

Vienna, Feb 2026

## **Working in Concept – Platform for Urban Activation and Strategic Vacancy Management**

An Initiative to activating underused shops with temporary, high-value design interventions to foster sustainable, inclusive, and resilient neighbourhoods across Europe.

**Call reference:** HORIZON-NEB-2026-01-BUSINESS-03: Approaches to reuse vacant, obsolete or underutilised spaces.

**Application status:** *Research for Project Coordinator and consortium*

### **Abstract**

Across Europe, an increasing number of neighbourhood shopping streets are affected by long-term vacancy, particularly at ground-floor level, where empty shops weaken local economies, social life and the quality of the built environment. At the same time, emerging designers and young creative professionals face significant barriers to market access, visibility and affordable retail space. This challenge presents a opportunity for innovative funding and business models aligned with the New European Bauhaus. By activating otherwise unused local shops for a high-value, time-limited interim use (1 – 2 years), neighbourhoods can be transformed into living laboratories for quality design, craftsmanship and sustainable consumption. Inviting (young) designers to produce, showcase and sell well-designed, locally rooted objects not only prevents vacancy and urban decay, but also generates cultural, social and economic value at street level. As a low-risk, flexible and replicable model, such interim uses anticipate the long-term future of neighbourhoods by strengthening local identity, fostering circular and human-centred economies, and testing new forms of collaboration between property owners, designers, municipalities and communities – in line with the values of the New European Bauhaus.