**Zielona Góra Thematic Meeting**

**October 21-23, 2026**

# NETWORK SOLUTIONS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Programme

## MEETING CONCEPT

The meeting is intended to provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and practices related to supporting vulnerable communities through cooperation between universities, local governments, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders.

The discussion will focus on network solutions, understood as forms of collaboration that facilitate communication, knowledge exchange, coordination, and joint action among different actors. Particular attention will be given to cooperation between cities and universities, while recognising the contribution of NGOs, municipal companies, and local communities.

For the purpose of the meeting, vulnerable communities are understood as groups that may be disproportionately affected by demographic, economic, social, or environmental changes in urban areas. These include, among others, older adults, young people, families facing difficult life circumstances, and other groups at risk of social exclusion.

Drawing on the experience of Zielona Góra, the meeting will examine how cooperation between cities, universities, and their partners can contribute to:

- ✓ strengthening local capacities to address the needs of vulnerable communities;
- ✓ designing and implementing network-based approaches to selected urban challenges;

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- ✓ integrating research, policy, and practice in the development of local solutions;
- ✓ developing cross-sector cooperation between local governments, universities, NGOs, municipal companies, and community organisations.

Participants are encouraged to actively contribute to the discussion and share their knowledge and experience related to the topics addressed during the meeting. A particular opportunity for exchange will be provided by the **marketplace in the form of a poster session**, scheduled for Friday, 23 October 2026. The session will offer a space for presenting ideas and planned projects, as well as for sharing outcomes and experiences from completed initiatives. Participants may also use the poster session to disseminate concepts, explore potential cooperation opportunities, and identify possible partners for future activities. Participation in the poster session can be indicated during the registration process for the Zielona Góra meeting, which will open in early September 2026.

The meeting is intended to facilitate discussion on existing practices, identify areas for further cooperation, and support the exchange of experiences that may be relevant to other cities and institutions.

**PARTICULAR TARGET GROUP**

- Academics and researchers working on vulnerable communities and social inclusion, particularly those engaged in practical solutions and collaboration with practitioners in the field.
- Policymakers and political representatives working on vulnerable communities and social inclusion, particularly those involved in developing policies and practical solutions in collaboration with local stakeholders.
- Students and early-career researchers interested in vulnerable communities and social inclusion, particularly those engaged in research, innovation and practical projects addressing social challenges.
- Municipalities and public service providers working with vulnerable communities, particularly those involved in developing and implementing practical solutions to improve access to essential services.
- NGOs and community organisations working with vulnerable communities and social inclusion, particularly those engaged in grassroots solutions and collaboration with public authorities, researchers and other practitioners.

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**Wednesday, 21 October 2026**

| Time | Venue | Activity | Speakers |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14:30-15:00 | Rektorat Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego [Rector's Office of the University of Zielona Góra], ul. Licealna 9, Zielona Góra<br><br>The event is planned to be streamed online | **Registration and welcome coffee** | |
| 15:00-15:15 | | **Welcome from the City and University** | Prof. Wojciech Strzyżewski, Ph.D., D.Sc., Rector of the University of Zielona Góra<br>Marcin Pabierowski, Mayor of the City of Zielona Góra |
| 15:15-15:45 | | **Cooperation between the University of Zielona Góra and the City of Zielona Góra**<br>*Presentation* | Prof. Justyna Patalas-Maliszewska, Ph.D., D.Sc. Eng., Vice-Rector for Research and International Cooperation, University of Zielona Góra<br>Marek Kamiński, Deputy Mayor of the City of Zielona Góra |
| 15:45-16:15 | | **Is Zielona Góra an Academic City? Young People's Perspectives on the University and the Region**<br>*Presentation*<br>→ Young residents of the region and their perceptions of the University of Zielona Góra as a place to study, develop and plan their future.<br>→ Zielona Góra as an academic city: its strengths, limitations and young people's expectations.<br>→ Factors influencing the choice of university and decisions to stay in the region or leave for studies elsewhere.<br>→ Students as users of the city: education, work, leisure and the quality of academic life. | Assoc. Prof., Dorota Szaban, Ph.D., D.Sc., Institute of Sociology, University of Zielona Góra |
| 16:15-:16:30 | | **Photo** | |
| 16:30-17:00 | | **Coffee break** | |
| 17:00-17:30 | | **Collaborative Networks for Safety Education in Local Communities: The Case of the "Zielona Góra Resilience and Safety Academy"** | Assoc. Prof. Anna Pławiak-Mowna, Ph.D. Eng., Institute of Control and Computer Engineering, University of Zielona Góra |

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| | | *Presentation and discussion*<br>→ Building effective partnerships for safety education in local communities<br>→ The "Zielona Góra Resilience and Safety Academy" as an example of cross-sectoral cooperation: experiences and good practices | Dr. Jarosław Flakowski, Marshal Office of the Lubuskie Voivodeship, Zielona Góra Safety Academy<br>Michał Loroch, Military Recruitment Center in Zielona Góra, Zielona Góra Safety Academy<br>Grzegorz Boruszewski, Penetration Tester, Zielona Góra Safety Academy |
| 17:30-18:45 | | **How does diversity become a competitive advantage?**<br>*Panel discussion*<br>→ Realizing diversity as a competitive advantage<br>→ Building shared direction from diverse perspectives<br>→ Balancing productive tensions and collaboration<br>→ Turning diversity into better decisions and impact<br>→ **T**he responsibility of the university and the city for supporting vulnerable groups | **Moderation**:<br>Dr. Justyna Nyćkowiak, Institute of Sociology, University of Zielona Góra<br>**Participants**:<br>Dr. Jarosław Flakowski, Marshal Office of the Lubuskie Voivodeship, Zielona Góra Safety Academy<br>Dr. Agnieszka Opalińska, Director of the Office of the Association of Municipalities of the Lubuskie Voivodeship<br>Piotr Frołowicz, Grupa Alivio Spn.S. [Alivio Group Social Cooperative]<br>Katarzyna Marciniak, President of Zastal Zielona Góra Basketball Club |
| 18:45-19:15 | | **Welcoming new EUniverCities members**<br>**Organizational matters** | Sophie Schrötter, EUniverCities Network Secretariat<br>Organising Team |
| 19:30 | Restauracja „Między nami” [Restaurant „Między nami”], al. Niepodległości 11, Zielona Góra | **Dinner** | |

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**Thursday, 22 October 2026**

| Time | Venue | Activity | Speakers |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00-10:00 | UrbanLab,<br>ul. Matejki 2b, Zielona Góra | **Urban Lab –** From Readiness to Co-Creation: Urban Lab as a Low-Threshold Network for Young People and Local Communities<br>*Presentation*<br>→ Building readiness before participation.<br>→ Moving from wellbeing to micro-engagement and co-creation.<br>→ Connecting residents, city, university, institutions, NGOs and business. | Agata Bazydło, Urban Lab<br>Błażej Huzarski, Urban Lab |
| 10:00-11:30 | | **"From "Not For Me" to "My impact": A Psychological Journey Toward Participation"**<br>*Workshop*<br>→ Participation as a gradual psychological process<br>→ Barriers faced by vulnerable communities<br>→ Low-threshold paths from distance to agency<br>→ Network support for accessible participation | Agata Bazydło, Urban Lab<br>Błażej Huzarski, Urban Lab |
| 11:30-12:00 | | **Coffee break** | |
| 12:00-13:30 | | **Inclusive Mobility: Needs and Solutions**<br>*Presentation, study walk, discussion*<br>→ Mobile approaches for needs assessment in social service<br>→ Accessibility and disability in urban spaces<br>→ A walk as a participatory diagnostic method | Dr. Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo, Institute of Sociology, University of Zielona Góra<br>Dr. Joanna Frątczak-Müller, Institute of Sociology, University of Zielona Góra<br>Dr. Piotr Zwarycz, Institute of Sociology, University of Zielona Góra |
| 13:30-14:20 | | **Lunch** | |
| 14:30-16:00 | | *Parallel study visits:* | |

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| | Grupa Alivio Spn.S., ul. Okulickiego 37, Zielona Góra<br><br>Dom Sąsiedzki [Neighbour's House], ul. Kościelna 9/10, Zielona Góra | **1. ALIVIO GROUP – PROJECT CREATED BY EXCLUDED FOR EXCLUDED. A Multithread, Holistic System Supporting People Socially Excluded or Being at Risk of Social Exclusion**<br><br>**2. From Shelter to Home: Supported Housing, Community Networks and Independent Living** | Piotr Frołowicz, Grupa Alivio Spn.S. [Alivio Group Social Cooperative]<br>Mateusz Czechowski, Spółdzielnia Socjalna Alternatywy [Social Cooperative Alternatywy]<br>Małgorzata Jaskulska, RONDO Christian Foundation for Personal Development<br>Marta Kościelecka, RONDO Christian Foundation for Personal Development<br>Anna Nalewajko, RONDO Christian Foundation for Personal Development |
| 17:30 | Urząd Miasta Zielona Góra [Zielona Góra City Hall], ul. Podgórna 22, Zielona Góra | Trip to Kinga Vineyard and dinner with wine tasting | |

**Friday, 23 October**

| Time | Venue | Activity | Speakers |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8:30-9:50 | Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Sala multimedialna [University Library of the University of Zielona Góra, **Multimedia Room**], Kampus B, al. Wojska Polskiego 71, Zielona Góra | **Coordinators' meeting** | Prof. Willem van Winden, Regenalyze |
| 10:00-10:45 | Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Sala konferencyjna [University Library | CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION<br>**Assessing sustainable development in cross-border cities: Zielona Góra and Cottbus**<br>*Presentation and discussion* | Assoc. Prof. Sławomir Kłos, Ph.D., D.Sc. Eng., Institute of Mechanical Engineering, University of Zielona Góra |

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| | of the University of Zielona Góra, **Conference Room**], Kampus B, al. Wojska Polskiego 71, Zielona Góra | → Analysis of the level of sustainable development of cities in terms of environmental, economic, and social aspects<br>→ Development of a mobile and stationary air quality monitoring system | Prof. Justyna Patalas-Maliszewska, Ph.D., D.Sc. Eng., Vice-Rector for Research and International Cooperation, University of Zielona Góra<br>Prof. Marcin Witczak, Ph.D., D.Sc. Eng., Institute of Control and Information Systems, University of Zielona Góra |
| 10:45-12:30 | Palmiarnia Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Budynek A16 [Palm House of the University of Zielona Góra, Building A16], Kampus B, al. Wojska Polskiego 69, Zielona Góra | **Coffee break & Poster Marketplace with student participation** | |
| 11:30-12:30 | Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Sala multimedialna [University Library of the University of Zielona Góra, **Multimedia Room**], Kampus B, al. Wojska Polskiego 71, Zielona Góra | **Erasmus+ Partnerships for Cooperation. Brainstorming ideas for an EUniverCities proposal** | Dr. Lindsey Anderson, University of Exeter |
| 12:30-13:30 | | **Closing Workshop and Farewell** | Dr. Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo, Institute of Sociology, University of Zielona Góra |
| 13:30 | Palmiarnia Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, Budynek A16 [Palm House of the University of Zielona Góra, Building A16], Kampus B, al. Wojska Polskiego 69, Zielona Góra | **Lunch** | |

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