



ON BOARD

The Aha! Moment – How Poznan turned its potential into an Education Innovation Network

“Creativity is about making connections and usually depends more on collaboration than individual efforts” Ken Robinson, Out of our Minds: Learning to be Creative.



“How is it possible that we have not tried out more durable and permanent cooperation prior to commencement of the ON BOARD project?” remarked one teacher involved in the ON BOARD project, locally coordinated by the city of Poznań. *“Why didn’t we do this earlier?”*

The main reason seemed to be related to structure and size, even before our first ON BOARD experiences. After all, Poznań is a much bigger city than Viladecans, leader of URBACT III “ON BOARD Connecting cities through education” project. Designing an educational network in a smaller city has completely different conditions than in a larger one. So even if we chose only one district for our area of ON BOARD activity, this did not change the fact that we were in a “machine” inhabited by 500,000 people, which could at any time bring about complications.

How could we do the work? What were we afraid of at the beginning? Poznań's network has so much potential, we knew, but what was standing in the way?

The key is to know: Why are we doing this?

Have you heard about the **Golden Circle**? A rule, known already in nature, was used by Simon Sinek in his book "Start with why." It's a simple mathematical relationship, a formula of perfect proportion – you gain greater order, understanding and beauty. It is a signpost for valuable action to always start by asking the question "**WHY are we doing something?**"

The Golden Circle

WHAT

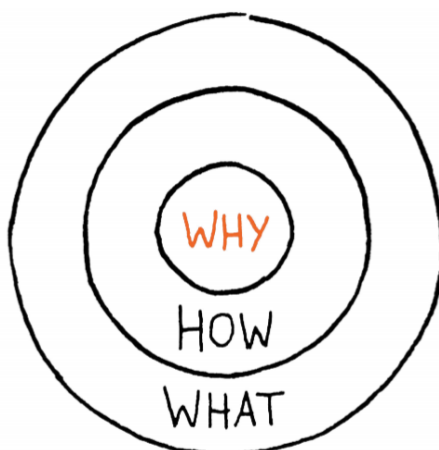
Every organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. These are products they sell or the services they offer.

HOW

Some organizations know HOW they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

WHY

Very few organizations know WHY they do what they do. WHY is not about making money. That's a result. WHY is a purpose, cause or belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.



With this Golden Circle guide as our heuristic, in 2019 City of Poznań joined the URBACT III project "**ON BOARD Connecting cities through education**" to search together with 5 cities from Europe. *Why?* To learn the recipe how to make education more powerful and innovative in our city. *Why?* To learn how we could build on the diversity of our city collaborations to make a successful, strong and sustainable Education Innovation Network (EIN) in Poznań.



Even though the lead partner, Viladecans, could show it was able to design a network of interdisciplinary stakeholders in its own EIN, it was going to be up to us to attempt the same, to be able to bring together our own community stakeholders to build our own EIN, adapted to our own capacities and needs.

So, keeping in mind the Golden Circle, we first decided to find out what was in Poznań's "insides". Based on Viladecan's experience we developed our **own network model**, which is called "**SEJ Model**" (Sieć Edukacyjna Jeżyce – Educational Network of Jeżyce). This comprehensive study was helpful for us to define the needs of main stakeholders, to characterize them and their potential.

This led to a key insight. We observed that in a smaller town like Viladecans there were automatically fewer potential stakeholders, but paradoxically it increased their chances of **building strong bonds** and solid cooperation. The assumption being that the ties between stakeholders in a smaller community is stronger.

We observed in Poznań, a big city, that we have many entities and each can participate in many different individual projects. Though each may get involved in a single project for a moment, each can then find another "more interesting topic" and drift away. We learned that for a large city like Poznań, therefore, the network approach is essential. A network can change **dynamically, develop itself expressively** with the arrival of new stakeholders and the departure of existing ones, regardless of individual projects. A network is capable of absorbing and adapting and growing based on change, even if an individual project or entity comes and goes. We came to learn that the Viladecans' network approach can work, in large or small environments.

True enough: already in our first visit in **Viladecans** could we see the impressive commitment of local authorities and the implementation of their far-reaching plans, working together. It seemed that everything was based on the belief in the rightfulness of the planned activities. Together with 4 other cities in ON BOARD: **Albergria, Tallin, Nantes and Halmstad**, we could see first-hand the results and successes of Viladecans' experiences.

We thought: **We can do it!** We can try this “learning by doing” network approach in the City of Poznań too.

“Because we believe in modern education. We can see that a change is an opportunity for new quality. We are convinced that we will achieve more together than individually” – mission of SEJ (EIN in Poznań).



Who's involved?

Learning from one another is a gift. Collaborative learning by doing is key. To test the ideas from Viladecans and exchange Good Practices, we chose **only the part of the City of Poznań** which has over 24.000 inhabitants, the District of Jezyce, about which we had previously diagnosed regards its needs and potential for ON BOARD.

3 primary schools (Primary School No. 23, Primary School No. 36 and Primary School No. 71) here joined us with curiosity and willingness to build the educational network. Great support came from **District's Council** of Jezyce and also from the Parents' **Councils**.

The **Future Lab - Innovative Education Laboratory** at Poznań Supercomputer and Network Center has provided us with space for creative meetings. Very quickly, these hosts became partners, helping us train and learn the secrets of technological solutions useful to students.



Poznańskie Centrum Superkomputerowo-Sieciowe
afiliowane przy Instytucie Chemii Bioorganicznej PAN



A very important partner from the world of science joined us too - the **Faculty of Engineering of Management Poznań University of Technology**. As it turned out later, its participation was priceless, because it contributed to the idea of SEJ - but what this is, you will learn later.



We also have non-governmental organizations involved. One is **Jeżyki Youth Council** consisting of school students from Jeżyce who want to change their surroundings, decide for themselves and make decisions about improvements. We have more people from the **private sector** who want to join the network, but we don't want to reveal the details yet.

The network is coordinated by our **City Development and Foreign Relations Department** with big support from our friends from the **Educational Department** of the City Hall Poznań.

POZnań*

Everyone knows their task and role in the network and understands how the network works, how to implement it and how to work towards its sustainability. Importantly, we know exactly WHY we are ON BOARD.

Through inspiration, Poznan is developing its network

One of our first lessons from ON BOARD came from our visit to Viladecans. **Give voice to children!** Trust them, let them be independent and highly motivated. The individualised approach gives everyone a chance to develop. We are just beginning down this path. We had the feeling we had yet to develop a **way to help children whose language of learning is different from ours.**

Inspiration 1: Discover and learn of innovative methods to implement it at schools!



In Halmstad we saw the strong position of the **teacher-innovator**, responsible for innovations in the schools and a key person for inspiration. With teachers' role a priority in the Swedish system, they act as ambassadors of change and the modernization of the curriculum. For us, such **change leaders** don't always get the support needed.

Inspiration 2: Constitute leaders of innovation in every school in Jezyce!



Co-creation was very apparent in Halmstad and Viladecans, too. The opportunity to participate, juxtaposing different contexts, including confronting your own actions with the ideas of others, helps **opens the school to change**.

Inspiration 3: Energize network members and co-create activities among SEJ!

In Albergaria we visited the Incubator at the former primary school. As an example of how you can **adapt non-obvious space** to meet new needs, it preserved the spirit of the location while transforming it into a creative space. The building has retained many original elements, e.g. old door handles and classroom boards, but modern infrastructure has also been introduced. Such a mix gives an amazing impression and stimulates creation. It was **respect for tradition** while creating the future. We can work this way, too!

Inspiration 4: Teach students more empathy, cooperation and holistic view!



From Tallin we take the vision of human-tech approach and power of support to education from business and government authorities. An interesting experience was, among others, the

visit to Mektory Smart Campus, in the Estonian "knowledge transfer organization" , with its local and international business partners, including Tallinn University of Technology.

Inspiration 5: Involve the private sector and promotion of the EIN by city authorities!



With our feet on the ground, our aspirations aim high

We identified the core elements for creating change in the SEJ. These include:

- ✓ equip schools with new technologies and tools
- ✓ implement methods of modern education in 3 primary schools
- ✓ increase quality of education in schools and their image in district
- ✓ make the cooperation and communication among stakeholders more sufficient
- ✓ involve more stakeholders in network and building strong relations with the district's citizens
- ✓ create a common platform for knowledge and experience exchange.

To achieve these goals, we have been calling upon our URBACT Local Group (ULG), an interdisciplinary group with diverse skills, powers and capacities. It was a fluid process from the start to **identify and build each one's role** in the SEJ:

- 👤 principals and teachers: discover and implement the new methods
- 👤 District Council: support, promotion and unit environment of all 3 schools
- 👤 parents from Councils Parents: participation in schools live and their development on the way to innovative education
- 👤 R&D institute "Future Lab - Innovative Education Laboratory": train and show innovation approach
- 👤 University of Technology, Faculty of Engineering of Management Poznan: research of network movement and create of communications strategy
- 👤 NGO's from district: additional value and contribute another perspective
- 👤 City Hall Poznań: coordinator.



SEJ is began to act. With set goals and a motivated team, we started working and building the first ideas. Since beginning we meet official as hole group ULG members 14 times! In the meantime we have been working in small groups too and making the SEJ even stronger. Here our story of growing...

Let's do it!

Equipped with inspiration and diverse capacities, and looking forward to the next international meetings - aware of our strengths and weaknesses, we have been flourishing! Here are the stages of our ON BOARD growth, so far:

Stage 1: How will we communicate?

Two development workshops: **“Functioning scenarios for SEJ”** and **“Prototyping of communication instruments within the framework of educational network in Jezyce”**



Stage 2: We are training thanks to the literature!

ULG members got **ON BOARD Bookcase** with inspired books of Ken Robinson, Simon Sinek a.o. Just to try in theory how creativity, motivation, effective teaching, evolutionary didactic taste. As you can see from this Transfer Story, we also took advantage of Bookcase.



Stage 3: Immersion in the world of modern ways of learning.

2 workshops for teachers: **Design Thinking** Workshop for schools on “**Innovation in education and the challenge - how could we apply new methods and more innovations in our work?**” and Educational Workshop “**Terrain games and escape room**” as part of training “**Step in to the future**”.



Stage 4: The provider is needful

Today, the 3 schools are covered by **patronage of the Poznań University of Technology**, which helps in **developing a communication strategy** for projects implemented by schools and **support in promotional strategy**.

In the meantime: we are implementing **micro projects**, meeting up to 16 times in a group of **ULG** to not fall out of rhythm. We have 3 schools “**Locomotives** (of change) - teacher” as innovative leaders! 2 projects “**Legend of Jeżyce**” and “**Jeżyce in lence**”, provided by pupils from 3 schools are proof the Educational Innovation Network works.



Win a few, lose a few

The birth and consolidation of a network goes through common stages: forming, storming, norming and performing. This model of group development was first proposed in 1965 by [Bruce Tuckman](#), an American Psychological Researcher and is known who carried out his known as "Tuckman's stages of group development". Every step has vital influence on building the strong network, but each step also brings **difficulties** and shows **imperfections**, too. The main ones have been:

- ⊗ formal barriers and complex procedures by implementing solutions and ideas
- ⊗ strong personalities in the core of SEJ
- ⊗ insufficient engagement of students and parents
- ⊗ incomplete and different technological equipment of schools
- ⊗ lack of time resources of teachers (busy on their current issues)
- ⊗ poor promotion of schools and their activities in the area
- ⊗ unclear communication.

That said, there are a number of ON BOARD take-aways that will endure – all **positive and transformative**. The opportunity for building our own experience and transferring solutions seen in ON BOARD society and gaining different perspectives on the approach of foreign partners to modern education is every day more valuable, important and necessary for us. Our **presence in the international network** gives us the legitimacy to speak up in discussions at its highest levels. Our openness to change and others’ awareness of own potential has given us a growing-up effect amongst peers, a more mature and expert voice in policy.



ON BOARD Transnational Meetings showed us how to involve students in work using **smart technologies** and to work with emotions and transversal competences: teamwork, communication, critical thinking. This is something we definitely need in Poland to bring fresh ideas to their classrooms. We have just started with the new methods of teaching. Modern technologies make the process of **lifelong learning** much more diverse, and thanks to greater accessibility to them also much easier. Each international meeting is an opportunity to feel how other European cities operate in this area.

For the fifth TM, as the host city, we are waiting (impatiently). Unfortunately, at the beginning of 2020, all of Europe and the world were affected by the COVID-19 virus. The world came to stop and we were forced to postpone the event, which was almost completely prepared, for setting the next stage of knowledge transfer...We really believe we will meet soon in better times! In the meantime we stay in touch with partners cities and testing new tools to communicate online. Maybe the next Transnational Meeting will be organize on that way? Who knows, what the future brings...

The only sure thing is change

The pandemic made this fact clear again – the only sure thing is change. What reality will look like in the days and weeks ahead is impossible to predict. As parents, teachers, scientists or leaders, we wonder how to prepare young generations for the **challenges of the 21st century**. What to teach and how to motivate them? What will give them the strength to independently and effectively change the world for the better? How to **equip pupils with the skills** necessary to be an active and engaged citizen? Through ON BOARD, it is our experience that more “aha moments” will come for more and more institutions and people: **transformation of education** is unstoppable.

URBACT ON BOARD and its 6 cities are finding the right way!