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KEY HIGHLIGHTS MAY 2023 - MAY 2024 AZERBAIJAN





"Icherisheher is a very dear place to all in Azerbaijan and has great potential in various areas of development. By making the Old City Smart, we want to enhance the experiences of our guests and comfortability of our resident,"

Shahin Seyidzade, Chairman of the Icherisheher Board, Azerbaijan

"At Khirdalan Municipality we strive to be active in all possible ways for the benefit of our residents. M4EG is one of the key initiatives that has helped us to shape the way our team communicates with our partners and works towards more engaging and active community,"

Orkhan Musayev, Chairman of Khirdalan Municipality, Azerbaijan

"For us it is crucial to involve our residents in this initiative. They will be able to grow their small and medium business and help our village to develop as a sustainable tourism destination. Our online sessions have helped us to draw the right picture and develop our initiative even further,"

Farkhad Ashurbeyli, Project Manager Urva Municipality

"In our initiative, we try to give 'Second Breath' to women released from incarceration by helping them to reintegrate back into society and gain necessary skills and knowledge to support themselves in the future"

Manaf Talibov, Project Manager, Sabail Municipality

"Through the implementation of urban imaginaries, we are shaping a brighter future for Mingachevir, one that prioritizes sustainable urban development, community engagement, and economic growth"

Ramiz Aliyev, Head, Mingachevir Municipality

"During our journey with col-leagues through Urban Imaginaries, we have learned a lot of valuable lessons. Direct involvement of our community in close dialogue will help us build a better, brighter and collaborative future"

Elman Verdiyev, Head, Naftalan Municipality

Abbreviations

CO	Country Office
EaP	Eastern Partnership countries
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
LA	Local Authorities
LEDP	Local Economic Development Plans
M4EG	Mayors for Economic Growth (Facility)
P4EG	Pathways for Economic Growth
ULC	Urban Learning Center
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IRH	Istanbul Regional Hub

Key figures

number of new members	n/a
number of M4EG members	55 City Municipalities: 11 District Municipalities: 20 Village Municipalities: 24
number of deep demonstrators:	
Portfolio Journey cities	2 (Icherisheher Administration and Khirdalan City Municipality)
Urban Imaginaries	4 (Mingachevir Municipality, Naftalan Municipality, Sabail Municipality, Urva Municipality)
people reached via communications channels	At least 30,000
number of events	7 (Deep Demonstrators Meeting with UNDP SM, Urva study tour of Balkans, Icherisheher study tour to Smart City Expo World Congress, ULC Launch in-person training sessions)
number of municipal staff registered at the ULC	6

Introduction

The "Mayors for Economic Growth" (M4EG) Initiative in Azerbaijan, launched in partnership with the European Union (EU), represents a significant step towards fostering sustainable economic development at the municipal level. This initiative aims to empower local governments, enhance their capacities, and promote inclusive economic growth through collaborative efforts and innovative strategies.

Since its inception, M4EG has provided a platform for Azerbaijani municipalities to engage in strategic planning and implementation of economic development activities tailored to their unique contexts. The initiative emphasizes the importance of local governance in driving economic progress and encourages municipalities to take a proactive role in shaping their economic futures.

Throughout the past year, the M4EG Initiative has achieved notable milestones in various municipalities across Azerbaijan. This annual report highlights the progress, challenges, and successes encountered during this period. It showcases how local leaders have harnessed the support and resources provided by the M4EG framework to stimulate economic activity, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for their residents.

These efforts are designed to create resilient local economies capable of withstanding external shocks and adapting to changing economic conditions. The initiative also prioritizes inclusivity, ensuring that economic growth benefits all segments of the population.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, this report serves not only as a record of progress but also as a source of inspiration and guidance for future endeavors. The experiences and lessons learned through the M4EG Initiative in Azerbaijan provide valuable insights for other municipalities and regions seeking to embark on similar paths of economic transformation.

With continued commitment and collaboration, the "Mayors for Economic Growth" Initiative aims to build on its successes and drive further economic development across Azerbaijan. This report underscores the vital role of local leadership and the collective efforts of all stakeholders in achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Connecting the Network

REGIONAL SENSEMAKING FOR THE PORTFOLIO JOURNEY



Icherisheher Administration at the Regional Sensemaking Workshop organized by M4EG in April 2023 in Brussels, Belgium.

“Participating at the regional workshop was an interesting experience for us. It gave us a platform to represent Azerbaijani municipalities at international stage. At that time, we just finished designing our portfolio, so it was interesting to see how others implemented their interventions and what were their learning. This helped us to be wary of challenges that were ahead of us and gave us inspiration to push forward on our own ideas,”

Orkhan Musayev, Chairman of Khirdalan City Municipality, Azerbaijan

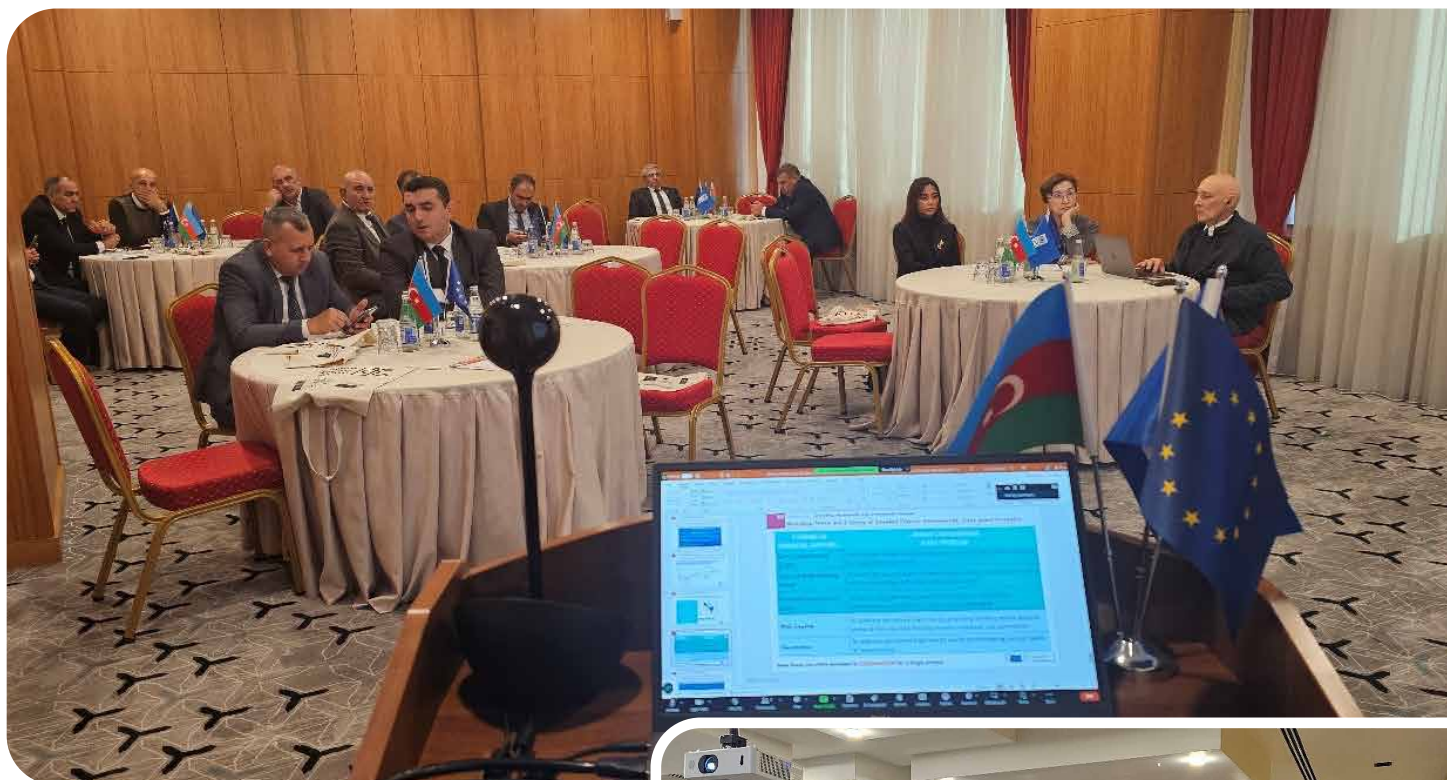


Chairman of the Khirdalan City Municipality at the Regional Sensemaking Workshop organized by M4EG in April 2023 in Brussels, Belgium.



Two above images depict Icherisheher Administration, Khirdalan City Municipality, EU, UNDP and development partners at the Regional Sensemaking Workshop organized by M4EG in April 2023 in Brussels, Belgium

URBAN LEARNING CENTER LAUNCH IN AZERBAIJAN



The Urban Learning Center (ULC) was officially launched in Azerbaijan in November 2023, featuring in-person workshops in Lankaran, Mingachevir, Sheki, and Baku. Participation in these sessions extended to representatives from all 55 municipalities of the M4EG Network in Azerbaijan, along with representatives from the Municipality Center of the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan. Detailed information on this stream was disseminated to participants, accompanied by the finalization of a work plan for 2024. The launch was joined by the representatives of the EUD team who participated together with the teams from various regions of Azerbaijan. The EU Delegation to Azerbaijan has extended additional support to the LEDP component of the initiative by enlisting an expert to assist municipalities in developing their new generation of LEDPs, now P4EGs.



The UIC launch in Azerbaijan

The ULC intends to introduce approaches beyond 'business as usual' with a range of tools and approaches with an 'urban makeover' intention, including such things as foresight, social and community listening, sensemaking, adaptive and agile management, learning and monitoring effects, all with a strong focus on local solutions linked to the global objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its framework of SDGs.

FUTURE FIT CITIES URBAN FORUM 2023

Chairmen and team members from Icherisheher, Khirdalan, Mingachevir, Naftalan, Sabail and Urva had an opportunity to learn and share their experiences with fellow municipalities as well as distinguished speakers at the forum.



“Deep Demonstrators” from Azerbaijan participated at the Future Fit Cities Urban Forum 2023 organized by UNDP and EU in Batumi, Georgia.



LAUNCH OF PATHWAYS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



Pathways for Economic Growth P4EG



ARUP



Climate-KIC

TAL
TECH

In line with ULC activities, in March 2024, M4EG launched a comprehensive methodology to support the local authorities in designing their economic development plans called “Pathways for Economic Growth”.

Founded on the principle of holistic development, the P4EG framework helps cities best assess social, environmental and economic factors in local development, as well as the potential for scaling up their projects in cooperation with central governments, donors and European and International Financial Institutions.

The methodology was developed in partnership with Arup, EIT Climate-KIC, Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech).

“FUTURE READY LOCAL GOVERNANCE” REGIONAL WORKSHOP

The objective of this workshop was to provide an opportunity for local executives, experts and practitioners of local governance and integrated local development to take stock of their work, discuss current policy and programmatic trends, share best practices and innovations, provoke new thinking and insights, and generate new ideas that will accelerate the achievement of sustainable development on the ground.

Chairman of the Khirdalan Municipality, Mr. Orkhan Musayev participated at the “Future Ready Local Governance” Regional Workshop, where he shared his experience with portfolio approach at local level and what changes it has brought to the daily operations of the municipality under his leadership.



Chairman of the Khirdalan Municipality, Mr. Orkhan Musayev participated at the “Future Ready Local Governance” Regional Workshop



Future Ready Municipalities

Portfolio Journey

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Khirdalan | Entrepreneurship and Talent |
| 2 Icherisheher | Smart Old City |

Urban Imaginaries

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1 Mingachevir | Transition to LED Lighting |
| 2 Naftalan | Building a Ceremonial House |
| 3 Sabail | Rehabilitation Center for Women Released from Prison |
| 4 Urva | Tourism Information Center & Local Brand |

URVA MUNICIPALITY STUDY TOUR TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

As part of a learning journey for the municipality a study tour was organized to secondary cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro to learn about the experiences of local authorities in stimulating tourism, creating local identity and branding and cooperation with local communities.



Urva municipality
Study Tour to Bosnia
and Herzegovina,
Serbia and Montenegro

“Being a small village municipality, it is not often you get the chance to learn from international experience. Thanks to UNDP & EU, we have had an opportunity to explore what other countries did in the area that we want to develop, and this study tour has given us a lot of useful information to be used in area of geographical identification, expansion of tourism potential and family branding.”

Farhad Ashurbeyli, Project Manager at Urva Municipality, Azerbaijan



Urva municipality Study Tour to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro

KHIRDALAN JOB FAIR – “1001 İŞ”

As one of the options in the urban transformation portfolio of the Khirdalan Municipality, the first ever municipal job fair was organized in Khirdalan. Khirdalan Municipality gained the support of the State Employment Agency and State Vocational Education Agency in preparation and hosting the “1001 İş” (1001 Jobs) Job fair in Khirdalan. It should also be noted that Khirdalan Municipality on this option was not only supported by the M4EG Team, but also VET4Future Project funded by the EUD and implemented by the UNDP Azerbaijan Office. This is an example of how the M4EG acts as a platform that connects initiatives and resources for increased opportunities for its members.

The Fair brought together around 30 private sector companies operating in hospitality and tourism, education, publishing, food, alternative energy, and the construction sector. The companies informed the visitors about their ongoing employment and internship opportunities and provided some creative sessions to select potential employees. The “1001 Jobs” Fair attracted over 1000 visitors with their dynamic stands, interactive games, and competitions. The target group was 14-29 aged local youth who were about to choose a new career, looking for a job, or new learning paths to improve their knowledge and skills.

At the fair, career specialists provided free consultation sessions to the youth and helped them with CV writing, interview tips and networking. Being one of the frontrunner cities under the M4EG network, the Khirdalan Municipality will continue its efforts to support youth while involving the private sector and other agents to further sustainable development of the area.



Khirdalan Job Fair – “1001 İş”



ICHERISHEHER STUDY TOUR TO SMART CITY EXPO WORLD CONGRESS 2023

Within the framework of the urban transformation portfolio of Icherisheher, a study tour was organized for the team members of the Administration to the Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona, Spain.

The trip gave the opportunity to the Administration team to learn about new innovative and smart solutions being implemented in the world, establish various contacts with potential suppliers and expand their network. With more than 140 countries represented by 1106 exhibitors – the expo was an immersive experience with possibilities not just to learn, but also test many solutions presented.



"We want to thank you for allowing us to attend this event and enrich our knowledge and skills in urban innovation. We believe the Smart City Expo World Congress is a valuable platform to foster collaboration, learning, and action among all the stakeholders involved in the urban ecosystem."

Leyla Hajiyeva, Innovation Advisor to the Chairman of the Management Board

Icherisheher Study Tour to Smart City Expo World Congress 2023



URVA TOURISM INFORMATION CENTER

Urva Municipal Team has finalized its learning journey and is getting ready to open the doors of its very own Tourism Information Center. Final discussions were held with local and national partners of the municipality to complete the preparations ahead of the summer season.

Availability of support from local businesses and State Tourism Agency has helped the municipality in its work towards making Urva a know destination on Northern Tourism route of Azerbaijan.



Urva Tourism Information Center

KHIRDALAN PORTFOLIO IDEATION WORKSHOP

Following successful activation of some of the options within the Urban Transformation Portfolio of Khirdalan City Municipality, an ideation workshop was held in May 2024 to review the results of completed work and identify future steps within the portfolio.



Khirdalan Portfolio Ideation Workshop

Naftalan, Mingachevir and Sabail are in the process of procurement for their initiatives, and we will be looking forward to seeing their ideas become reality.

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