

ToNite: increasing night-time safety through community-led urban renewal solutions

Region	Europe and Central Asia
Award Scheme	Shanghai Manual
Themes	Planning & Design Public Space Regeneration Safety
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Summary

The ToNite project, launched in 2019 under the European Union’s Urban Innovative Actions programme, aimed to improve night-time safety and livability along the Dora River in Turin’s Aurora and Vanchiglia neighbourhoods. Confronted with urban decline and reduced activity after dark, the city shifted from traditional policing to a community-led approach based on social empowerment, co-design, and digital innovation. Through participatory research, co-creation, and urban regeneration, ToNite engaged over 500 residents and funded 19 community projects, reaching more than 30,000 people through cultural, educational, and civic activities. Major spatial transformations included the redesign of Viale Ottavio Mario Mai, Giardino Pellegrino, and the Dora riverfront, combining lighting, green infrastructure, and cultural programming to create safer, inclusive spaces. A digital urban data platform was introduced to monitor environmental and social indicators in real time, feeding into the city’s Night Management Plan. The project improved perceptions of safety, revitalized neglected areas, and strengthened social cohesion while embedding participatory governance into urban policy.

Background and Objective

The ToNite project was launched in 2019 under the European Union’s Urban Innovative Actions programme to enhance night-time safety and livability along the Dora River in Turin’s Aurora and Vanchiglia neighbourhoods. These areas had experienced economic decline and social insecurity after dark, leading to reduced activity and reliance on traditional security measures. Recognizing the limitations of surveillance-based approaches, the city sought to develop a more integrated, community-driven model of urban safety built on social empowerment, participatory governance, and innovation in public space management. The project aimed to improve perceptions of safety, activate neglected public spaces, and strengthen social cohesion through community participation and urban design. Its goals included fostering inclusive and safe night-time environments, supporting local organizations to co-manage urban spaces, enhancing data-driven decision-making, and creating a model of participatory governance that could be

replicated in other cities.

Actions and Implementation

The project combined ethnographic research, participatory design, and spatial regeneration. A baseline study and co-design workshops engaged more than 500 residents to identify barriers to safety and opportunities for renewal. Nineteen community projects were co-funded, reaching over 30,000 people through cultural, educational, and social activities. Physical interventions along Viale Ottavio Mario Mai, Giardino Pellegrino, and the Dora riverfront transformed underused spaces into inclusive, multifunctional public areas with improved lighting, green infrastructure, and accessibility. A digital urban data platform was also created to collect and analyze real-time information on safety perceptions, mobility, and environmental quality to guide decision-making.

Outcomes and Impacts

The initiative enhanced public safety perceptions, reactivated key public spaces, and fostered civic pride and collaboration. It generated over 2,200 community events and built durable partnerships between municipal authorities and local associations. The project's integrated approach has become part of Turin's Night Management Plan and informed broader city policies on mobility, environment, and urban resilience. The combination of social innovation and spatial transformation has made night-time areas more accessible, welcoming, and inclusive.

Sustainability and Scalability

Sustainability is ensured through formal "pacts of collaboration" between the city and community organizations, providing long-term management frameworks for public spaces. The open-access urban data platform supports continuous monitoring and adaptation. The project's participatory and data-driven approach has been mainstreamed into other municipal programmes and shared internationally through the URBACT 2Nite network, making it a transferable model for other European cities.

Gender and Social Inclusivity

ToNite prioritizes inclusion by engaging women, youth, migrants, and older residents in co-design processes and community activities. Many projects focused on creating safe spaces for women at night, intercultural dialogue, and youth mentorship. The initiative promotes equality in public space access, participation, and decision-making, strengthening trust and diversity in urban life.

Innovative Initiative

The project is innovative in redefining urban safety as a social and spatial process rather than a security function. It integrates community co-design, cultural programming, and digital technology within a unified governance model. Its use of real-time data for participatory monitoring and evaluation represents a pioneering approach to human-centered smart city development.

Resources devoted to delivery

The project was funded through the European Union's Urban Innovative Actions programme, with approximately EUR 5 million allocated to implementation. The city government, design firms, NGOs, universities, and community groups collaborated through co-funded grants, technical assistance, and participatory workshops. Human resources included municipal planners, social researchers, digital analysts, and local volunteers.

Conclusion

The ToNite project demonstrates how community-led urban regeneration can redefine safety and inclusion in city life. By integrating social innovation, participatory design, and data-driven management, it has transformed previously neglected areas into vibrant, accessible spaces. The initiative contributes to long-term urban resilience, aligning with the New Urban Agenda's commitment to inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities.