

EDUSI TORMES+: THE RIVER AREA AS AN ELEMENT OF URBAN INTEGRATION

Since 2017, the City Council of Salamanca has been working on implementing the Más Tormes Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategy (EDUSI TOR–MES+). This Strategy, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Sustainable Growth Programme 2014-2020, involved carrying out a unique intervention, largely on the Trastormes area.

The Resolution of 29 September 2016 from the Secretariat of State for Budgets and Expenditure of the Ministry of Finance and Public Administrations, through which grants from the first call for bids for selecting Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies were awarded, co-financed by the ERDF Operative Programme for Sustainable Growth 2014-2020, marked the administrative start of this successful programme.

Thus, EDUSI TORMES+ was registered on the conceptual framework defined by the European Union's Cohesion Policy, implemented by means of the document framework 'European Strategy 2020' which identifies three features which must characterise growth processes in the EU. Firstly, smart growth through knowledge development and innovation; secondly, sustainable growth based on a greener economy which is more effective and more competitive at resource management; and lastly, integrated growth, focussed on boosting employment, as well as social and territorial cohesion. In this context, and with an integrated approach, the Strategy has coordinated urban, environmental, socio-economic and technological investment based on a public participation process.

The focal point of EDUSI TORMES+ is the river Tormes and its riverbanks as a unique area of opportunity to develop projects and initiatives which value local resources. Thus, the intervention contributes to improving interaction and integration. The ultimate goal of this Strategy is to facilitate urban integration, based on the joint intervention on the triad of the river, riverbed and neighbourhoods and ensuring that the basic aim of the integrated projects and policies developed is to support the physical, economic and social regeneration of the disadvantaged riparian urban areas.

Thus, the Urban Development Strategy for the city includes four 'guiding principles' which define its intervention profile. Firstly, EDUSI TORMES+ is an urban and territorial cohesion venture which integrates the Trastormes neighbourhoods with the city. The long historic process shaping this urban space means that nowadays these neighbourhoods are a social, cultural and economic patchwork of the different stages the Trastormes area of Salamanca has gone through historically. Here, secular families from Tejares, new residents from Chamberí and some vulnerable communities live side by side. All of this shapes a socially diverse and complex urban space, which requires a boost, streamlining resources and connectivity in order to be integrated with the city's urban dynamics.

Secondly, this is an intervention to naturalise and recover the river area of the Tormes. By providing a large green lung, the main example of which is the enhancement of the more than 40 hectares of existing general systems in Salas Bajas in order to develop a river park initiative, based on green and cultural corridors and itineraries, together with providing urban allotments. The strategy is a big commitment to the environment through developing and creating green spaces which in turn act as greenhouse gas sinks and recreational spaces to be enjoyed by citizens, facilitated by improved connectivity between spaces through soft mobility (pedestrian and cyclist crossings, cycle lanes).

Thirdly, the Strategy was conceived as a commitment to improving quality of life in the Trastormes neighbourhoods by means of the required structural intervention to enhance its functionality and image

as well as the community's living conditions, through urban regeneration interventions and improved quality of life in the neighbourhood communities. To this end, interventions include developing initiatives for the reurbanisation and reclassification of public spaces, improving meeting and living areas, as well as sporting and recreational facilities.

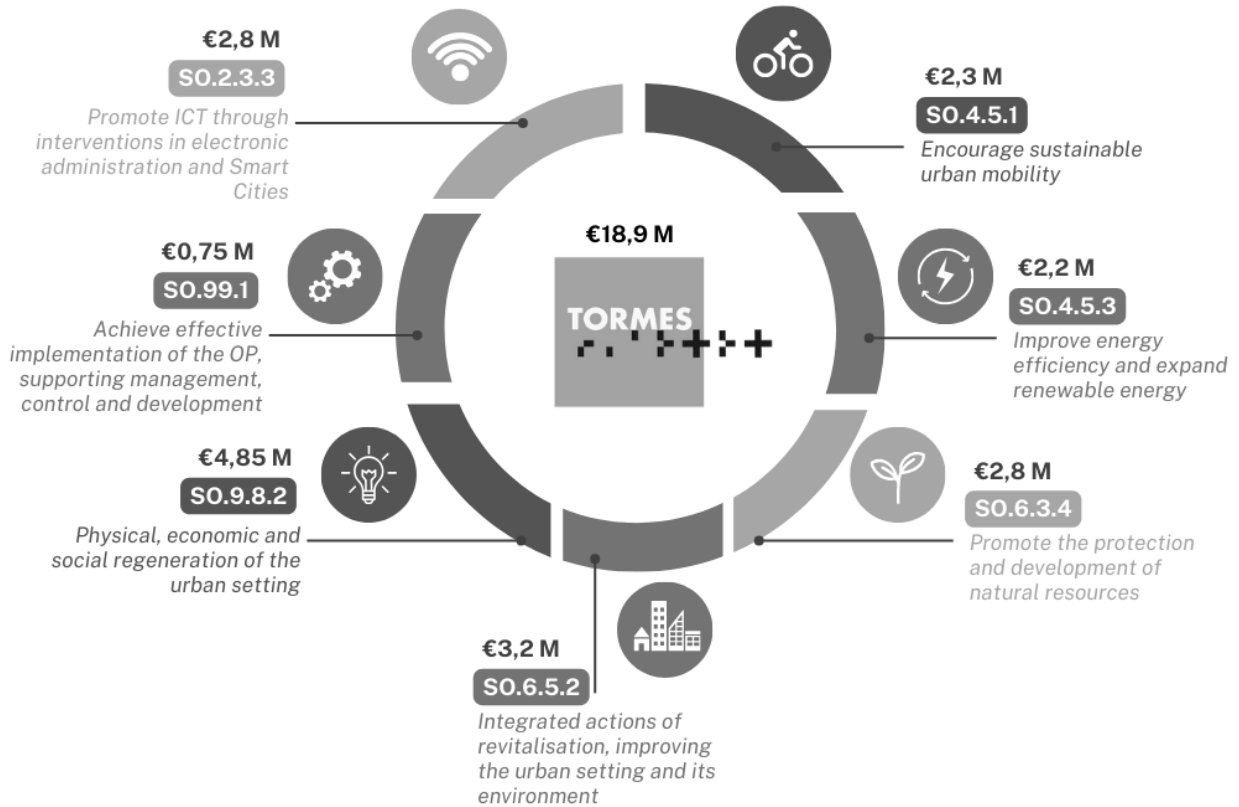
Lastly, EDUSI TORMES+ is a clear opportunity to capitalise on the Trastormes area and its human and environmental resources by developing structural policies with social and economic content such as training, labour integration, learning about entrepreneurial culture or exploring new niches of employment and activity. All within the context of boosting digitalization and new information and communication technologies. At the same time, the Strategy is an excellent opportunity for implementing a pilot Smart City initiative which involves creating a technological platform allowing different urban functions to be managed.

At the programme level, the TORMES+ Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategy has been implemented through seven lines of action, which coordinate different thematic and specific ERDF objectives for the 2014-2020 period. Therefore, the EDUSI addresses issues ranging from improved access, use and quality of new technologies to social inclusion and the fight against poverty and discrimination, via interventions which support the shift towards a low-carbon economy and promote protecting and valuing natural and cultural resources.

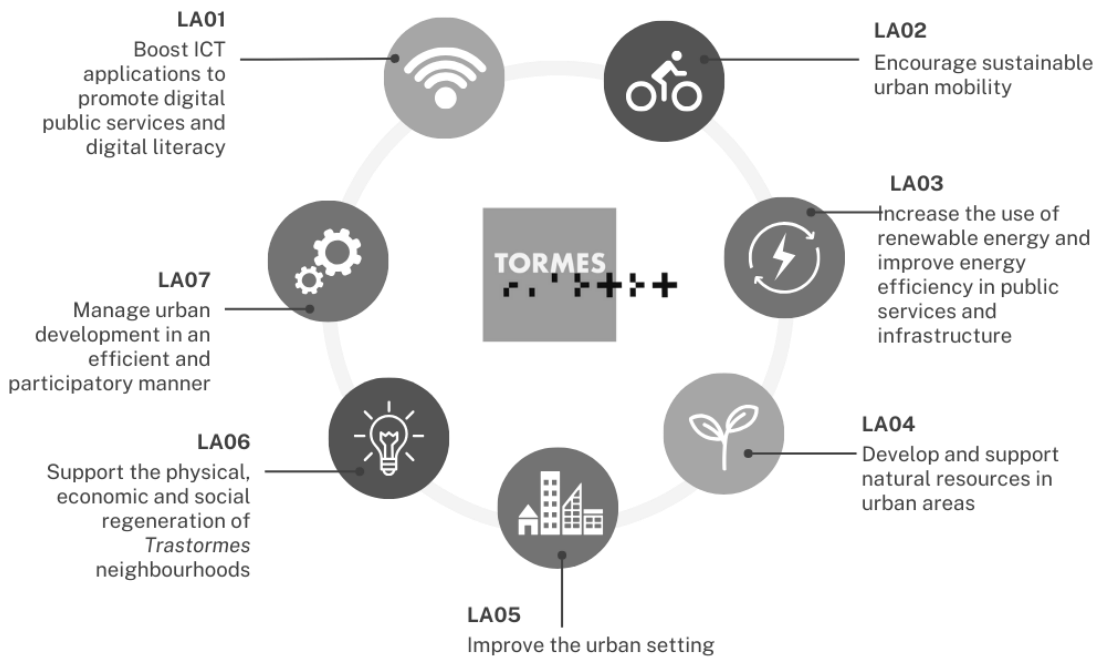
Deploying the Strategy in the Trastormes area included an intensive process of public participation in the city, implemented through a Public Call for Expressions of Interest for the Selection of Operations covered by EDUSI TORMES+. In this call, forty-two proposals presented by a total of twenty-one agents with independent legal status were registered: eleven associations and foundations (neighbourhood, environmental, cultural, political), three social economics companies and seven educational and research centres linked to the University of Salamanca.

Once the operations proposals had been received, the Technical Evaluation Commission analysed their suitability so they could be included in a Technical Project, called an Operation, reviewed, formulated and implemented by the Municipal Departments and Areas in their role as Executive Units for EDUSI TORMES+. Once approved, by means of the Resolution from the Delegate Councillor of Finance, the Operations were integrated into the Strategy as structural elements in order to achieve the definitive objectives. Based on this participatory process, eventually twenty functional Operations and four instrumental Operations associated with the Strategy's management, implementation and communication were approved.

Given the adaptability of the TORMES+ Strategy, developed within the framework of the EU Cohesion Policies, when assessing the intervention in Salamanca, how the results obtained at the local level contributed to attaining the thematic and strategic community objectives must be analysed. Thus, the seven-year implementation of this integrated macro-intervention with urban, infrastructural, environmental, technological, economic and social components has reconfigured the image of the neighbourhoods and the river area itself.



Eligible approved funding and distribution by EDUSI TORMES+ Specific Objectives



Lines of action for EDUSI TORMES+

ACHIEVEMENTS ATTAINED WITH EDUSI TORMES+

A significant part of the Operations developed by means of EDUSI TORMES+ have the river area as a reference point. The river space is understood as the river and its riverbanks, where interventions acquire an integrated character linked to the development and cohesion objectives. Thus, one of the greatest achievements attained by implementing the different technical projects which make up the Strategy was the functional conversion of the river area into a space of urban integration and cohesion.

Regarding the urban river interventions, the development of a large green space destined to become organic urban allotments, the impact of which has been shown to be very significant due to its social and environmental benefits, stands out. Quantitatively, this Operation involved creating approximately seven hundred allotments (which differ according to the end user: citizens, social use or research purposes) and naturalised walks designed as a new meeting, living and leisure space for people from Salamanca. This intervention has received strong social support from the whole city, and explicit recognition from the European Union, which granted the Urban Allotments in Salamanca the distinction of best representative and communicative project in the ERDF Cohesion Policies in 2022.

Expanding the scale, the allotments are set in a large river park covering both banks of the river, integrating and linking these spaces with the urban area across its twenty-eight hectares. Similarly, this Green Corridor has areas for leisure, rest, sport and children, in a microcosm representing the multifunctionality of this space. This condition has been improved by different interventions associated with the integration and cohesion of the urban area, which improve physical and functional connectivity between both sides.

In physical terms, connections between neighbourhoods on both sides of the river have been improved by constructing a new bridge for pedestrians and cyclists, very popular with the locals, as well as remodelling another two existing connections with improved provisions on their interurban transit. Meanwhile, functional connectivity is associated with the development of these spaces with other interventions from the Strategy via environmental, cultural, scenic routes and itineraries which mark out the river area. There is a total of ten routes which centre on the banks of the river Tormes and its neighbourhoods and can be explored both by bike and on foot, with three of them being completely accessible. All of them have varied interpretative signage.

Ultimately, the Tormes river area and its riverbanks has been established as a large green lung for the city. A space with great potential ability to accomplish an environmental function of naturalising the urban area and absorbing greenhouse gases, which the Salamanca City Council promotes as part of the Municipal Green Infrastructure Strategy (Savia Green network) and the Municipal Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

This process of naturally recovering the river area has been complemented by developing sustainable and energy-efficient solutions in different initiatives implemented in this space. Among them, building a water tank, located in the Urban Allotments area, to collect river water in order to provide the water needed to supply the smart irrigation network which covers it. Also in this setting, different solutions of photovoltaic energy generation by means of solar panels are included, providing the necessary energy for pumping and collecting the river water, as well as supplying the allotment facilities themselves.

The Integrated Environmental Centre of Huerta Otea is located on the right bank, which aims to actively contribute to mitigating climate change, raising awareness in the use of renewable energies

and improving the environment of the existing park, a great success with neighbours. The centre is envisaged as a combined operation which is complete in itself, creating a focus of stable attraction with multiple possibilities and opportunities for use in accordance with the different programmes proposed there (Botanical Garden and Energy Classroom, for example).

Likewise, the implementation of EDUSI TORMES+ has led to improvements in quality of life, functionality and the image of the riverbank neighbourhoods. Through urban regeneration interventions, the Strategy has developed initiatives for the reurbanisation and reclassification of public spaces, enhancing meeting and living places as a key point in a context where the Trastormesina community was committed to staying in their neighbourhoods, demonstrating deep social and cultural roots in the urban setting.

Specifically, as part of the unique intervention on the historic section of Tejares, action has been taken to renew the urban networks, including features for technological control and controlling existing pressures, which means a paradigm shift in this centre. To achieve this, emphasis has been placed on pedestrianisation and promoting sustainable mobility as well as on adapting a neighbourhood setting which fosters coexistence in public spaces. The interventions to improve quality of life in the neighbourhoods were reinforced by widening and renovating crossings over the station (historically requested by locals) and by recovering healthy, green spaces such as the Health Parks in Tejares or Chamberí.

At the same time, and taking advantage of the new centre associated with the Park of Urban Allotments, a facility known as Urban Lonja has been created. A multipurpose space, suitable for hosting promotional events for local products and resources, with a clear purpose of active leisure and recreation.

Meanwhile, initiatives in entrepreneurship and digitalisation have led to a socio-economic revival of the neighbourhoods and their areas of influence, reaching the whole city and promoting up-to-date knowledge and skills for an increasingly demanding and digitalised labour market.

In this area, the possibilities for improvement inevitably pass through structural policies with social and economic content: training, labour integration, learning about entrepreneurial culture and exploring new niches of employment and activity. All this in a context of boosting digitalization and new information and communication technologies.

The implementation of the Strategy in these terms has placed these neighbourhoods on the map of technological entrepreneurship in Salamanca, with the Centre of Entrepreneurship and Training Tormes+ as the driving element. A space destined to serve entrepreneurs and freelancers who want to introduce technological innovations to their respective businesses, collaboratively and supported by specialist staff.

The Centre holds training events, workshops on improving employability and support programmes for entrepreneurship and innovation. It also provides specialist training in its digital fabrication laboratory, or FabLab, equipped with the latest technology tools which are now the main attraction due to growing demand.

Likewise, this Strategy has promoted the implementation of a Smart City pilot project by creating a technological platform which gathers different data, structuring this based on different verticals. This Operation has been a major step towards the future creation of a digital twin of the city which allows and facilitates the integrated management of the municipal services.

Transversally, with the aim of guaranteeing the effective management and consistency of the EDUSI, a line has been set up for technical assistance in implementation, communication and, of course, management. Through these operations, the Strategy and the Communication Plan itself are monitored and streamlined, in order to broadcast its aims and achievements.



LA011_ Develop and plan the ICT Technological Platform
LA012_ Digital education and training



LA0211_ New crossing for cyclists and pedestrians over the river Tormes
LA0212_ Adapt existing crossings over the river Tormes
LA0213_ Sustainable connectivity of operations. Cycle path



LA031_ Integrate sustainable and energy-efficient solutions in Urban Allotments
Water deposit and leisure facilities
LA032_ Integrated Environmental Centre in Huerta Otea



LA041_ Reconstruction of the fishery in Tejares and adaptation of the river setting
LA042_ Introduce green corridors on the riverbanks
LA043_ Realisation of Urban Allotments
LA044_ Environmental, cultural and scenic itineraries



LA0511_ Improvements to Plaza Extremadura
LA0512_ Sporting facilities and infrastructure in neighbourhoods
LA0513_ Improvements to Chamberí Park as a viewpoint/astronomical observation point
LA053_ Adaptation of Lazarillo Park in Tormes



LA061_ Reurbanisation of Tejares centre
LA063_ Economic Activity Centre in Buenos Aires
LA0641_ Consolidate and value the *Noria de Sangre* (Blood Waterwheel)
LA065_ Adapt railway overbridge
LA066_ Develop Tormes+ Entrepreneurship and Training Centre



LA071_ Support managing EDUSI TORMES+
LA072_ Support implementing EDUSI TORMES+
LA073_ Support information and communication activities for EDUSI TORMES+
LA074_ Communication Plan for EDUSI TORMES+

List of Operations which make up EDUSI TORMES+ and related Lines of Action

EDUSI TORMES+: A SUCCESSFUL WAY OF EXPERIENCING EUROPE

The experience of managing a multifunctional intervention of this magnitude has meant learning about the processes of local participative governance and inter-administrative coordination. Conceived as an initiative of broad consensus and social and institutional participation, the Strategy has been managed with the active participation of the Information and Citizen Participation Committee and local associations, especially significant in these neighbourhoods.

Local participative governance was promoted and encouraged, not only through the aforementioned structures, but also by diffusion on the website, social networks and, as a singular element, by sending regular newsletters with updated information on the progress of the Operations. Measures to which digital signage was recently added, offering information on different initiatives and aspects of the city.

Meanwhile, the institutional coordination and management of the EDUSI has been a great challenge, involving ten Municipal Areas and Departments as Executive Units, together with the Department of Finance; Recruitment and Internal Affairs; the Budget Office; and the Municipal Board of Housing and Urban Development respectively, responsible for the Management and Coordination of the Strategy.

Thus, the interventions carried out in Salamanca, as a medium-sized city, are a magnificent example of applying the EU's cohesion policies both to promote sustainable and inclusive growth, associated with the green transition, and regarding the social and territorial cohesion of the river area with the city.

Similarly, the process of digital transition developed under this Strategy is a good example of applying these policies in the area of incorporating new technologies and intelligence in local dynamics.

In conclusion, the implementation of EDUSI TORMES+, together with the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Savia Green network) and the Municipal Adaptation to Climate Change Strategy, all of these instruments linked to the city's Urban Agenda approved in 2022, place Salamanca on the path to green, technological and digital transition in order to deal with the future framework of the 2021-2027 programme of the EU's Cohesion Policies.