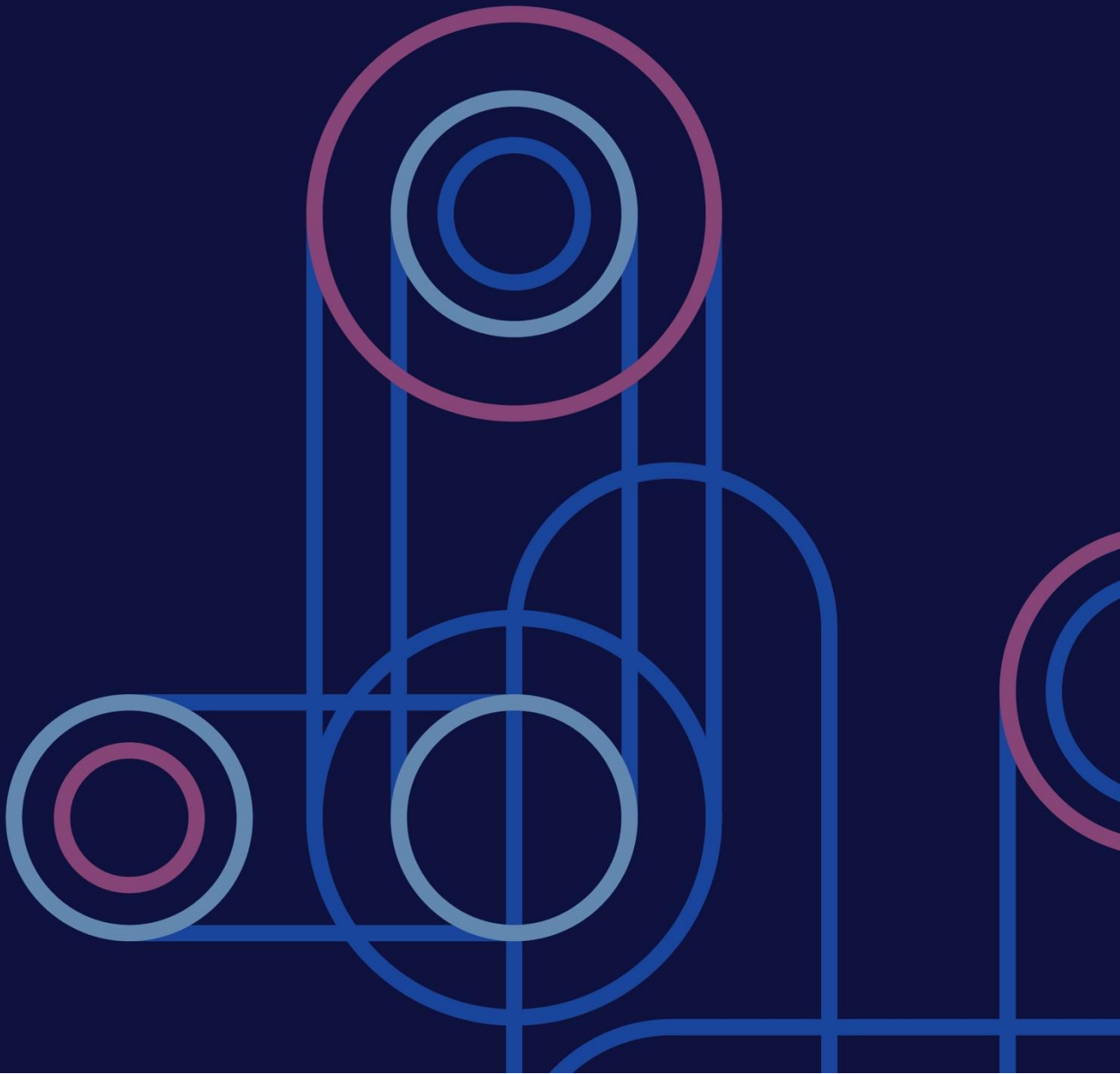


CASE STUDY

*Réseau Bretagne Urbanisme et Santé (RBUS):
a local intersectoral network for healthy urban
planning*

2025



Basic information	
WHO Region	EURO
City or Country	Brittany (region), France
Timeline	2011 – ongoing
Type of intervention	Network; capacity-building
Primary level of implementation	Regional
Primary sectors involved	Health; urban planning; environment; education; research
Primary health outcomes or challenges	Health equity; integration of health in urban planning; NCD prevention

Case description

The Réseau Bretagne Urbanisme et Santé (RBUS) is a regional interdisciplinary and intersectoral practice network that supports local authorities and partners in integrating health into territorial planning and urban development projects across the Brittany Region of France. Established in 2011 after a first “Göteborg-type” health impact assessment (HIA) in Rennes, the participating planners, public health professionals and academic partners chose to continue working together, recognizing the added value of joint action for urban health. Primary stakeholders included the City of Rennes and Rennes Metropole, the French National School of Public Health (EHESP), the Regional Center for Action and Information for Vulnerable People (CREAI Bretagne), the International Francophone Association Santé et Développement Durable (S2D), and the Regional Health Agency (ARS Bretagne). The network was soon joined by other public, academic and civil-society actors, including the Regional Health Observatory (ORS Bretagne), the Rennes Urban Planning Agency (AUDIAR), the Regional Center for Health Promotion (Promotion Santé Bretagne) and the Rennes Institute of Urban and Territorial Planning (IAUR). A cooperation agreement signed in 2014 formally established its collaborative framework. This agreement is renewed every five years to update the list of partners and to realign priorities with the evolving regional public health context. The network is currently in the process of expanding, with new partners joining from the Brest area.



RBUS Seminar. Brest, France: 2024. © Anne Roué Le Galle.

RBUS functions as a voluntary, non-hierarchical platform linking institutions concerned with urban and rural spatial planning and development projects, environment, and health in the context of climate change. Its governance rotates among members and is anchored in quarterly plenary meetings and thematic working groups. Decisions are reached collectively through consensus, with EHESP and the City of Rennes providing coordination support. The network operates as a regional think-tank and resource centre, offering training, technical support, and advocacy for integrating health considerations into spatial planning.

Key objectives are to strengthen the relationship between public health and urban and territorial planning, to raise awareness among local authorities of the health implications of urban and rural projects, and to support the application of tools, like HIA, that guide health-promoting urban design. Members develop and share approaches under the concept of "urbanisme favorable à la santé" (healthy urban planning) (HUP). Activities include regional seminars, capacity-building sessions, joint research, and participation in international, European and national projects such as CUSSH (Complex

Urban Systems for Sustainability and Health), the EU Joint Action Prevent Non-Communicable Diseases, and the French GreenCan initiative.

The network's success is grounded in long-term trust and institutional continuity. A formal collaboration agreement ensures representation from each member organization even when staff change, and the collective culture encourages mutual learning and commitment. Regular participation – reflected in low absenteeism at meetings – demonstrates members' sense of ownership. Political support from the City of Rennes, a founding member of the French WHO Healthy Cities Network, and from the regional health authority (ARS) has been an enabling factor, providing visibility and legitimacy.

RBUS has contributed to the mainstreaming of HIA and HUP principles within local planning policies and urban development projects. Its seminars and knowledge-exchange events help local decision-makers adopt methods for linking health, environment and sustainability goals. The network's influence is recognized at local, regional and national levels, with requests for expert input from external partners and national ministries. A few similar networks are now beginning to take shape in other parts of France, notably Normandy and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region, inspired by the RBUS model and reflecting a growing interest in integrating health into territorial planning, in both urban and rural contexts.

A persistent challenge is limited time availability among members, most of whom participate over and above their institutional duties. Nevertheless, the flexible structure has allowed continuity and innovation. Looking ahead, RBUS intends to expand its collaboration to stakeholders engaged in ecological and energy transitions, reflecting a broader systems approach to health across living environments, and a strong commitment to better integrating health–environment–climate issues into decision-making through co-benefits approaches.

Strategic Highlight

RBUS illustrates how simple but deliberate processes can support integrated action for healthy urban planning at regional scale. The network's basic design elements create predictable spaces for information flow, joint problem-solving and iterative learning across urban planning, public health and environmental domains. By centring practical tools such as HIA and operational frameworks like the ISadOrA guidelines, which support integrating health and environmental concerns into urban development projects, RBUS translates data and evidence into steps that are tractable for local authorities and design teams, supporting decision-making while building common language and expectations. Several features of its governance and operational mechanisms align with principles of strategic action:

First, the network functions as a coordination mechanism that transcends sectoral and institutional boundaries. By rotating facilitation and holding regular joint sessions, RBUS offers all actors an active role to play, while building a shared language and procedures for decision-making among actors from health, planning and environmental fields.

Second, RBUS strengthens institutional and systemic capacity for integration. Through seminars and training, it develops technical competence in HIA and other healthy urban planning tools and context-sensitive planning while also creating the social capital that underpins collaboration. The presence of research and education actors (EHESP, IAUR, S2D) ensures continuous feedback between science and practice – a key feature of strategic processes that generate and work with evidence.

Third, the network embodies adaptive and learning-oriented processes. Its evolution from a single HIA project to a long-term regional platform illustrates incremental institutionalization of strategic action. Processes are reviewed and refined through member reflection and external linkages with national and European initiatives.

Finally, RBUS has succeeded in creating a de facto political and institutional mandate for healthy urban planning without formal hierarchy – an important innovation in process design. Its underlying collaboration agreement and visibility in regional policy forums anchor urban health within broader planning agendas. This approach demonstrates how processes themselves – rather than new institutions – can deliver integration when they create trust, shared rules and predictable engagement.

RBUS shows that sustained intersectoral action can depend less on a single project or leader than on the systematic design of processes that connect actors, disciplines and levels of governance. By embedding collaboration in routine practice, the network has helped Brittany's cities make health a permanent component of urban policy.

Further Information

- [Constitution du Réseau Bretagne Urbanisme et Santé \(RBUS\)](#)
- [Journée régionale "aménagement durable et santé" 2019](#)
- [Relationship-building around a policy decision-support tool for urban health](#)
- [L'Urbanisme favorable à la santé \(UFS\)](#)
- [Le guide ISadOrA: une démarche d'accompagnement à l'Intégration de la Santé dans les Opérations d'Aménagement urbain](#)