


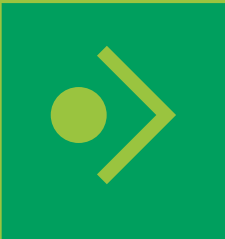






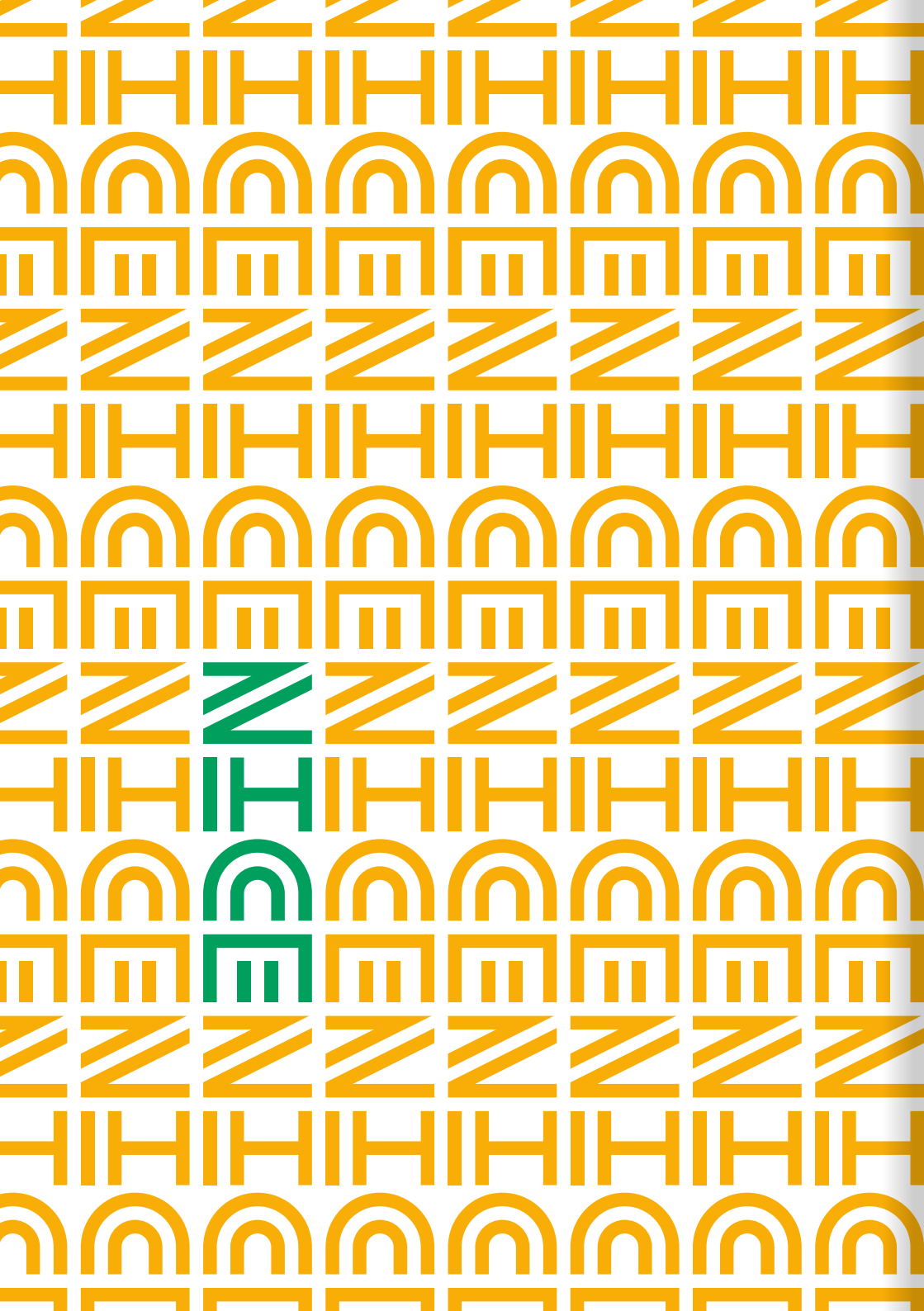


Linking e-commerce and circular lifestyle offers in city centre in Würzburg

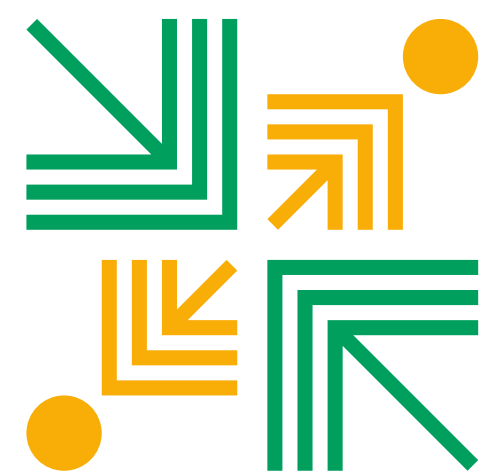


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Perex

In Würzburg, the German Environment Agency (UBA) launched a bicycle pick-up and delivery service for repair and rental items as a pilot project. The service was tested in cooperation with the Würzburg Zukunftshaus, the bicycle courier Radius, and adelphi. The pilot ran from June to December 2024. The idea behind it: to bring the convenience of online shopping together with sustainability and the strengths of a vibrant city centre.

Not as many people used the service as expected, but the pilot still broke new ground: For the first time, Würzburg residents could try a bicycle delivery service designed for circular lifestyles. The cooperation between all partners opened doors for future projects, and the communication around the pilot sparked wide interest in sustainable consumption.

The finale was a real highlight: more than 160 people joined the closing event, learning more about circular lifestyles, and enjoyed a bicycle cinema.

Picture 1: Zukunftshaus Würzburg, Source: Zukunftshaus Würzburg.

Picture 2: from left to right, Chaminda Perera (Radius), Thomas Mitschke (Radius), Lisa Spängler (Zukunftshaus), Source: Zukunftshaus Würzburg.

THE PILOT IDEA



Together with the Zukunftshaus in Würzburg, UBA tested a pilot on the topic of „**Connecting online retail, city centres and sustainable consumption**“. This pilot ran from June to December 2024. Main goals were on the one hand the support of sustainable consumption offers like renting and repair and on the other hand to show how a link of e-commerce with city centres can benefit both sides.

The Zukunftshaus, a cooperative focused on circular lifestyles, was the perfect partner. Its offers already covered four pillars: sustainable products, renting, repairing, and swapping. The pilot added a new dimension – a pick-up and delivery service for rental items and for products customers brought in for repair.

This service made renting and repairing easier than before. People no longer had to visit the Zukunftshaus in person both ways. They either get their repaired items delivered, or they get their rented items picked-up from home. Rental items can be reserved directly at the Zukunftshaus website.

The logistics partner for the service was Radius, a local bicycle courier. This means all pick-ups and deliveries were CO₂-neutral.

The pilot therefore combined the circular offers of renting and repairing with the classic delivery service for online retail. The fact that the delivery is CO₂- neutral also addresses the so-called „last mile“, a hotspot in the environmental impact of online retail. And the location of the Zukunftshaus in the city centre can be further strengthened by the expanded offering.



Beyond UBA, Zukunftshaus, Radius, and adelphi, more local partners were involved. A local advisory board supported the project, bringing together representatives from the City of Würzburg, the Julius-Maximilians-University Würzburg, memo Stiftung, and several NGOs.

Furthermore, UBA also worked closely with its NiCE tandem partner Enviros from Czechia, exchanging experiences on circular lifestyles and sharing ideas about pilots.



How it started

Picture 3: Advisory Board Meeting at Zukunftshaus premises. Source: UBA

The UBA first launched a call for partners to join the pilot project on “Connecting online retail, city centres and sustainable consumption.”

Among several applicants, **Zukunftshaus Würzburg** was chosen. With its four pillars and central location, it was the perfect fit. Furthermore, the **city of Würzburg** has already gained recognition through the **Wü-Livery concept**, a successful bike-based delivery service launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. This service allowed citizens to order from city centre shops online and have purchases **delivered by bicycle.**



Picture 4: Würzburg residence, Source: UBA

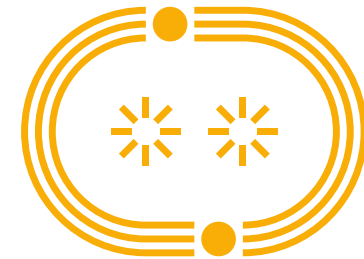


Preparation began with stakeholder mapping, target group analysis, and two ideation workshops, one online and one on site. The aim was to refine UBA's pilot idea for the NiCE project. Feedback from ENVIROS, UBA's NiCE tandem partner, flowed directly into the discussions. During the workshops, participants created a timetable for the next steps, divided up tasks, and built a shared understanding of the pilot idea. Alongside the established pilot partners and the advisory board members, further local volunteers also took part.



To gauge interest, the team carried out a survey before the launch. More than 300 people responded.

The results were clear: a large majority said they would use the new delivery service and were willing to pay for it. Most also believed that such a service would make renting and repairing items more attractive.



Picture 5: Ideation workshop group February 2024, Source: UBA
Picture 6: Würzburg, Source: UBA

Implementation PHASE



The pilot officially kicked off in May 2024 during **Zukunftswochen Mainfranken**. At the launch event in the **Zukunftshaus**, pilot partners presented the new delivery service and discussed the environmental impacts of online retail with citizens.

Around 20 people joined the evening, which sparked lively debate and marked the start of the pilot.



Throughout 2024 and 2025, the partners held regular meetings to coordinate activities and track progress. A shared online board supported collaboration. Especially the **workshops** with the advisory board groups were valuable for the development of the service **and further communication activities**.

During the implementation, **UBA** collaborated with its **Czech tandem partner** through **workshops and site visits**. The transnational exchange sparked new ideas for the pilot activities and helped with evaluation and monitoring processes.

During the implementation of the delivery service partners were very active to promote the new service and circular lifestyle offers in general. This involved activities on social media, street festivals, and local campaigns. A short video became Zukunftshaus's most-viewed post ever. The communication activities reached many people. Yet, despite the positive feedback from the user survey beforehand, demand for the delivery service remained low.



Picture 6,7: Visit of NICE tandem partners (Enviros and Silo Jihlava) in Würzburg, Source: UBA



Outcomes and learnings



The pilot showed how challenging it is to link online retail, city centres, and sustainability. Despite strong interest in the survey, the demand for the delivery service itself remained low throughout the whole pilot runtime. Missing features, like online payment and full pick-up and delivery, made the service less convenient than expected.

Still, the project brought real value. Zukunftshaus and Radius could test a new offer with little risk. Partners learned what works and what needs to change to make circular services more attractive.



The advisory board created strong local ties, and new ideas for events and cooperation are already on the table.



The campaign around the pilot reached many citizens. It sparked conversations about repairing, renting, and sustainable delivery and gave visibility to circular lifestyles in Würzburg. The bicycle cinema at the closing event showed how culture and sustainability can come together in the city centre, **drawing more than 160 people.**

What's next? The delivery service will not continue for now, but the learnings flow into NiCE solution guides, UBA's "Future City Centres" action guide, and the "How-to Zukunftshaus" manual. Zukunftshaus, Radius, and the city are also exploring new formats: from digital tools to promote rentals, to events during the next "Stadtradeln" campaign in 2026.



The key takeaway:
even if not every pilot
succeeds on the first try,
testing bold ideas creates
knowledge, builds
partnerships, and keeps
the vision of a more
sustainable city alive.



Picture 10: Mainbridge Würzburg May 2025, Source: UBA

Further Information



Pilot Partner Websites

Zukunftshaus: <https://www.zukunftshaus-wuerzburg.de/>

Radius: <https://www.wuerzburger-fahradkurier.de/>

Adelphi: <https://adelphi.de/en>



NiCE Project Websites

UBA: <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/en/topics/sustainability-strategies-international/spatial-settlement-development/sustainable-lifestyles-nice-from-niche-to-centre>

Interreg: <https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/nice/>

NiCE Online Seminar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrAmjW_h1jE

Pilot video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFh39SZ77eg>

Knowledge Platform <https://circularlifestyle.eu/>



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