy Districts, etc. Agreement . Executive protocol signed between Sapienza University and Chengdu EIRI on similar areas. Manchester (see above).
Energy saving in buildings. Incubation/acceleration programmes for EU companies into Chinese market	Rome, Barcelona, Chengdu, Liuzhou	Webinars between Sapienza and Chengdu EIRI (MoU signed including concrete research topics); Including elements of sustainable energy districts in Liuzhou.
Culture, Education & Tourism		
Research & Academic Education Cooperation on Urban Agriculture	Rome, Yantai	Yantai and Tuscia universities signed MOU for cooperation, creating Sino-Italian Faculty of Urban Agriculture & Wine, & summer schools
Digital twin for cultural heritage for the old Italian Consulate building	Rome, Yantai	Framework agreement between Sapienza University and Yantai University (research/exchange). Reference digital twin on restauration.
Nice carnival cooperation with Haikou	Nice, Haikou	Presented at WUF in Dubai. Case study on Nice cooperation published .
Business to business support		
Advanced Manufacturing : Training curriculum on industry 4.0 for Chinese academic / industry partners	Mannheim, Chongqing	Launch of Mannheim-Chongqing Cooperation Centre , the most important part of the Chongqing Europe Centre.
Industrial Design : Launching a bilateral platform/centre for SMEs/Start-Ups including training & incubation activities	Bologna, Stuttgart, Nanjing, Guangzhou	Setup of Industrial Design Platforms for Stuttgart and Bologna in Nanjing. Roadmap for cooperation between Bologna and GDD .
Smart City & Energy : Cluster to cluster & university cooperation	Bologna, Granada, Rome, Stuttgart, Nanjing, Yantai, Liuzhou	Launching of smart city platform by the Open City IoT Smart Lab from Rome. Integration with Yantai Uniorange Jerreh platform. Involvement of Smart City Cluster (Granada) . Cooperation with Nanjing TechWeek . MoU signed between FREE Association and Liuzhou Liudong District .

IUC's 4th Annual City-to-City Global Event

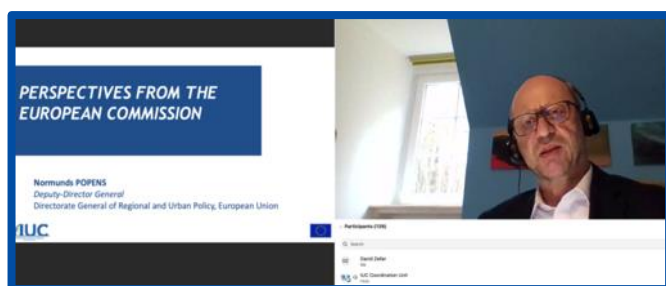
On **3 December 2020**, the IUC held its 4th (and final) City-to-City Event to reflect on the progress made by the programme. The online conference involved 166 participants from cities and regions across the globe, comprising European and international representatives, including local and subnational authorities. During the morning session, participants discussed urban development in the face of COVID-19 challenges, and subsequent efforts to jump-start a Green Recovery. In particular, the role of emerging smart digitalisation, a changing urban environment, and funding were addressed in dedicated sessions.

Hilde Hardeman, Director and Head of Service for the EU's Foreign Policy Instruments, welcomed the online participants and referred to the IUC as a flagship programme for localising the SDGs in cities.



The Plenary I session covered the topic Implementing a Green Recovery. Presentations from several IUC cities shared insights on challenges, opportunities and common goals in sustainable urban development, especially in light of COVID-19 and related recovery efforts.

Normunds Popen, Deputy-Director General of DG REGIO, delivered the keynote with the appeal, "We need to build on the knowledge and experience out there...I hope the new phase, IURC will be as successful as the IUC has been."

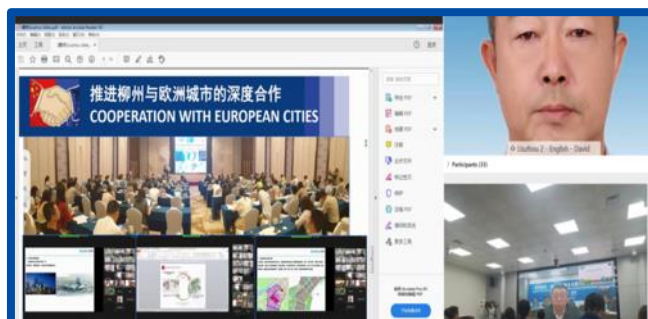


IUC city-to-city cooperation focused on implementing a green recovery. The sessions explored the challenges and topics of global concern arising from the recent COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery efforts. Two presentations from China were delivered. First, Dingxian Xiang, Deputy Director of Energy Saving Monitoring Centre in Wuhan stated that *"The conference is a very high-level to share with other cities around the world how Wuhan copes with the epidemic and how to practice the post-epidemic green at the same time, seeking the future of cooperation"*. Wuhan, as the worst-hit area of the new epidemic, has made great efforts to overcome all kinds of difficulties.

"After 76 days, the city controlled the outbreak, the economy restarted, green recovery was underway," Mr Xiang said. He shared four guiding principles for the control of the pandemic, which Wuhan City has shared with UN-Habitat.



Liuzhou's Executive Deputy Mayor Gang Hou referred in his speech to the long history of the city as well as to the tourist and cultural heritage. *"Since 2018, Liuzhou has been a pilot city of China-EU regional policy cooperation. I am delighted that we have signed 17 memorandums of cooperation with European cities in areas including urban development, industry, education, science and technology, and other fields,"* he said. Liuzhou city shared its experience on fighting the epidemic last April, along with Barcelona, Rome, Mannheim and Granada ([see here](#)).



Ramon López, Policy Coordinator for Int. Relations, DG REGIO summarized the results of the IUC programme at the global level. The work was carried out over 150+ capacity building sessions and events. Mr. López spoke of future developments and the handover to the IURC, starting in January 2021, adding in Australasia the countries of Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Vietnam for the *city-to-city* cooperation. For the *region-to-region* cooperation in innovation, the addition of China and Japan will round out the programme. In the 4 annual editions of the IUC global event, more than 100 participants from Asia took part.

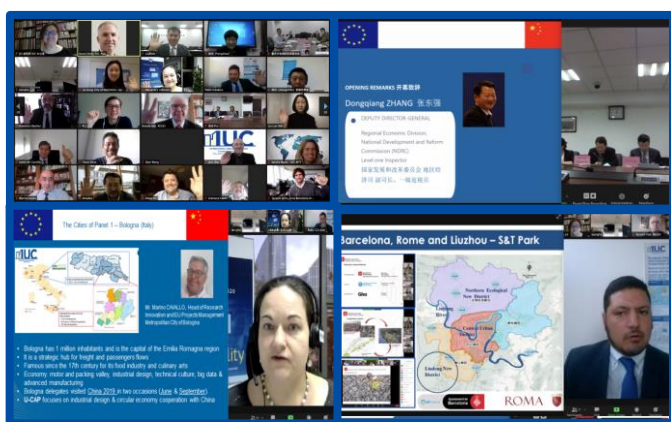


News

EU's DG REGIO – China's NDRC Online Seminar

In mid-November, over 80 experts from European and Chinese cities as well as high level representatives of the European Commission's DG REGIO and China's NDRC met in combination *online* and *onsite* in China to discuss issues of regional innovation and sustainable urban development within their annual seminar series held since 2006.

The event was moderated by Dr. Ronald Hall, Active Senior Advisor for DG REGIO, and included statements by DG REGIO Deputy Director General Normunds Popen and Dongqiang Zhang, Deputy Director General at NDRC. The event consisted of two sessions dealing with *Green Deal*, *Digital Transformation* and *Regional Innovation* as opportunities for EU-China collaboration. IUC results were presented.

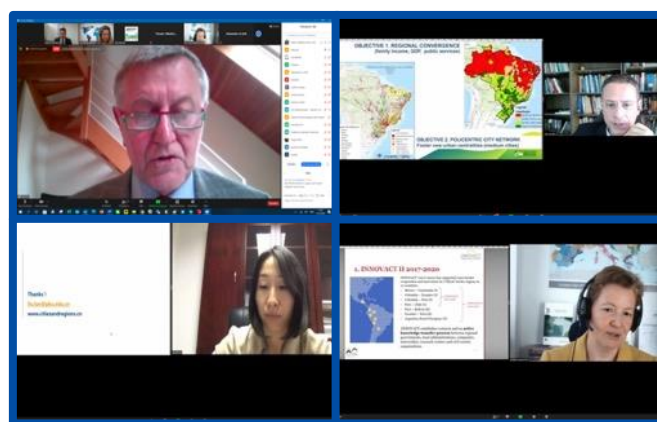


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IUC Co-organises Regional Innovation Webinar

In mid-October, the IUC team co-organised an online workshop on regional innovation. Around 50 participants joined the event that focused on the concept of smart specialisation as a means of improving investment in regional development.

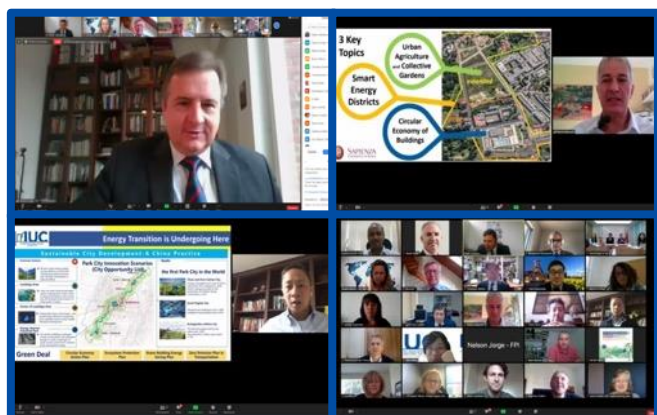
Dr. Rudolf Niessler, Principal Advisor at DG REGIO stated that over the past years and building on a series of success stories at EU level, more than 120 Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) have been developed in EU regions and Member States. Moreover, over 30 interregional partnerships on agri-food, industrial modernisation and energy have boosted and localised innovation policies.



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IUC Co-organises City-to-City Cooperation Webinar

In mid-October, the IUC team co-organised the webinar "International cooperation for innovation in urban development policy and practice: results and perspectives from EU-Asia Cooperation" involving 60 experts, held during the *European Week of Regions and Cities*, the EU's flagship event on urban and regional development.



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MoU signed - Yantai and Tuscia Universities

End-October, the IUC Asia held a *Memorandum of Understanding* virtual signing ceremony between Yantai University (China) and Tuscia University (Italy), to develop joint academic and research actions in areas including food, agriculture, forestry, landscape and urban environment. Dr. Ronald Hall - on behalf of DG REGIO - opened the event.



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Granada Blockchain Webinar Series & Platform

In October and November, Granada hosted three webinars dealing with the opportunities and challenges that blockchain technology represents for cities in the areas of smart city, circular economy and biotechnology. An online platform will support the development of future joint projects on blockchain. Activities were supported by the IUC competitive award granted to Granada.

The Mayor of Granada City, Luis Salvador, expressed how blockchain innovations can be useful in creating smart cities. Alexandra Lehmann of FPI stated, *"Blockchain technology promises to revolutionise the management of smart cities by providing unique tools to coordinate and integrate different city services with transparency, efficiency and privacy"*.

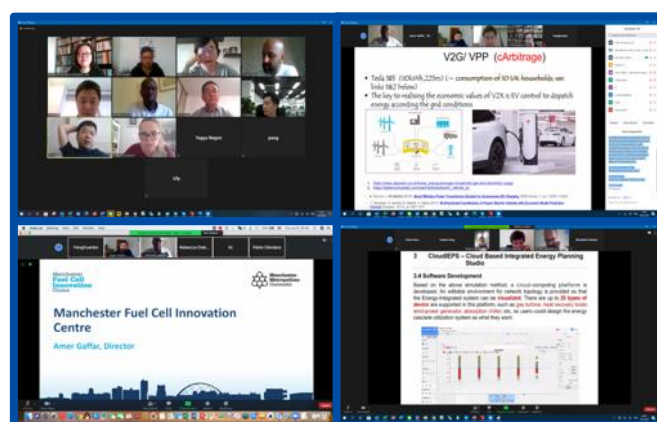


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Cooperation on Hydrogen Technology via IUC Asia

Several meetings on renewable energy cooperation were organised with representatives from Manchester, Rome, Stuttgart and Chengdu-based Sichuan Energy Internet Research Institute (EIRI) of Tsinghua University, including experts from the Manchester Fuel Cell Innovation Centre (MFCIC) of Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), Sapienza University and the Stuttgart Region.

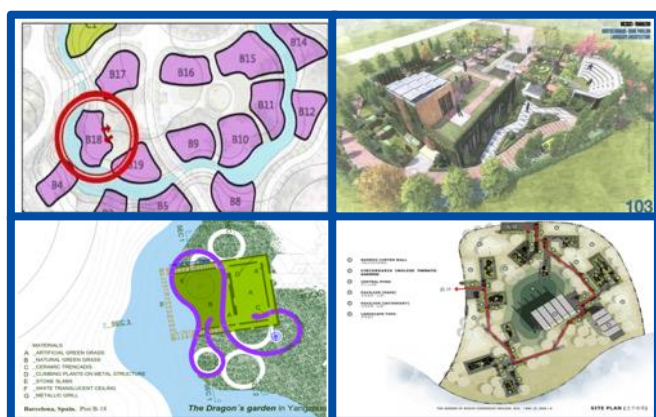
Main cooperation topics are: SME and start-ups exchanges between MMU and EIRI, the EXCEL Acceleration Program of EIRI; technology exchanges and joint POC/pilot projects with local industry partners; joint R&D, expert exchanges under the framework of Smart Hydrogen System Lab in Chengdu.



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EU Cities at Yangzhou Horticultural Expo 2021

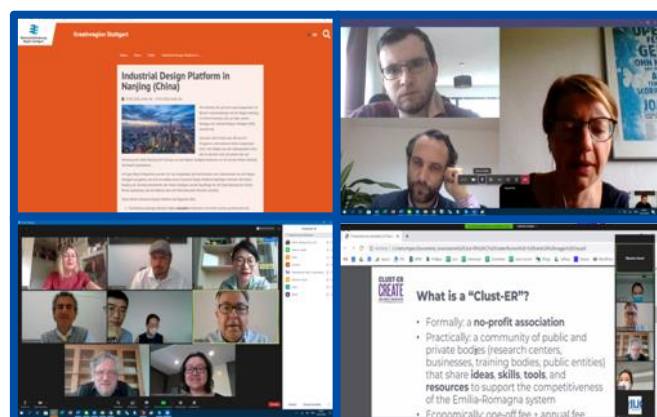
The IUC pilot cities of **Rome**, **Barcelona** and **Bologna** have designed own garden pavilions for the **Yangzhou Horticulture Expo 2021**. Along with **Stuttgart Region**, these cities may organise several activities in Yangzhou between April and October 2021. Thematically, EU cities are focusing on energy efficiency, urban agriculture and green infrastructure.



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Cooperation on Industrial Design

Stuttgart Region, **Bologna**, **Nanjing** and **Guangzhou** have initiated cooperation on industrial design as a basis to achieve circular economy solutions. A platform has been launched, showcasing educational service providers as well as training and incubation activities for start-ups.

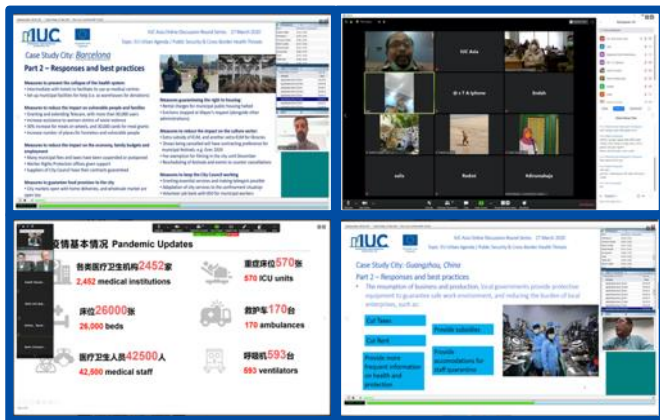


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2020 Selected Online Meetings

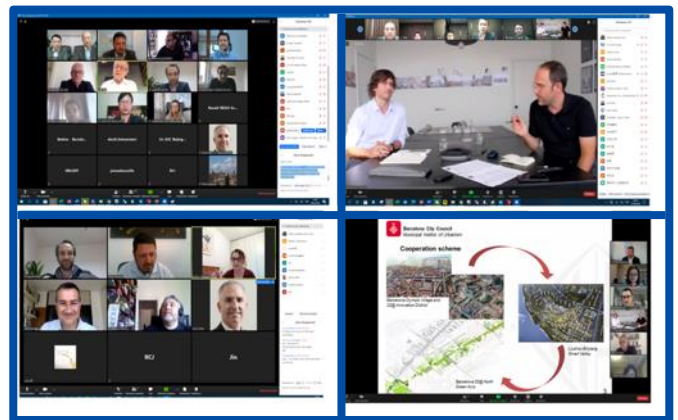
More than 50 online sessions have been held this year. Below is a glimpse:

EU – Asian Cities on Corona Crisis



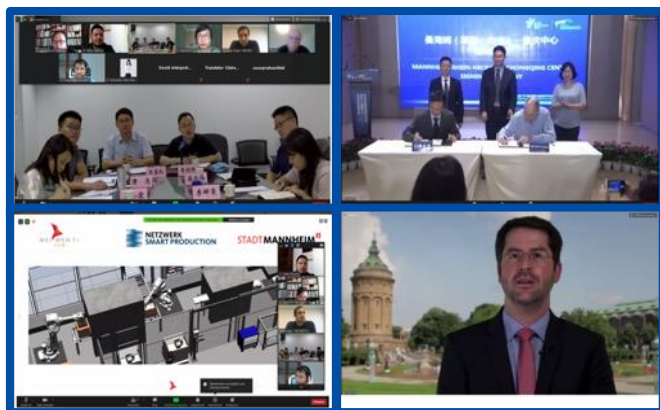
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Barcelona – Liuzhou Smart City Cooperation



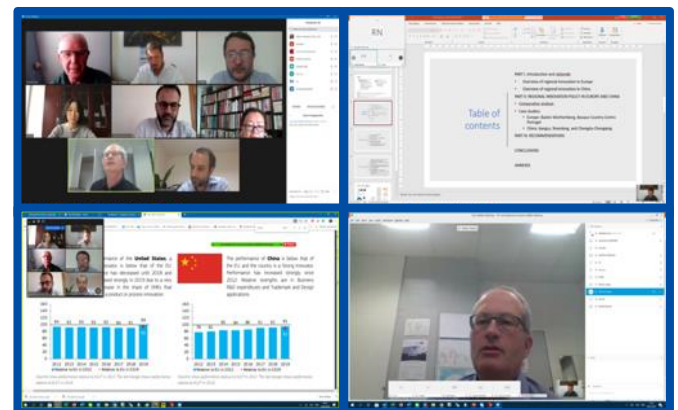
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Mannheim – Chongqing Innovation Centre



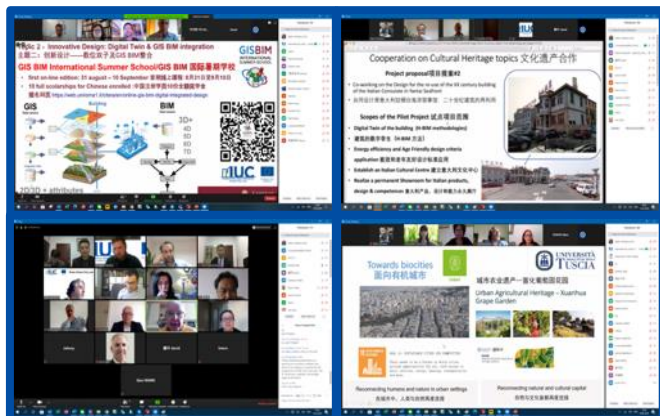
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EU – China Regional Innovation Study



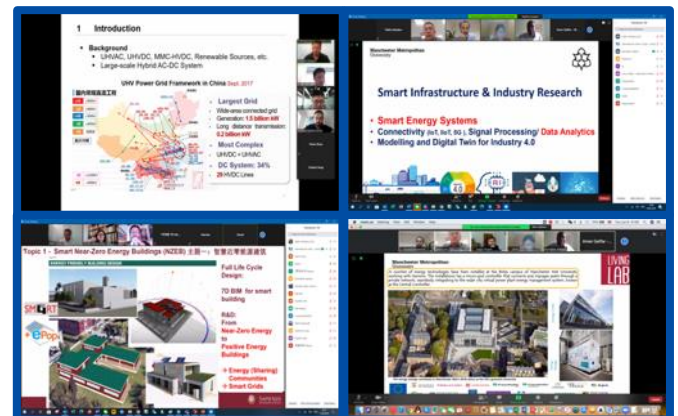
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Cultural Heritage, Smart City & Agriculture



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Rome / Manchester / Chengdu Renewable Energy



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IUC Asia in the Chinese media – selected articles

Mannheim – Chongqing Cooperation



Liuzhou – EU Cities COVID-19 Dialogue



Rome – Yantai Cooperation



Yangzhou – EU Cities Cooperation



New videos developed Granada, Mannheim, Rome, Chongqing, Liuzhou and the IUC Asia programme

Elaboration of new project videos on several pilot projects / activities. See links to these and further videos on our website.

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