

# ACUTE - Accessibility and Connectivity Knowledge Hub for Urban Transformation in Europe

## WP5 – Future of the Knowledge Hub

### D5.3 Future ACUTE Management Model

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University of Latvia   LU	LATVIA
Research Institutes of Sweden   RISE	SWEDEN
University of Westminster   UoW	UNITED KINGDOM
Malmö University   MAU	SWEDEN
Grazer Energieagentur GmbH, Graz Energy Agency   GEA	AUSTRIA
VTI/Sweden's national centre for research and education on public transport   K2	SWEDEN
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## 1. Introduction

The efforts of WP5 of the ACUTE project to develop a valid future management model for a Knowledge Hub for ENUAC and DUT involved many collaborative talks and discussions in a series of workshops and face-to-face meetings, both with representatives from JPI and DUT, their programme and funding bodies and other external experts, as well as within the ACUTE partner consortium. Having lined out in D5.1 the differences to other existing organisations and initiatives and identified a fast, feasible, promising solution for a web-based community and knowledge exchange platform that is available within the ACUTE and ALSO the DUT partner consortium. D5.2 showed us the added value and target groups as well as three different scenarios for such a platform solution, including costs and budget estimates based on real-life values of experience and marketing guidelines for such a Knowledge Hub platform. D5.3 now outlines the development and description of the setting in which we believe a Knowledge Hub for DUT could be based and operated.

## 2. Interaction with DUT in developing Knowledge Hub concepts

### 2.1. Quick Wins from the ACUTE project's experience

For almost the entire duration of the ACUTE project, WP5 was in close contact with representatives of JPI and DUT, the programme and funding bodies and participated in a series of workshops and meetings. It soon became clear that in providing support to DUT, we could draw upon valuable experiences from the ACUTE project itself. This included the following recommendations to DUT:

#### **Align timeframes**

Most of the ENUAC projects covered by ACUTE were well into their 3rd year of funding, while in contrast, the ACUTE Knowledge Hub had just started, so the timeframes mismatched substantially. A future DUT Knowledge Hub must ensure that it is a continuing activity in which all projects (past and ongoing) can easily participate.

#### **Project structure**

ACUTE was launched as a project via a call, like all the other projects it was intended to serve as a Knowledge Hub. As this led to a large consortium with researchers from different disciplines, several challenges were associated with this structure. There were sometimes not enough resources available per partner and it led to an enormous coordination and communication effort during the project (but even more so BEFORE the application was finalised). Our recommendation to DUT was not to start a future Knowledge Hub as a project, but either as an internal unit, with dedicated permanent staff and budget only for this task, or as a subcontract via a tender, focussed and clear in its goals and without huge overheads.

#### **Commitment**

As for the ENUAC projects covered by ACUTE, there was no obligation for them to cooperate and collaborate with the ACUTE team. The fact that we have managed to keep them on board and motivated to participate in our work for over two years is a result of our constant work and our attempt to add value to their work. We have recommended to DUT to include mandatory work packages for working with a Knowledge Hub in their calls or tenders to overcome this problem.

### 2.2. Supporting the internal DUT development of a Knowledge Hub

The above-mentioned and other recommendations were proposed to those responsible at DUT in a series of feedback loops and workshops and were partly implemented, not only into DUT Calls from 2023 onwards, but also into DUT's internal WP7, which is concerned with developing a Knowledge Hub (see Figure 1).

**KH STRUCTURES AND SYNERGIES**

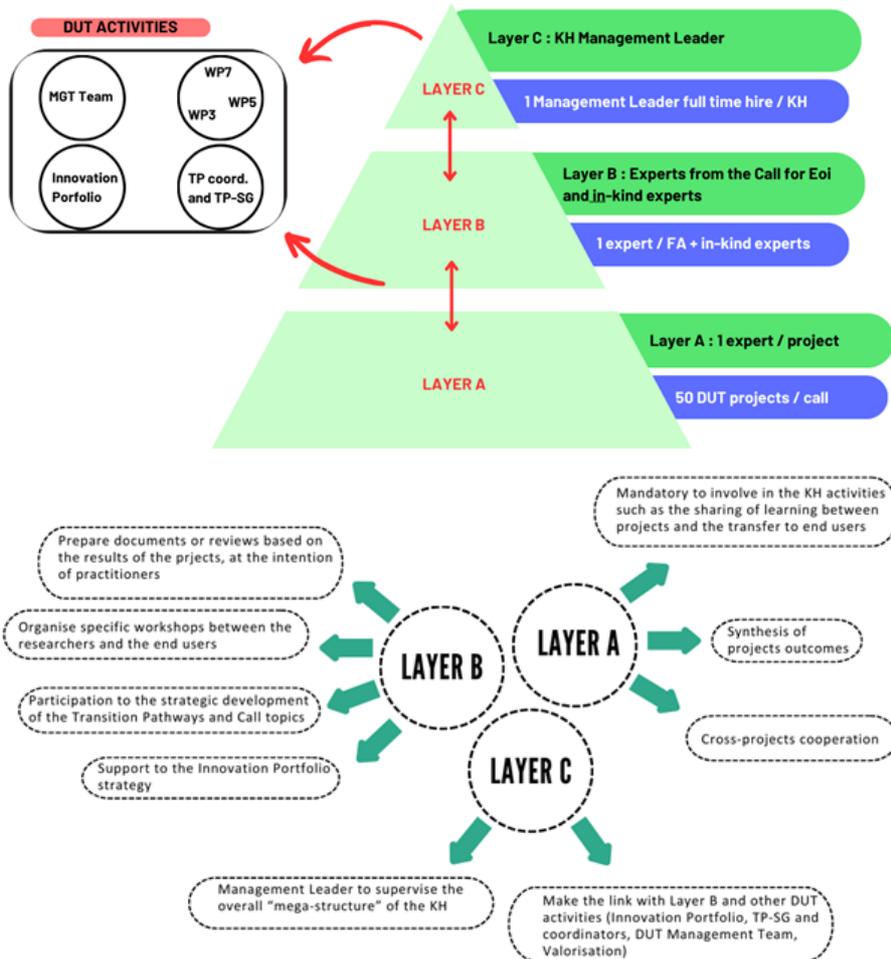


Figure 1: Proposal of Knowledge Hub Structure and Activities in DUT's WP7 (Nicolas PAULIEN, ANR, as of April 2024).

Our feedback to this proposed structure included the following recommendations:

- Avoid the selection process for Layer B Experts as in ACUTE (no Call for Eoi);
- A tender would be the best selection process guaranteeing best value for money;
- Limit experts per partner country within Layer B of the KH to a small number;
- Give more responsibilities to the Layer A experts from the projects to avoid overload of Layer B tasks;
- Avoid having separate Knowledge Hubs for each DUT pathway - one DUT Knowledge Hub is sufficient;
- Layer C as management should be more than one person and be responsible for the whole of DUT, thus avoiding double or triple work, inconsistency and overlapping responsibilities;
- There is not necessarily a need for independent experts for the PED, 15mC and CUE Transition Pathway (TP) in Layer B. There are experts with cross competencies having broader expertise in more than only one specific field or TP;
- The range of activities of the Knowledge Hub should be broader than shown in the figure 1. In addition to the tasks of networking, communication and dissemination, it should also be a repository, a kind of historical memory for all the important results of the projects covered, in order to have them as a reference for subsequent programmes, calls and projects. Instead of financing a separate website for each project, resources (money/personnel) could be allocated to a central location for all projects.

### 3. The ACUTE Knowledge Hub concept and model

During the project we were informed that the concepts already developed by DUT would no longer be pursued and that an external consultant (BAX) had been commissioned to further develop a Knowledge Hub for DUT. The coordinator and several partners of ACUTE tried to reach out to this new actor to help him bring in our previous experiences, but unfortunately we did not receive a response in the course of almost 5 months.

As a consequence, our own ACUTE model and a use case for a Knowledge Hub for the 15mC pathway was developed in cooperation with the Expertises Territoires Platform run by CEREMA, to show which great opportunities for knowledge sharing between academia and practitioners already exist, with a very low barrier to entry, low(er) set-up costs, an almost self-organized community and the possibility of interaction, repository and documentation of solutions beyond the lifetime of individual projects.

#### 3.1. The Overall Structure of Embedding a Knowledge Hub for DUT

Figure 2 gives an overview how we think that a Knowledge Hub should be situated within the DUT framework and what its functions should be. Key to the concept is the use of a web-based Community platform which will be described in more detail in chapter 4.

DUT anticipates up to 50 projects per year and/or call in the 15mC pathway alone. Such a huge number of projects can only participate in a Knowledge Hub through a division of tasks and their (mandatory) delegation to the individual projects on the one hand and through the use of structural management and automated methods on the other. We therefore envision a Knowledge Hub organization as a direct contractor to DUT with clear responsibilities and tasks, managing structured interaction processes like surveys or workshops with the projects, which also contribute by participating in events and dissemination activities (managed by the highly competent JPI/DUT communication team already at work), sending representatives to the Knowledge Hub and, most importantly, participating in a community platform where all information about DUT, the calls, the individual projects, their respective tasks, etc. could be stored, exchanged and processed.

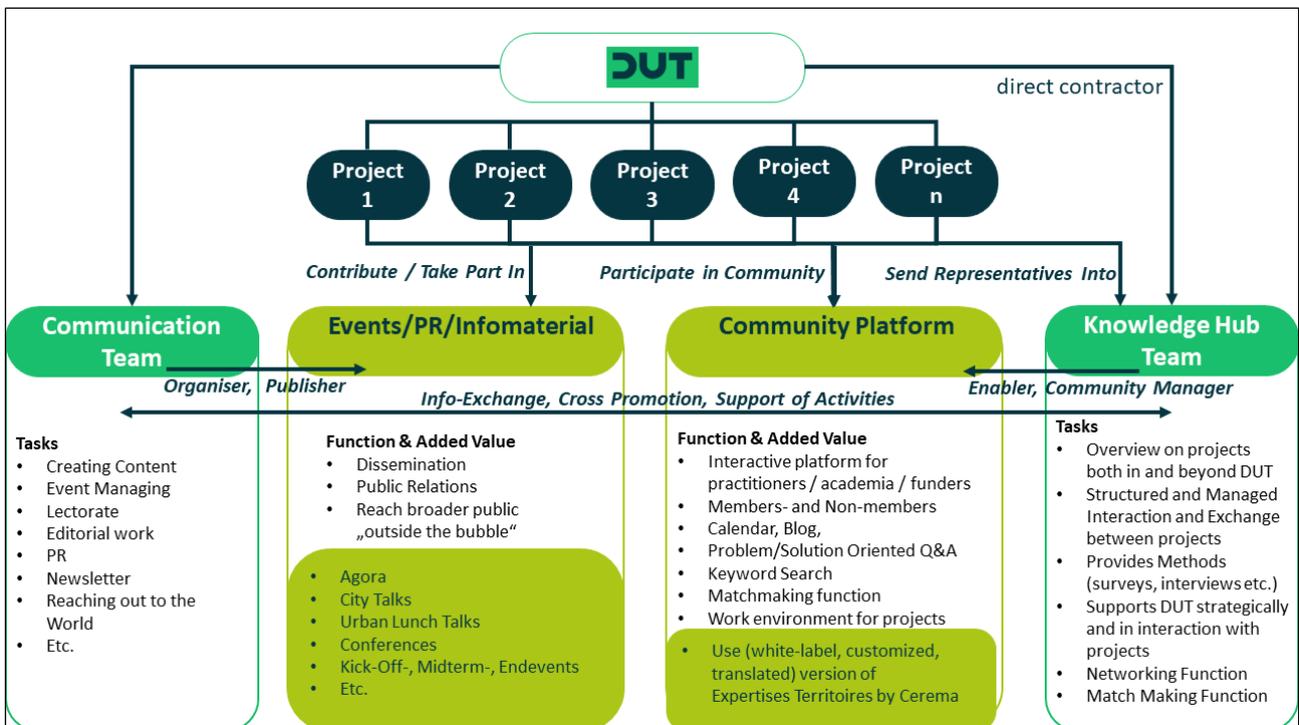


Figure 2: Knowledge Hub Embedment and function within DUT

### 3.2. The Knowledge Hub Community Platform and its Added Value(s)

In Deliverable 5.2 we argued that the Community Scenario is the most balanced and feasible option for sustaining a Knowledge Hub for DUT. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders—researchers, practitioners, businesses, and policymakers - a self-sustaining ecosystem of shared knowledge and expertise is created. The community platform can play a crucial role in the different functions assigned to the Knowledge Hub:

- It is a place where academics can present their findings and knowledge to an audience made up of peers and practitioners;
- It is a place where practitioners can present their achievements and their successful or unsuccessful implementations of the 15 minute city concept;
- It is a place where individuals can connect personally according to their respective expertise and position in the landscape (academics or the various forms of practitioners);
- It is a place where questions can be asked, accessed and answered, in a movement from academia to practice or vice versa.

In this way a process of knowledge creation can occur at the interface between academia and practice. This function represents a strategic added value of the community, as practitioners can gain insights from academia into their practical problems and academics can derive new research questions based on practical concerns. Figure 3 provides another overview of the community platform as an important tool for a Knowledge Hub.

A huge benefit for the individual project would also be that it is no longer necessary to set up and maintain a separate project website, which in most cases is no longer updated or even maintained after the end of a project, but that the knowledge generated and the content produced live longer than the project itself and are available for both researchers and practitioners in the form of open community intelligence.

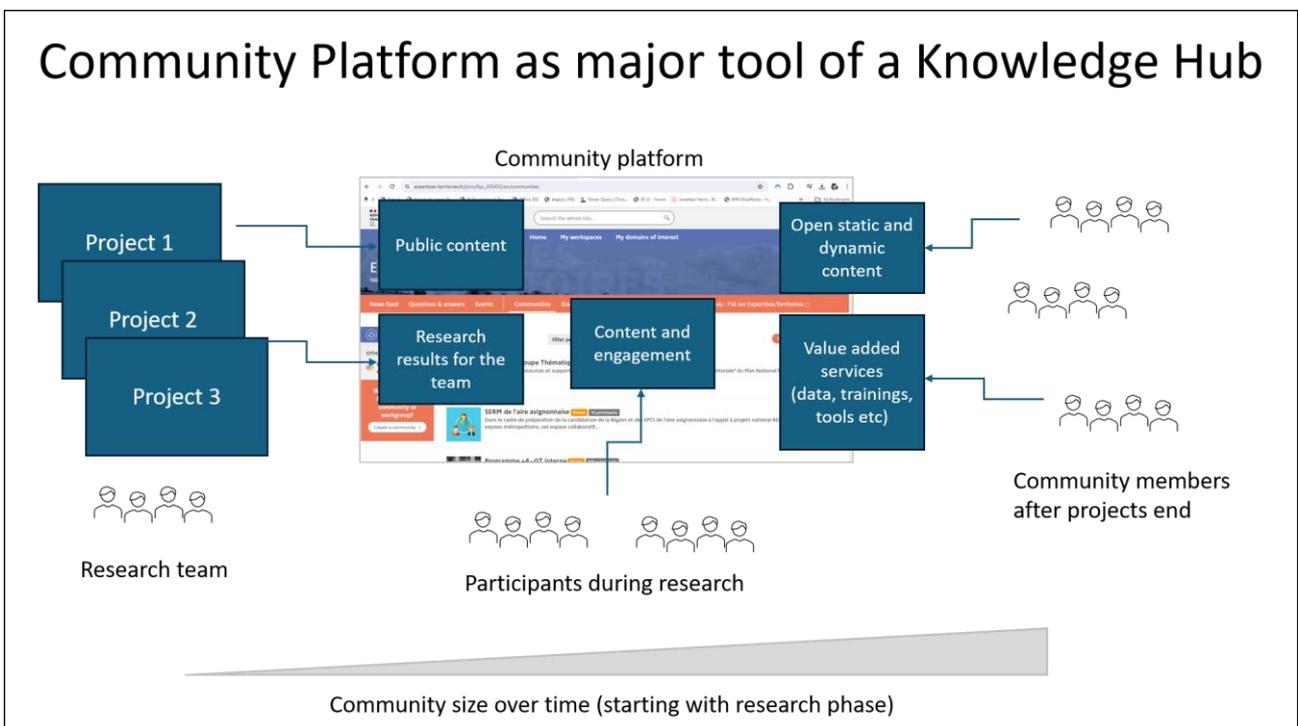


Figure 3: Community Platform as major tool of a Knowledge Hub

## 4. The 15minC Community on Expertises Territoires

As described above, a living community platform is key to the concept of setting up a Knowledge Hub for DUT to tackle upcoming challenges in an ever-changing world and to accelerate urban transitions. A very good example of such a platform is “Expertises Territoires” by CEREMA, which is a partner in both DUT and the ACUTE project. CEREMA – the Centre for Studies and Expertise on Risks, the Environment, Mobility and Urban Planning is the major French public agency for developing public expertise in the fields of urban planning, regional cohesion and ecological and energy transition for resilient and climate-neutral cities and regions. It employs 2,700 people, 500 of whom are dedicated to research and innovation activities. It was created in 2014 through the merger of eleven public specialist organizations, each with decades of experience in the fields of bridges, roads and ports infrastructure, water, geotechnics, risk, land use and urban development.

### 4.1. Expertises Territoires (ET) in a nutshell

ET was developed to address the following topics and challenges every research organisation faces:

- There are a lot of silos of knowledge and a strong isolation of stakeholders in addressing the challenges faced;
- There is a need to share questions, problems and solutions and to rely on cooperative spaces to co-construct them;
- There is a necessity to connect expertise from diverse backgrounds to address issues.

Using a user-centered approach (listening, prototyping, testing) and based on several years of work and numerous internal and external interviews, the aim of the platform was formulated to lead the (inter)national expert communities in the challenges of ecological transition and climate adaptation

- By becoming the "digital commons" of knowledge;
- Through opening up to all stakeholders at the local, national, and international level;
- By offering robust and scalable functionalities;
- Through a continuous user-centered focus;
- By providing high-quality, close support (both in community animation and transforming Cerema’s practices);
- **Though a white-label approach.**

The white-label approach means that each partner and community can maintain its own identity and thus gain visibility. Design, layout, functions etc. can be easily customised – see Figure 4.



Figure 4: Different Identities, Design and Layouts of different communities on ET.

The platform enables numerous experts to collaborate to solve complex problems and saves a lot of time in the process. It has been developed for more than a year to provide a wide range of collaborative tools in a single space:

- Co-editing (spreadsheet, word processing, presentation),
- Task manager,
- Calendar functions,
- Q&A functions,
- Blog,
- Date polling,
- Questionnaire,
- Resource space – Information or Project Repository,
- Integrated video/chat solution,
- Internet link sharing,
- and many more.

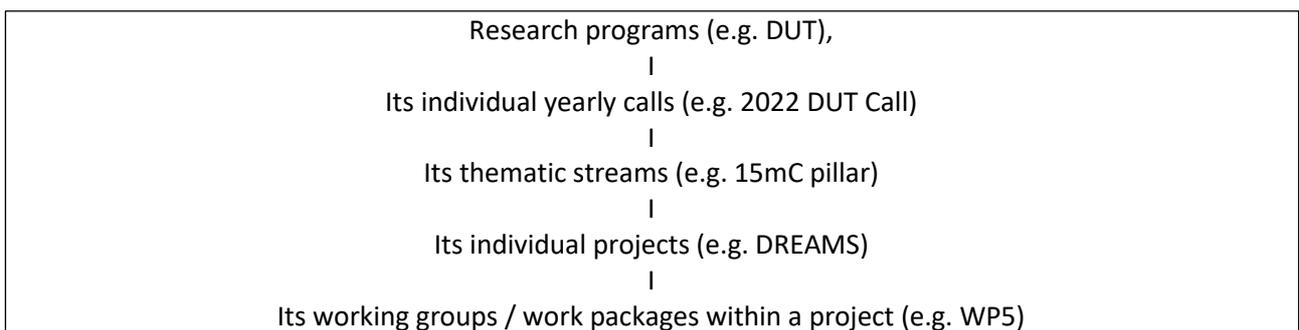
Communities on the platform can have different scopes like

- thematic communities (e.g. mobility, environmental health, accessibility, future neighborhoods, coastal areas, etc.),
- territorial communities (a territory can create its own community with its ecosystem of actors) and
- technical communities with territorial technical conferences.

The goal is for these communities to thrive, create new content, attract new members, and also to build bridges between the individual communities. Communities can be public, private or secret, allowing for collaboration on confidential projects:

- Public community: its content, members, questions etc. are visible to everyone;
- Private community: its name is visible to everyone, but its content, its members, etc. are only visible to members of the community;
- Secret community: It is only visible to the members who belong to it.

It is also possible to set up hierarchical communities. This allows the architecture of the platform to be easily translated/ adapted, for example to fit the hierarchy of DUT.



*Figure 5: Possible Hierarchy structure for setting up a platform for DUT.*

After only 2 years of operations, Expertise Territoires already has more than 17.000 members, organised in nearly 250 communities.

#### 4.2 15 min Cities community: Bringing more proximity in Cities

As a result of the ACUTE project, the 15mC Community on Expertise Territoires has been created by some of the ACUTE partners. It serves as a living example of how such a Knowledge Hub community can function and be operated solely through the exchange in the network. Many functions of a Knowledge Hub are already integrated in the community, e.g. it functions as a repository for projects results, as an exchange or marketplace of information etc. The calendar function is already widely used, providing an easy opportunity to communicate about relevant conferences, webinars and project events.

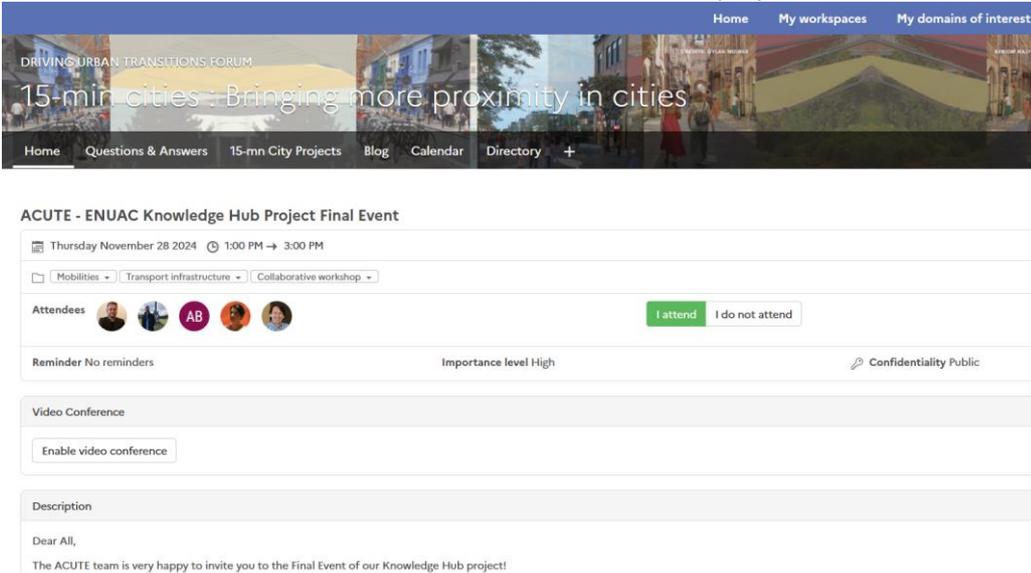


Figure 6: Calendar entry of the ACUTE project's final event.

Already more than 120 projects have been published as individual sub-pages of the community and can be used by these projects as repositories for their projects achievement or just as an information billboard for a quick overview.

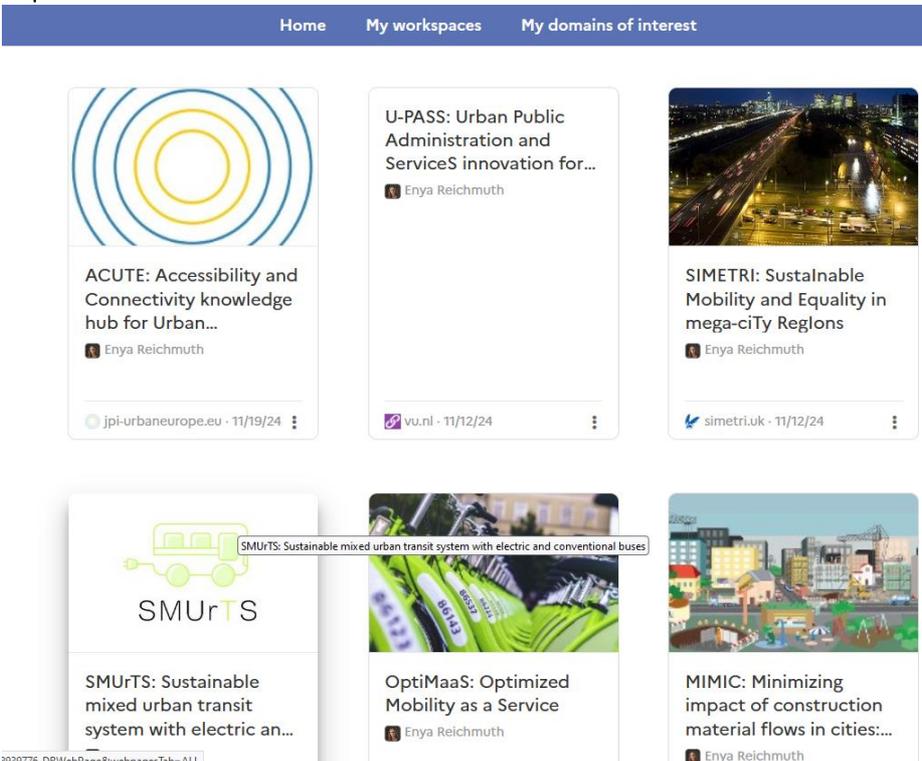


Figure 7: Examples of project subsites on the 15mC community on ET.

In november 2024 we already count more than 60 members on the platform, which can be classified as academics, public or private consultants, members of innovation or funding agencies, practitioners and members of NGOs.

The practitioners cover a wide variety of positions in public or private institutions. With a total of 25 practitioners we observe a ratio of about 60/40 percent share between academics and practitioners. Academic interactions have started, for example with the co-creation of a position paper proposing a new approach to travel times adapted to the 15 minute city context and a series of research questions answered by academic partners. This proves the validity of the concept and its implementation on the platform as a suitable tool that fosters interaction, creates knowledge and involves academics.

## 5. Conclusion

The ACUTE project has demonstrated the great potential and necessity for an effective Knowledge Hub within the DUT framework, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange across diverse stakeholders. Through the efforts of WP5, a comprehensive foundation has been laid, informed by extensive engagement with representatives from the JPI and DUT funding bodies as well as external experts. The result is a well-grounded model that emphasizes streamlined management, inclusivity, and sustainability.

The proposed Knowledge Hub stands as a bridge between academia, practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders, enabling a seamless flow of insights and practical applications. Lessons from ACUTE show how important it is to avoid excessive overheads, encourage collaboration and use a single community platform to prevent resource fragmentation.

The recommendations for structural and operational improvements - such as creating a centralised, permanent management structure and focusing on a broad-based repository - promise long-term effectiveness and scalability. By integrating these insights, the Knowledge Hub can act as a living repository, a center for past and ongoing data, and a place for collaboration where challenges meet solutions. The alignment of timelines, the mandatory inclusion of the Knowledge Hub in project calls and the establishment of a vibrant web-based community platform are essential to realizing this vision.

The example of **Expertises Territoires** by CEREMA and the **15mC community** we developed illustrates the feasibility of such a community platform and offers a tangible and scalable model. With its robust features and flexibility, the platform successfully fosters collaboration between different stakeholders, including academics and practitioners, while lowering barriers to entry and operating costs. The specific success of the 15mC community, which already consists of a large number of members, validates the approach and highlights its ability to foster meaningful exchanges, co-create solutions, and preserve institutional memory beyond individual project lifecycles.

To summarise, the Knowledge Hub concept developed by ACUTE is not only a response to the needs of DUT but also a proactive framework for managing urban transitions in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By adopting and building on these recommendations, DUT has an opportunity to establish a Knowledge Hub that is resilient, inclusive, and impactful and serves as a model for similar initiatives across Europe and beyond. This initiative has the potential to drive forward the goals of sustainable urban development, ensuring that knowledge and innovation are shared, applied, and continuously developed and refined.