



Urban Agenda for the EU

Multi-level governance in action

2021 Update



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Manuscript completed in **November 2021**

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This brochure is published under the responsibility of the European Commission. It has been delivered under the Framework Contract 'Support to the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU through the provision of management, expertise, and administrative support to the Partnerships', signed between the European Commission (Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy) and Ecorys. The opinions expressed and the arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of European Commission. This brochure, as well as statistical data and maps included herein, are collected from the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU and reflect the state of play at the moment. The Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included. Neither the Commission nor any person acting on the Commission's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union, 2021

ISBN 978-92-76-43347-7
doi: 10.2776/30449

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Legend

- Participating EU Member States
- Coordinator City
- Coordinator Member State
- Partner Regional Authority
- Partner City

Show All

Amsterdam Partnership

- Air Quality
- Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees
- Housing
- Urban Poverty

Bratislava Partnership

- Circular Economy
- Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy
- Urban Mobility
- Digital Transition

Malta Partnership

- Climate Adaptation
- Energy Transition
- Public Procurement
- Sustainable Use of Land

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- Security in Public Spaces
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In times of crises, the **role of cities in fighting global challenges** is becoming ever more apparent. Cities have long concentrated the challenges our societies are faced with, be it climate change, social inequalities or migration, and the pandemic's effect has been no exception. Cities are however also at the frontline of delivering solutions, paving the way towards recovery and resilience, and digital and green transition.

This brochure delivers valuable insights on how **multi-level governance and partnership** are put into action in the scope of the **Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU)**, launched in 2016 to improve the urban dimension of policies and the role of cities in policy-making. This publication sheds light on the **innovative and unique character of the UAEU**, which has enabled cities, the European Commission, other EU institutions, Member States, and key stakeholders to reflect together and identify solutions on how to better tackle urban challenges. All this by working across and beyond levels of governments, sectors and territories. It displays the achievements, experiences and learnings of the UAEU and its fourteen thematic **Partnerships** including inspirational solutions to urban issues. This brochure also outlines the **next phase of the Urban Agenda for the EU**, initiated in the scope of the New Leipzig Charter, as well as the upcoming opportunities for cities through EU programmes and initiatives.

Beyond the UAEU, the support of the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** will allow Europe and its cities, towns, and municipalities to emerge stronger and more resilient from the current crisis. The aim of the Facility is not to get us back to where we were, but to take a leap into the future. It will support the recovery, but also invest in the next generation to carry out the green and digital transitions. Cities have a decisive role to play to support and implement the reforms and investments foreseen in this framework.

In addition, **Cohesion policy**, which will be allocating one third of all 2021-2027 funding to financing green projects, will be key in supporting cities and regions in transitioning into a climate-neutral future. Thanks to a compulsory **8% of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** to be implemented by cities in every Member State, through the Policy Objective 'A Europe closer to citizens' and the **European Urban Initiative (EUI)**, cities will receive support for investing, for innovating, and for building their capacities and knowledge.

In turn, cities have a major responsibility in the development of the surrounding areas, acting as 'growth corridors' where growth circles back to the wider territories they are part of.

The **Urban Agenda for the EU** will continue being at the heart of urban transformations, acting as a space for dialogue and for action. By focusing on urban challenges such as climate adaptation, digital transition or jobs and skills, it contributes to enhanced and more sustainable development solutions in European cities. I am confident that the UAEU will strive to give space and visibility to cities' needs in the EU, and to **reinforce the consideration for the urban dimension** in all policies.



Elisa Ferreira
Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms



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State of Play of the Urban Agenda for the EU

The [Pact of Amsterdam](#), adopted in May 2016, was a key milestone in the development of a shared EU-wide approach to urban challenges. Through it, the Urban Agenda for the EU was launched, marking an important step towards realising the potential for cities to shape policy alongside national and EU actors.

The [Urban Agenda for the EU](#) is an innovative urban policy initiative, which has put multi-level governance into action. It has enabled cities, Member States, the European Commission and other key stakeholders to come together to jointly tackle pressing urban matters and deliver concrete outputs for the benefit of EU citizens.

The Urban Agenda for the EU is boosting the role of cities in national and EU policymaking to better connect the EU with citizens' needs.

There is scope to strengthen urban policy in the EU...

Cities are centres for driving positive change and development, supporting the move towards a sustainable and resilient society. Many of the challenges we face today – social segregation, air pollution, provision of affordable housing, and climate change, to name a few – are being tackled in cities. At the same time, cities are positioned to develop innovative solutions to these challenges by, for example, promoting inclusion and better integration through the establishment of a new European Migrant Advisory Board (see page 31).

The Urban Agenda for the EU has provided valuable support and impetus to urban policy thinking and dialogue in Europe. An information hub, '[One Stop Shop for Cities](#)', provides an entry point to other EU policies with an urban dimension. Evidence-based policies in the EU are enhanced by the [Urban Data Platform+](#), which offers a wealth of information on European cities and regions. There is a strong [urban dimension in Cohesion Policy](#), with delegated responsibilities for cities to select projects that are part of an integrated urban strategy. Projects funded through [Urban Innovative Actions](#) and [URBACT](#) networks provide additional support to research and practice.

There is scope to further reinforce urban policy in the EU through stronger and closer cooperation between cities, Member States and the EU. This is where the Urban Agenda for the EU is making a concrete and positive contribution. It is an 'umbrella' for all urban policy initiatives, helping to strengthen urban policy at all levels, from city to Member State to the EU.

"This is an incredible opportunity for cities to improve the life of their citizens and spreading growth across their surrounding areas"

Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

...and to contribute to the UN New Urban Agenda

Through its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the [United Nations 2030 Agenda](#), the Urban Agenda for the EU is also outward-looking and connected to global challenges. To read more about the Urban Agenda for the EU and how it supports the [New Urban Agenda](#), please see the below chapter 'International commitments of the Urban Agenda for the EU'.

"Building skyscrapers is not urbanisation, urbanisation is a process." It is city dwellers who make for good urban outcomes, not buildings, and we need to listen to the people so as to design better lives for them".

Maimunah Mohd Sharif of Malaysia, Executive Director of UN-Habitat

...by supporting better regulation, better funding and better knowledge

The Pact of Amsterdam states, 'in order to realise the full potential of the European Union and deliver on its strategic objectives, the Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve cities in achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge. The Pact of Amsterdam states, 'in order to realise the full potential of the European Union and deliver on its strategic objectives, the Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve cities in achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge.



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Better regulation is supported through more effective implementation and coherent implementation of existing EU policies, legislation and instruments. Better funding is about identifying, supporting, integrating, and improving sources of funding so that urban policy actors can better understand and access it. Better knowledge is about further building the knowledge base on urban issues and reinforcing/strengthening the mutual exchange of knowledge and good practices.

...by piloting territorial impact assessments

The European Commission is carrying out impact assessments, including a territorial assessment to better understand how future EU legislation might impact territorial units such as cities. In addition, the European Commission has set up a platform ([Fit for Future Platform \(F4F\)](#)) to improve existing EU legislation, involving national authorities and other stakeholders. The need to increase involvement from local and regional authorities in this platform has been recognised. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is part of the government group and will make use of its [RegHub](#) network of regional and local authorities, and EUROCITIES is part of the stakeholder group. The [Communication on Better Regulation](#), issued in 2021, confirms this intention. It addresses the need to amend Better Regulation guidance to highlight the importance of screening and assessing territorial impacts, and to clearly present assessments, evaluations and explanatory memoranda.

"The urban impact assessments strengthen better evaluations and urban innovative actions help the EU to capitalise on the strength of cities to find innovative solutions for the citizens of Europe."

EUROCITIES, Statement on the Urban Agenda for the EU

...based on an integrated approach

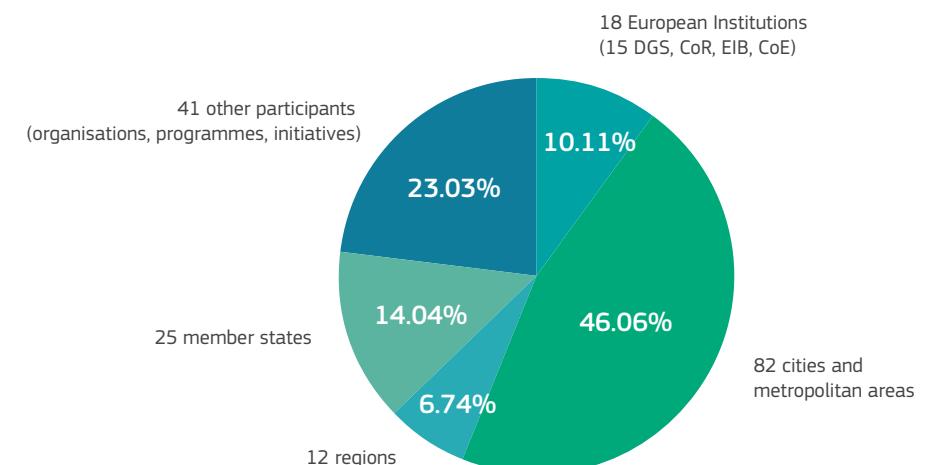
Silo thinking leads to silo solutions. This is contrary to an integrated approach to urban development. The importance of integrated urban development was affirmed by the [Leipzig Charter of 2007](#) – and [reaffirmed by the New Leipzig Charter in 2020](#) – and is a cornerstone of the urban dimension of Cohesion policy. European cities must continue to be supported in a manner that allows them to design and implement integrated strategies; Cohesion Policy currently supports this, and will continue to do so in the future.

The priority themes of the Urban Agenda for the EU are not addressed individually, but in a connected and joined up manner which depends on input and collaboration between experts from different policy fields, and from different levels of government. For example, air quality cannot be addressed without also considering urban mobility (transport) and energy transition (clean energy).

...and based on participation

In the EU regulatory framework, multi-stakeholder involvement, partnerships and wider public participation are mentioned as key principles in a series of policy documents. The [European Code of Conduct](#) on Partnership proposes a strengthened partnership approach in planning and spending and lays down a common set of standards to improve consultation, participation and dialogue with partners during the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects financed by Cohesion policy funds. The urban dimension of Cohesion policy ensures a participatory approach through the involvement of relevant stakeholders, now and in the future.

Most actions under the Urban Agenda for the EU are delivered through partnerships, each made up of a variety of members. The 14 partnerships have brought together 25 Member States, 82 cities and/or metropolitan regions, 12 regions and 15 directorate-generals of the European Commission, and no less than 44 institutions, ranging from European umbrella organisations, programmes and networks, to civil society organisations and private companies. In total, 326 partners work together, embodying the principle of shared ownership and multi-stakeholder involvement.



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Partnerships are in regular dialogue to build joined-up solutions; one of the most valuable features of the Urban Agenda for the EU is its capacity to link policy actors who would otherwise not be in contact.

"The Urban Agenda for the EU is a milestone for cities and for Europe. It delivers impact through the multi-level governance in a partnership approach, which strengthens mutual understanding and collaboration across Europe."

EUROCITIES, Statement on the Urban Agenda for the EU

Delivered through partnerships

The Pact of Amsterdam set out a range of priority themes for the Urban Agenda for the EU, from urban mobility to jobs and skills. Most actions are delivered through partnerships, each made up of various members.

In 2016, four Partnerships were established around urban poverty, the inclusion of migrant and refugees, air quality and housing – the Amsterdam partnerships. A year later the Bratislava partnerships followed, addressing digital transition, urban mobility, jobs and skills in the local economy, and circular economy. These were followed by the Malta Partnerships, covering the sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, climate adaptation, public procurement and energy transition.

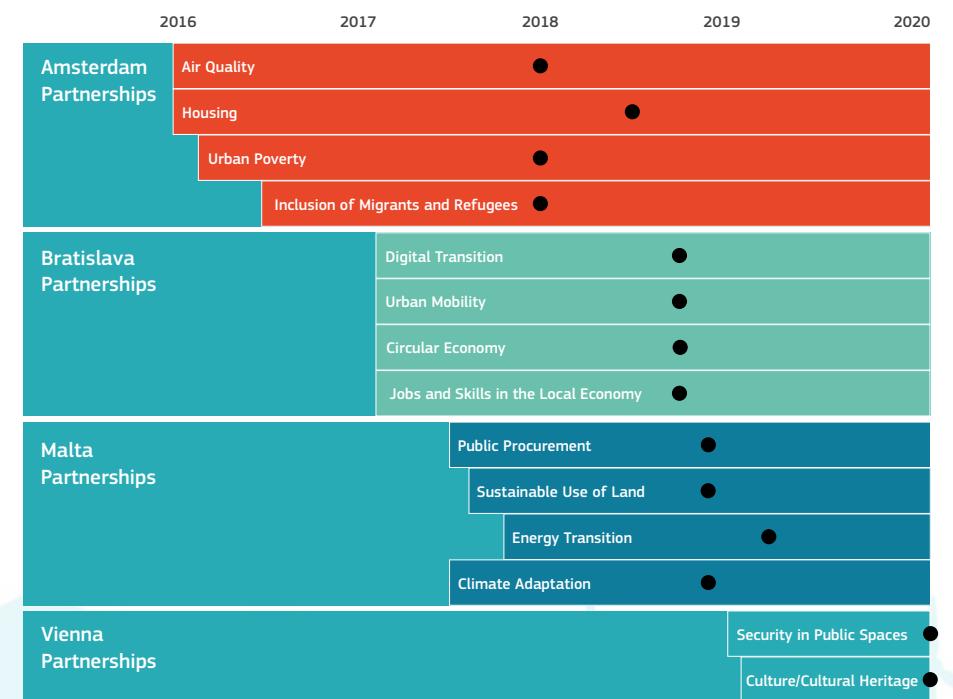
In early 2019 the partnerships on culture and cultural heritage and security in public spaces were established; known as the Vienna partnerships.

...and action plans

Each partnership delivers through an action plan, which is finalised by consensus and covers improvements in regulation, funding and knowledge, but may also extend to policies, governance and practice.

"The emerging action plans of the Urban Agenda for the EU are excellent roadmaps to addressing the challenges faced by Europe's urban centres. Policy development and implementation of such plans are crucial for the future of Europe."

Kieran McCarthy, Member of European Committee of the Regions and Independent City Councillor of Cork



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...in an open and dynamic way

The Urban Agenda for the EU has continually evolved, mobilising greater numbers of urban, regional, national and EU actors at each stage. The website of the [Urban Agenda for the EU](#) is the central information resource for anyone interested, offering details of the partnerships, news and updates.

The 14 action plans are inspired by the needs of cities and their inhabitants; everyone is invited to contribute through public consultation. In this way, the Urban Agenda for the EU offers a unique way to bring Europe closer to its citizens.

Evolving over time

Now six years on, implementation is well underway and in part finalised. Action plans have been launched by 14 partnerships, through which 132 distinct actions are currently being implemented or have been finalised (based on the update of actions from March 2021). Each individual action aims to solve urban problems and to contribute to the evolving policy landscape across Europe. Each action has a specific output. This may be a policy toolkit to assist urban policy actors in better managing social and affordable housing in Europe (an action by the Housing Partnership), a legal handbook on innovative public procurement (an action by the Public Procurement Partnership), or making microfinance more available to migrants and refugees (an action by the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees Partnership).

Furthermore, several Partnerships have decided to continue their activities, beyond their natural lifespan, to finalise some of the actions, or in other cases to work on new ones. This was done to both consolidate their previous achievements and raise ambitions to meet new challenges in times of crisis and uncertainty.

The Inclusion for Migrants and Refugees Partnership has presented a [revised Action Plan](#) for 2021–2022 to the Directors General on Urban Matters DGUM, which includes seven new Actions that they will focus on during their extended tenure. The seven Actions combine structural interventions with targeted measures that seek to address specific vulnerabilities such as mental-health concerns among migrants and refugees, enhancing the protection of children in migration, and identifying challenges to inclusion facing LGBTQI+ migrant communities.

The Public Procurement Partnership has also announced that a new Action Plan should be presented in early 2022. The Partnership is expanding and hopes to reach out to additional public authorities in this way. The three new actions for the extended term will have an emphasis on a post COVID-19 economic recovery, leveraging public procurement as a strategic tool for environmental, digitalisation, and innovation goals to meet the EU green targets, and knowledge exchange of innovative, social, and sustainable experiences.

Maintaining political momentum

Following the Pact of Amsterdam and the Council Conclusions (2016), the call to more effectively involve cities in national and EU policymaking continued. The [report from the European Commission to the Council of the EU](#) on the Urban Agenda for the EU, the [resolution of the European Parliament on the 'role of cities in the institutional framework of the Union'](#), the [Opinion of the CoR on 'implementation assessment of the Urban Agenda for the EU'](#), and the [EUROCITIES statement 'EU partners delivering added value for citizens'](#) demonstrate commitment from all levels.

During the Romanian Presidency, the Urban Agenda for the EU was reinforced by the [Bucharest Declaration](#) supported by all levels of governments and other stakeholders. The [New Leipzig Charter](#), an initiative of the German Presidency of the Council of the EU, was adopted in 2020. It stands as a key document to redefine the principles of sustainable urban development in light of current frameworks and challenges. The experiences of Urban Agenda partnerships with multi-level urban governance, co-creation of policies and citizen participation all contributed to this renewed Leipzig Charter. The [Implementing Document of the New Leipzig Charter](#) reaffirms the importance of the Urban Agenda for the EU and aims at guiding its next phase. Moreover, the Ljubljana Agreement, which is being developed during the Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies, aims at establishing the next phase of the Urban Agenda. The document is to be adopted during the Ministerial meeting in November 2021. In the European Commission's 2021–2027 Cohesion policy, support to the Urban Agenda is included in the [European Urban Initiative \(EUI\)](#).



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Addressing the challenges of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact worldwide, and posed many challenges in different areas, such as jobs, housing, digital access, etc. Some of these challenges were particularly acute in cities. Partnerships were also impacted since they had to change their working methods to accommodate the emergency measures. Nonetheless, partnerships persisted in their work and moved forward to see if they could give assistance in any relevant area. The Housing Partnership, for example, focused on the fact that the pandemic put cities and tenants under pressure. They highlighted what had been done to protect people. Both the city of Vienna and Germany's larger COVID-19 crisis package guaranteed that no one will be evicted for being unable to pay rent.

Additionally, partners of the Urban Mobility Partnership actively helped cities and regions navigate the difficult times by providing an overview of useful resources on COVID-19 and mobility and collecting examples of how local authorities are keeping things moving despite the pandemic.

Furthermore, the Public Procurement Partnership realised that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, cities must reconsider their approach to economic growth and related policies, and that public procurement might play a role in this new approach. They researched how cities across Member States modified their procurement methods as a result of the pandemic, and how they linked them to broader social, health and environmental challenges. This resulted in a [report containing multiple case studies](#), offering insights on how cities can capitalise on new trends to make public procurement greener, more sustainable, and better serve the wider community.

The renewal process of the Urban Agenda for the EU is on-going and will take its new form following the adoption of the Ljubljana Agreement to take place in November 2021. This document will provide for the start of a new phase, with additional parameters, and adjustments in order for future work under the UAEU to be better targeted, and to have greater impact.

Achievements of the Urban Agenda for the EU

The following pages in this report highlight the diversity and variety of actions and achievements so far. Over the following chapters the role of the Urban Agenda for the EU in building innovative and good governance, working in a more integrated way to address cross-cutting issues, and in implementing the UN New Urban Agenda for the EU is highlighted. This is followed by a range of 'action stories' and examples of actions by supporting better regulation, better funding and better knowledge, three objectives reaffirmed in the Implementing Document of the New Leipzig Charter. The reader will also be taken through the multiple programmes and initiatives addressing sustainable urban development.

Series of Articles on the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships

This year, a [series of articles](#) centred around the 14 partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU was launched. The articles link Partnerships' actions and activities with other relevant EU projects and initiatives supported by Cohesion policy, such as UIA, URBACT or Article 7 cities benefiting from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and are structured around the three Productive, Green, and Just City dimensions of the New Leipzig Charter.

The aim is to highlight cities' critical involvement in the Urban Agenda for the EU and focus on specific actions they have led and implemented. The articles also showcase the EUI's added value, as well as practices and experiences on how diverse tools and financing assistance may help cities tackle issues in a strategic approach towards sustainable urban development.



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OBJECTIVES



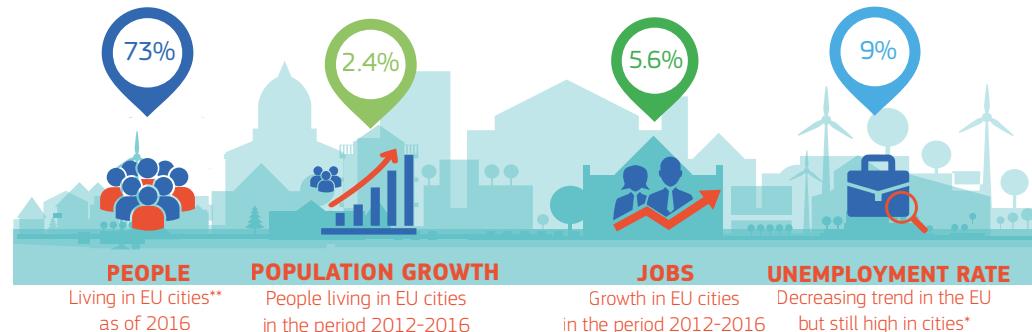
- BETTER KNOWLEDGE
- BETTER FUNDING
- BETTER REGULATION

“For Europe to be transformed, its cities must lead the way.

Elisa Ferreira
Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER CITIES



TIMELINE



AMSTERDAM PARTNERSHIPS

BRATISLAVA PARTNERSHIPS

MALTA PARTNERSHIPS

VIENNA PARTNERSHIPS

14 PRIORITY THEMES

AMSTERDAM PARTNERSHIPS



BRATISLAVA PARTNERSHIPS



MALTA PARTNERSHIPS



VIENNA PARTNERSHIPS



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Inspiring urban governance

The Urban Agenda for the EU promotes innovative and good governance, which is reflected at the level of coordination structures and policies in Member States and regions. Some Member States have been inspired by the Urban Agenda for the EU and applied similar approaches at national and/or regional level. This was the case in Poland, Italy and in the Basque region in Spain, to take three examples.

Poland: The Partnership Initiative of Cities and the National Collaboration Agreement

In Poland, new approaches to cooperating on urban issues were initiated through the adoption of its National Urban Policy in 2015. Later, in 2017, the Polish Ministry of Investment and Economic Development launched the Strategy for Responsible Development, which comprises several instruments dedicated to cities. One of them is the **Partnership Initiative of Cities**. Three pilot networks on air quality, mobility and urban regeneration – inspired by the Urban Agenda for the EU – are essential to this initiative. This was strongly related to the fact that Polish partners are active in 12 partnerships.

The Partnership Initiative of Cities uses a combination of the working processes of the Urban Agenda for the EU, and those of URBACT. Inspired by URBACT, 34 municipalities with their local stakeholders regularly come together at national level to explore ideas and projects to put in place. There are two kinds of meetings: individual pilot network meetings, and meetings bringing together the three pilot networks to explore synergies and to ensure a more integrated approach to local design. The activities of the pilot networks are twofold; each of the 34 cities describe potential actions, and each of the three networks elaborate recommendations to national ministries on specific policy areas (in a manner comparable to partnerships under the Urban Agenda for the EU). This working process allows better sharing and understanding of ideas and actions amongst Polish cities and thus leads to a more inclusive decision-making system.

Polish urban governance has seen further innovations. A **national collaboration agreement** was signed at the first National Urban Forum in Krakow on 1 April 2019 by representatives of several Polish ministries, regional governments, cities and their associations and scientific communities involved in urban development. The agreement aims to foster the implementation of the **Polish National Urban Policy** whilst promoting actions in the field of sustainable urban development and the SDGs.

The Polish Ministry of Enterprise and Technology coordinates the implementation of the SDGs, alongside the Strategy for Responsible Development, ensuring national priorities are consistent with global challenges and objectives. Besides this, Poland is implementing the New Urban Agenda through concrete actions, such as the *Clean Air Programme*, the *Package for Medium-Sized Cities*, and the *Human Smart Cities Programme*.

Italy: Enthusiasm leads to new national networks

Italy has the highest number of cities involved in the Urban Agenda for the EU. The Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion works with large and small cities to jointly implement this initiative. The Agency supports the application of smart city strategies in metropolitan agglomerations primarily through the **National Operational Programme Metropolitan Cities (PON METRO)**. Smart solutions rolled out in bigger urban areas, and the experiences of smaller cities via regional programmes and within the Urban Agenda for EU, are mutually supportive.

Within PON METRO a Technical Secretariat coordinates a national network of cities of all sizes and several national ministries and agencies. This network aims to combine learning experiences across various plans and programmes in Italy. Capitalising on the knowledge of the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU is another key task. The network is open to Italian cities active in the partnerships as well as those not involved in the Urban Agenda for the EU.



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The Basque region in Spain: Integrated policies as a road to success

The urban agenda of the Basque region in Spain is a good example of an approach to urban policies that has become increasingly integrated along the way. While an earlier strategy targeting the year 2025 focused on sustainable construction, the [BULTZATU 2050 roadmap](#) provides a holistic and integrated regional urban agenda.

The same development can be observed for the Hábitat Urbano pilot group, which has brought together some 40 stakeholders from the public and private sectors since 2015. The responsible entities, led by the Basque Department of the Environment, Territorial Planning and Housing, became increasingly aware that the Urban Habitat concept should follow a truly transversal and cross-cutting approach and decided to broaden the thematic scope of the group. Hence, the Hábitat Urbano pilot group expanded the sustainability concept to incorporate themes such as digitalisation, health, culture and cultural heritage, employability, gender, aging, mobility, energy transition, trade and education.

The involvement of the Basque region in both the Urban Agenda for the EU and the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations has been a key catalyst for this development.

Enhancing cooperation between urban research and practice

Another important spinoff effect of the Urban Agenda for the EU is enhanced cooperation between urban research and practice. The [Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe](#) has modelled its new Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda 2.0 on the Urban Agenda for the EU priority themes. Several calls for proposals within the [Horizon 2020](#) programme explicitly refer to the Urban Agenda for the EU. The European Commission continues to develop its efforts in urban research, as evidenced by its '[Future of Cities' report](#)', the establishment of an Urban Data Platform and a [community of practice](#) bringing policymakers and researchers together. Although research on urban issues is well developed, potential solutions are not always put into practice. Urban Innovative Actions offers cities the chance to test new innovative solutions and, in doing so, foster a genuine bottom-up approach. In addition, URBACT supports good practice and assists cities in adopting proven urban development solutions.

Urban Innovative Actions is the name of an initiative under 2014–2020 Cohesion policy, co-financed by the ERDF. Its mission is to identify and test new innovative solutions and, in doing so, to support urban authorities in their efforts to achieve sustainable urban development. It is rooted in a strong commitment at European level to strengthen the urban dimension of EU policies. Urban Innovative Actions contributes to the Urban Agenda for the EU, as the initiative is thematically aligned with identified topics relating to the agenda. In this way Urban Innovative Actions provides urban authorities with the opportunity to test new ideas and solutions, fostering a genuine bottom-up thematic approach. The **knowledge generated by cities** involved in Urban Innovative Actions is made available to practitioners and policymakers in Europe and beyond. It will also be used to feed into the work of Partnerships in the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU.



URBACT

For about 15 years, the [URBACT programme](#) has been the European Territorial Cooperation programme aiming to foster sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. It is an instrument of Cohesion policy, co-financed by the ERDF, the 27 Member States, Norway and Switzerland. URBACT's mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges by networking, learning from experience, and identifying good practice to improve urban policy. URBACT actively contributes to the Urban Agenda for the EU by having URBACT cities or experts in all partnerships and by linking the outcomes of URBACT projects and capitalisation activities to the partnerships. URBACT also directly tackles many of the cross-cutting issues identified in the Pact of Amsterdam, such as exploring integrated approaches, opportunities for smaller cities, and gender equality. Well-developed URBACT methods are also proving valuable in the implementation of strategic and integrated urban development, in Cohesion policy and beyond.



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Using EU funding more effectively

Many partnerships are developing actions to make it easier for cities to access EU funding, some of which are further explained in the chapter 'Actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU in motion'. Guidelines have been developed for the next round of EU funding programmes to help the European Commission and Member States to mobilise funding towards more integrated approaches in cities.

Some ideas are coming from Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT and cities implementing the ERDF. An effort has been made to embed these solutions and ideas in the work of the partnerships.

Some cities managed to participate in European programmes (Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT, 5 % of the ERDF dedicated to cities) as well as the Urban Agenda for the EU. They are engaged in generating plans and actions which embody the main principles of sustainable urban development in Cohesion policy; partnership, multi-level governance and an integrated place-based approach.

Read more about how Lisbon, Barcelona and [Rotterdam](#) benefitted from European programmes and how they aligned them with the Urban Agenda for the EU. Check out how [Turin](#) (urban poverty) and [Bologna](#) (inclusion of migrants and refugees) moved from URBACT to a successful Urban Innovative Action project. Look into the cases of [Maribor](#) (circular economy) and [Cluj-Napoca](#) (jobs and skills in the local economy) embedding their Urban Innovative Action in the work of their partnership. [Lodz](#) and [Timisoara](#) (urban poverty), [Zagreb](#) (sustainable use of land) and [Alba Iulia](#) (culture and cultural heritage) are sharing their URBACT experiences with the other partnership members.

The effort to **fight urban poverty and deprivation** at European level is not new to our shared stance on social welfare, but poverty has increased in many cities across Europe as a result of public investment cuts and the economic crisis of the past decade. Similar efforts are also being made at European level, not only with the Urban Agenda partnership focusing on urban poverty, but also with other related partnerships such as Housing and Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. Furthermore, investments via the ERDF and the European Social Fund are supporting projects that seek to address urban deprivation and social exclusion. In parallel with these EU funds, national programmes are addressing urban poverty. Many instruments are concentrated in cities. For this reason, city administrations play a key role in developing integrated strategies to address exclusion and poverty problems.



Community-led local development in neighbourhoods

Source: URBACT

Lisbon developed a strategy for areas of priority intervention. This strategy provides a range of integrated tools – a map, a grant, a task force and the [Community-Led Local Development tool](#) (supported by Cohesion policy) – to be used and adapted in order to empower local communities and enhance quality of life for citizens.

As part of the strategy, Lisbon **established local structures for co-governance**, centred in neighbourhoods (local offices) and consisting of municipality coordinator and an executive committee comprising local stakeholders in the urban regeneration process. Local authorities, associations and other actors have also been engaged. This co-governance structure allows the municipality to **implement decision-making at local level and engage local actors**. This approach is being transferred through an URBACT network called '[Com.Unity.Lab](#)' to [other cities in Europe](#).

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Schools' playgrounds open to the wider public

Source: *Urban Innovative Actions*

Barcelona implements a project supported by Cohesion policy Urban Innovative Actions, through which school playgrounds will be transformed into climate shelters and opened to the wider public (outside school hours). In addition to traditional solutions to combat heat in school playgrounds, a recreational refreshment point will be created along with new green spaces.

The province of Barcelona is also contributing to tackling climate change under the Urban Agenda Partnership on Climate adaptation. Barcelona is leading an Action to better enable municipalities to implement climate adaptation measures by utilising support from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Calls for proposals under the European Structural and Investment Funds are often complex, and the action is dedicated to developing recommendations for future operational programmes.

Alongside infrastructure interventions, parallel processes have been implemented in cooperation with school communities to raise awareness of climate change. Several activities were kick-started including, for example, an educational project that includes teacher training as well as the involvement of students and school professionals in the health impact assessment.

"It's absolutely urgent for the future and for the sustainability of cities that there really is an initiative shared by everyone in the fight against climate change."

Janet Sanz, Vice-Mayor for Ecology, Barcelona City Hall

The issue of job creation is one of the top priorities for the EU, Member States, cities and citizens. Cities have a key role to play in creating and supporting the right conditions for innovative investment that leads to more and better jobs for their citizens.



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Job opportunities in research and innovation

Source: City of Rotterdam; Photo: Claire Droppert



Aligning young people's educational choice with future labour market needs

Source: City of Rotterdam; Photo: Claire Droppert

The city of **Rotterdam** has set up an integrated territorial investment (ITI), receiving financing from the ERDF. Its aim is to **connect neighbourhoods suffering from high unemployment rates with areas of the city offering job opportunities, investing in research and innovation, and the low carbon economy**.

The ongoing transformation of Rotterdam's economy has already started to influence the skills that are required from the workforce. Unprecedented new economic opportunities and challenges will drastically change needs of the labour market, and therefore, qualification and skill gaps are expected to grow significantly. This issue is especially relevant to young people in deprived areas.

These challenges are reflected in the Urban Innovative Actions project, BRIDGE, led by Rotterdam. Rotterdam tackles the urban challenge of better aligning young peoples' educational choices with future labour market needs. This is delivered through a career and talent orientation programme that covers children from primary school age (nine years) to student entry into the labour market.

Rotterdam – which is one of the coordinators of the Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy Partnership under the Urban Agenda for the EU – connects the dots by linking their innovative solutions (Urban Innovative Actions) and their experience with the ITI to the partnership, inspiring many other cities.

Both in UIA and UAEU, Rotterdam takes part in generating plans and actions grounded on the main principles of Cohesion policy about effective governance based on partnerships, multi-level governance and an integrated place-based approach. At programme level, **URBACT** has examined the changing EU context for cities in relation to jobs and skills as well. This work has drawn on the experiences of cities and has been informed by good practice across Europe.

"This financial support from Europe is a fantastic acknowledgement for innovative career guidance developed by mentors, deans, teachers and employers for the pupils on in Rotterdam South. This is a huge impulse enabling us to do even more for the young people in Rotterdam South."

Ahmed Aboutaleb, Mayor of Rotterdam

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Working on equal footing in the Partnerships

Working on an equal footing with all stakeholders (in other words, avoiding a strong organisational hierarchy) facilitates new possibilities for cities to work directly with the European Commission, Member States and other actors.

"A genuine partnership approach is a win-win situation. Policymakers at EU level become more informed about challenges in cities and vice-versa. It leads to better policies and better implementation. The Urban Agenda's strong point is that it pilots and develops a closer partnership between all levels of government."

Dorthe Nielsen, EUROCITIES

This has been also acknowledged by Karen Van Dantzig, the Urban Envoy of the Netherlands:

"Cities and regions are affected by EU policy and regulations on a daily basis. The Urban Agenda for the EU offers an opportunity to influence the many EU rules and regulations. In my view, the Better Regulation pillar is potentially the most impactful, but also probably the most complicated pillar of the UAEU. Strengthening it, for example through the Better Regulation Initiative, should give partnerships the tools and knowledge to intervene more timely and effectively."

And by Jan Olbrycht, Member of the European Parliament and President of the URBAN Intergroup:

"The Urban Agenda for the EU is a new model of multi-level governance. The role of local authorities has been strengthened as they participate in the work of different partnerships on an equal footing with other partners. They can share their opinion on the review of existing legislation and reflect on the future shape of national and EU policies."

The European Commission has reinforced urban policy coordination and considers the Urban Agenda for the EU as the 'umbrella' for its urban policy initiatives. This has increased cooperation and coordination between the respective DGs of the European Commission.

"I would like to emphasise the importance of the principle of participation and multi-level governance, working together with cities, regions, Member States and all stakeholders, at all levels. It is only by coordinating our efforts that we will succeed."

Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms



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European Commission contributions to the Urban Agenda for the EU and sustainable urban development

The European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) facilitates the overall process of the Urban Agenda for the EU by bringing EU policy expertise to partnerships' meetings, and by providing (together with the European Parliament) funding for a secretariat for the partnerships and maintaining communication activities with all interested parties.

The Urban Agenda for the EU is embedded in work across European Commission services and it constitutes a common frame for urban policy initiatives in the European Commission. This is particularly the case for [Cohesion policy](#), the [European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities](#), the [Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe](#), [Horizon 2020](#), the [Covenant of Mayors](#), the [Urban Innovative Actions](#), the [Urban data platform Plus](#) and the [Community of Practice for Cities](#). The Urban Agenda for the EU also represents the first EU commitment for contributing to the [New Urban Agenda](#) and the [SDGs](#), notably SDG 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities', as mentioned on [the Urban Agenda Platform website](#).

In November 2019, the European Commission published the '[Assessment Study of the Urban Agenda for the European Union \(UAEU\)](#)', which explores how far the objectives of the UAEU have been attained, and provides insights into the strengths, opportunities, challenges and shortcomings encountered throughout the implementation of the UAEU. It also identifies areas for improvement and considers how to make the UAEU more effective in the future. The European Commission has reinforced urban policy coordination to ensure better coherence in EU policy, to establish complementarities, and to build on synergies. In particular, coordination takes place at both policy and operational level, through the inter-service group dedicated to territorial cohesion and urban matters, which coordinates EU policy developments and is led by DG REGIO (but involves all pertinent Commission services). For example, partnership Action Plans are discussed and followed up in this inter-service group.

To reach out and help cities to better address challenges, as well as to assist them in making the most of EU funding opportunities, the European Commission launched the web portal '[One Stop Shop for Cities](#)' in 2016. This city-centred information hub also provides an entry point to other EU policies with an urban dimension. In addition, [URBIS](#) provides tailor-made advisory services for cities to prepare and access urban investment programmes available at the European Investment Bank.

The European Commission – together with the European Spatial Observatory Network ([ESPON](#)) – has also developed a territorial impact assessment methodology including a [TIA necessity check](#). The [Communication on Better Regulation 'Joining forces to make better laws'](#), which was published in 2021, mentions that 'territorial impact assessments and rural proofing will be strengthened, so that the needs and specificities of different EU territories are better taken into account'.

To ensure the future liveability of European cities, Cohesion policy invests in integrated sustainable urban development, supports participatory approaches and provides support to capacity building and experimentation. The urban dimension of Cohesion policy fosters intergovernmental collaboration under the Urban Agenda for the EU, and is connected to global agendas and challenges through its contribution to the SDGs of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda.

Every two years, a major European event – the [Cities Forum](#) – is organised by the European Commission, bringing together all relevant urban stakeholders.

To explore how to design inclusive, sustainable, and enriching ways of living, the European Commission launched the [New European Bauhaus \(NEB\)](#) initiative in January 2021. The NEB is an environmental, economic and cultural initiative, striving to reconcile accessibility, affordability, and aesthetic with sustainability in order to help deliver the European Green Deal, while improving the quality of life and reinforcing the sense of local identity. This interdisciplinary, people-centric, and creative initiative expresses the EU's ambition of creating beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive places, products and ways of living.

The initiative is being carried out in three stages: Design, Delivery and Dissemination. In the first phase, it explored how the NEB can accelerate, concretise and materialise good ideas. The delivery phase has been inaugurated by the Communication adopted on the 15th September, establishing delivery instruments and a first package of calls for proposals. Finally the focus will be on amplifying the ideas and actions that emerged and reaching a broader audience in Europe and beyond.

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Towards a place-based approach in EU policy

Sustainable urban development solutions should not be limited to the physical boundaries of cities and urbanised neighbourhoods. Most urban development challenges – such as mobility and land use, for example – are felt across city regions. Energy transition challenges similarly affect rural areas, given that whilst energy is often generated outside cities (in rurally situated power plants), cities are home to concentrations of energy consumers. Such functional links between city regions and their surroundings serve as territorial ‘hinges’ between urban and territorial political strategies.

This need to address both thematic challenges and territorial priorities is reflected in the [Territorial Agenda 2030](#), promoting balanced development in the EU and a place-based approach. Regions and cities share common challenges and debate on the post-2020

Territorial Agenda emphasised the need for coordination with the Urban Agenda for the EU. Alignment and interlinkages are important in tackling key European issues effectively, such as demographic change, climate change, societal fragmentation, good governance and urban-rural linkages.

The linkages between the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2030, the Urban Agenda for the EU, and the New Leipzig Charter, are important and may offer an opportunity to shape EU policies towards a place-based approach.



Cover of New Leipzig Charter
Source: European Commission



Cover of Implementation Document of the New Leipzig Charter
Source: European Commission

The New Leipzig Charter

The [New Leipzig Charter ‘The transformative power of cities for the common good’](#) was adopted in November 2020 at the Ministerial meeting under the German Presidency. It provides a key policy framework document for sustainable urban development in Europe. The Charter highlights the need for cities to establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and ensure their implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods. It defines three different dimensions of cities, Just, Green and Productive, which combined in a balanced and integrated manner contribute to developing resilient cities that can deal with social, economic and ecological challenges. The Charter also defines key principles of good urban governance, including Urban policy for the common good, an integrated approach, participation and co-creation, multi-level governance and a place-based approach.

The framework document is strongly aligned with Cohesion policy and its framework for sustainable urban development (SUD), as it calls for SUD strategies which are also being implemented in the context of the Article 7 of the 2014–2020 ERDF Regulation, as presented in the [‘Handbook of sustainable urban development strategies’](#), as well as Article 11 of the 2021–2027 [ERDF Regulation](#).

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Going beyond sectoral policies

The Pact of Amsterdam acknowledges that 'the complexity of urban challenges requires integrating different policy aspects to avoid conflicting consequences and make interventions in cities more effective'.

As each partnership deals with a specific theme and proposes actions and recommendations within that thematic field, the partnerships are invited to consider a number of cross-cutting issues in their work. These can be thought of as principles of urban policy, such as governance across administrative borders, sound and strategic urban planning, an integrated and participatory approach, challenges and opportunities of small and medium-sized urban areas and polycentric development, adaptation to demographic change, and so on.

These cross-cutting issues help to 'connect the dots' within and between the thematic partnerships.

This list has to be considered also in light of the New Leipzig Charter which also points out to urban policy for the common good, including access to public services, climate action and gender equality among others.

Cohesion policy contributes to a shared understanding of sustainable urban development. Between 2014 and 2020, it has invested more than EUR 17 billion across Europe through almost 1,000 sustainable urban development strategies following a place-based approach.

The Cohesion policy programmes URBACT and Urban Innovative Actions assist cities in delivering on the ground. In addition to Cohesion policy, the actions delivered through the Urban Agenda are contributing to the integrated approach as well.

What is behind the idea of an 'integrated approach'?

Addressing urban challenges in an effective and inclusive manner demands policies and measures based on an understanding of their spatial, sectoral and temporal implications. Next to bringing all relevant actors together to deliver a coordinated response to an urban problem, various levels of governance need to be involved – as illustrated by the composition of the partnerships. This type of multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation is crucial as cities are responsible for the implementation of EU and national policies. Moreover, cities often face challenges that transcend their own administrative boundaries. The management of commuter flows is a case in point. On the other hand, in the absence of coordinated approaches, cities can inadvertently magnify negative consequences for their surrounding areas.

The principle of an integrated approach was already present in the 2007 Leipzig Charter, and has been reaffirmed in the New Leipzig Charter. It is also one of the key principles of the Sustainable Urban Development dimension of Cohesion policy, notably its applicability through Article 7 and future Article 11 cities.



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Cross-cutting issues



Urban Agenda for the EU – 11 cross-cutting issues as outlined in the Pact of Amsterdam (2016)

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Other cross-cutting issues on which this brochure sheds light on are:

Going beyond administrative borders – Functional urban areas

There is an increasing mismatch between cities as administrative entities and the reality of modern urban life. The boundaries of our cities rarely cover the built-up area around a city, job or housing market and their catchment areas, business flows and private (e.g. shopping, leisure) and public (e.g. education, culture, health) services. This also applies to the city's 'ecosystem' (air, water and energy supply, solid and sewage waste disposal) and the greenhouse gas emissions.

The urban reality is often a much wider functional area defined by flows of people, goods and services, hence it would be necessary to apply functional areas at a spatial level appropriate for effective integrated approaches to sustainable development. In functional urban areas, cooperation is based on a shared vision; on a win-win basis. This is essential for urban-suburban areas, which may be surrounded by towns experiencing specific economic difficulties and may be dependent on the core city. This is also the case for urban-rural relations.

Due to this increased mobility and interdependence, functional urban areas have become an ever more important concept for policymakers. Solutions to many common challenges require thinking – and cooperating – beyond municipal boundaries. This is acknowledged in the [Territorial Agenda of the EU 2030](#) as well in the [Principles on Urban Policy](#), published by the OECD.

The Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the importance of functional areas as a supporting concept for effective integrated approaches to sustainable development, as illustrated in some of the examples below.

The **Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-based Solutions Partnership** developed an action to promote [functional urban area cooperation](#) as a tool to diminish urban sprawl. This is to be achieved through improved cooperation between municipalities pursuing coordinated spatial planning and appropriate financial incentive systems at the level of functional urban areas.

The partnership dealing with Urban Mobility has developed an action [integrating urban mobility](#) policies for cities covering their functional urban area and hinterlands. The question remains as to how to implement this in a way that respects the respective competences and responsibilities of all actors involved, while delivering results in a timely and efficient manner. The action of the **partnership** [collected and shared examples of practical experiences](#) with multi-level governance and partnership approaches in urban and functional urban areas across Europe.



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Including small and medium-sized cities

The public spotlight is often on the larger and more well-known cities as major focal points for urban economic development and innovation. The common assumption is that, with the potential for agglomeration and significant infrastructure investments, larger cities will always have distinct advantages over smaller cities. This approach does not, however, take into account the spatial distribution of local economies in functional urban areas clustered around smaller cities that make up the bulk of the urban settlements in Europe (OECD). In view of the growing European economy, the health and wealth of these smaller cities and their connected hinterlands should carry as much importance as the competitiveness of our larger cities.

"The European Union is for its citizens and there are at least 40% who live in small and medium-sized cities. The European Union is actually a part of all of us, so it should care about small and medium-sized cities. Especially at this moment because they have a hard time with changes in the economy."

Nicolas Beets, former Urban Envoy of the Netherlands



Calm city life with modern flats
Source: Shutterstock

The [EU Action for Smart Villages](#) (2017) is a joint initiative by the European Commission that seeks to combine actions from several policy areas relating to rural development, such as environment, regional and urban development, transport and connectivity. The aim is to improve traditional and new networks and services by means of digital technologies, innovations and better use of knowledge. Building on the experiences of [Community-led Local Development in rural areas](#), the Smart Villages initiative follows a participatory approach to developing a long-term vision and an integrated strategy aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental conditions of rural areas as well as building bridges between rural and urban areas. The European Commission also set out a [long-term vision for the EU's rural areas towards 2040](#) that aims to identify areas of action towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas and communities. In order to respond to the needs and ambitions of rural inhabitants, a Rural Pact will mobilise public authorities and actors, while an accompanying EU Rural Action Plan will promote territorial cohesion and new opportunities to attract innovative businesses, provide access to quality jobs, promote new and improved qualifications, improve infrastructure and services as well as leverage the role of sustainable agriculture and economic diversity.

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To showcase practical elements of such local economies and their importance for the Urban Agenda of the EU, several actions are highlighted. Partnership themes have different implications depending on the city size but are often particularly relevant for smaller towns and municipalities. In fact, several partnerships' actions specifically address the challenges faced by smaller and medium-sized cities.

The **Responsible and Innovative Public Procurement Partnership** has an action on how to set up local competence centres on responsible and innovative public procurement. These centres can foster training and skill development, networking, and potentially joint purchases. Such services are especially helpful for smaller cities as they support smaller authorities in successful procurement, by pooling expertise.

Climate change is a theme that affects all cities, no matter their size. The **Climate Adaptation Partnership** proposes *a new LIFE for urban adaptation projects*. The LIFE programme is the EU funding instrument for the environment and climate action. According to the partnership, however, the programme's complexity limits access – especially for smaller municipalities or those that lack European funding expertise. The action aims to contribute to 'a new LIFE' by upscaling existing national frameworks to support cities and by suggesting concrete access improvements based on a review of LIFE's scope, conditions and application process.

The **Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy Partnership's** action **Simplification 2.0** aims to help make future European Structural and Investment Funds more accessible for cities. In particular, smaller municipalities that lack the capacity and resources to take part in European initiatives could benefit from further simplification and differentiation. The **Latvian city of Jelgava** (around 60,000 inhabitants) not only co-coordinated this partnership together with Rotterdam and Romania; it also led three of its actions.

The **Culture and Cultural Heritage partnership** action on Collaborative Management to Adapt is focused on the social innovation paradigm and fosters integrated rehabilitation of deprived urban areas by offering social and cultural services. It aims to develop a guideline to promote collaborative management practices in cities of all different sizes, including small and medium cities.



Aerial view of Jelgava city
Source: Shutterstock

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2021–2027 Cohesion policy : The new framework at a glance

In May 2018, the European Commission presented its proposal for the new legislative framework of Cohesion policy, continuing its strong support for sustainable urban development. The Regulations entered into force on 1 July 2021.

[Cohesion policy](#) keeps on investing in all regions and the European Commission has put forward a simpler and more flexible framework to better reflect the reality on the ground.

There is a focus on five policy objectives around: (1) a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity; (2) a greener, low-carbon transition towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility; (3) a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility; (4) a more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights; and (5) a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives.

Cohesion policy represents a key instrument to deliver the goals of the European Green Deal on the ground. It can support the transition to a climate-neutral, green, and circular economy by prioritising available funding support for the 2021–2027 period.

Cohesion policy continues to support integrated territorial and local development strategies through territorial tools, and empower urban authorities and territorial bodies in the management of the funds, while requiring strong local partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

2021–2027 ERDF investments for integrated territorial and local development strategies will be supported either under policy objective 5 or under other policy objectives through one of the EU territorial instruments (ITI, CLLD) or another territorial tool designed by Member States.

The urban dimension of Cohesion policy is strengthened, with at least 8% of the national ERDF resources allocated to sustainable urban development strategies (urban earmarking), with special attention to tackling environmental and climate challenges, notably the transition towards a climate-neutral economy by 2050, to harnessing the potential of digital technologies for innovation purposes, and to support the development of functional urban areas (Art. 11 of ERDF/CF).

The following elements should be considered in the scope of integrated territorial development: a multi-sectoral strategic approach at the relevant geographic scale, a multi-level governance approach and a multi-stakeholder approach (Common Provision Regulation Articles 28 and 29).



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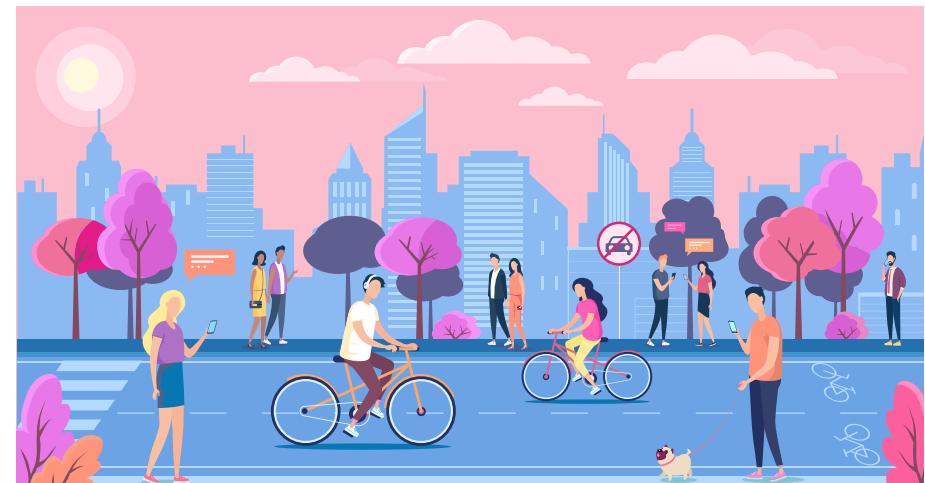
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European Urban Initiative (EUI)

The urban dimension of Cohesion policy for 2021–2027 includes the establishment of a European Urban Initiative. This initiative seeks to provide support to cities of all sizes by building capacity and knowledge, fostering innovation and developing transferable and scalable innovative solutions for urban challenges. It is also regarded as a concrete EU contribution to multi-level governance and the intergovernmental cooperation in Europe. The EUI shall support the UAEU and upon request from Member States, it may support the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters. Its activities will contribute to the new Policy Objective 5 ‘A Europe closer to citizens’ and will be the main policy framework as an enhanced commitment to territorial development and objectives to foster sustainable urban development.

The overall objectives of the EUI are to strengthen integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development and to provide a stronger link to EU policies. This initiative will include two strands: support of innovative actions, and support of capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication.



People walking and cycling
Source: Shutterstock

As part of its strategic approach, the EUI shall cover all urban areas, including large cities, small and medium-sized cities, as well as functional urban areas. In this context, the goal is to generate effective interconnections and synergies between the activities of the EUI and of the UAEU and the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters. The UAEU is considered a key vehicle for the implementation of the New Leipzig Charter. The Implementing Document of the Charter identifies the EUI as one of the instruments to provide support to the UAEU partnerships and to the intergovernmental cooperation on urban matters. In this sense, three specific objectives appear crucial: (i) to operationalise the principles of the New Leipzig Charter for the EU level; (ii) to continue developing the UAEU by involving urban authorities of all sizes in achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge to improve the consideration of the urban dimension in EU policies; and (iii) to better interlink the work done under the UAEU with the other urban-related activities under Cohesion policy, notably, through the EUI, and beyond.

The EUI will also work in close cooperation with authorities responsible for the interregional cooperation programme URBACT IV. The URBACT programme will continue its activities under the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation in the 2021–2027 period. Effective coordination and complementarity will have to be established between the EUI and URBACT IV which will continue to focus on transnational city networking, with the core of the activity being the exchange of experiences, innovative approaches, and capacity building in relation to the identification, transfer, and capitalisation of urban good practices in integrated and sustainable urban development.

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The international dimension represents an important cross-cutting issue within the Urban Agenda for the EU. Urban policies of the Member States need to collectively respond to global challenges at EU level and be in accordance with international agreements such as the [UN 2030 Agenda's SDGs](#), the [New Urban Agenda](#), and the [Paris Agreement on Climate Change](#). Cohesion policy also contributes significantly to their achievement, in terms of investments but also through its policy approach, involving regions and local authorities.

In 2015, the EU made a commitment to fulfil global objectives aiming for sustainable development in all places and for everyone by 2030. These are embodied in the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, comprising many targets that relate to local competences and urban challenges. These include, for example, reducing inequalities or taking climate action. The Urban Agenda for the EU contributes to the SDG vision by directly or indirectly providing better means for [cities](#) to act and by improving the consideration of urban issues in all policies. It also delivers a vision of cities for all and sustainable urban development in accordance with the New Urban Agenda, another key document specifically highlighting the potential of cities in tackling global challenges.

At the Habitat III Conference, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development organised in Quito in 2016, the European Commission presented three commitments to implementing the New Urban Agenda, acting as an enabler for achieving the SDGs in relation to urbanisation challenges:

- Delivering the New Urban Agenda through the Urban Agenda for the EU;
- Developing a global and harmonised definition of cities;
- Fostering cooperation between cities in the field of sustainable urban development.

The action plans presented by the partnerships target relevant SDGs. The section that follows offers a snapshot of how the partnerships address international commitments in their action plans.

In this context, in 2021, the European Commission launched a [review of the contributions of the Urban Agenda for the EU to the New Urban Agenda](#), which identifies and examines the different angles through which the UAEU contributes to the delivery of the United Nations' New Urban Agenda at EU level. The report underlines that the UAEU and NUA are strongly aligned. They share and promote common urban governance principles such as multilevel governance, integrated approach, partnership approach and co-creation, and place-based approach, which are also common to EU Cohesion Policy. The analysis shows that UAEU Actions are significantly contributing to the implementation of the NUA commitments in the European Union. All 132 Actions put forward by the UAEU Partnerships have been proven to contribute to the implementation of at least one or more among the 138 NUA paragraphs constituting the global urban commitments.



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SDG 11 – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Almost all actions under the Urban Agenda for the EU are linked with the targets of SDG 11. They aim to manage the rapid urbanisation and its impact on the environment, requiring multiple solutions and the participation of all levels of decision-making. This is reflected in the composition of the partnerships and the thematic focus incorporating the key dimensions of SDG 11 (for example Housing or Sustainable transport). The support for balanced economic, social, and environmental growth in cities of all sizes is another common aspect linking the SDGs and the Urban Agenda for the EU. By aligning their goals with the SDGs, the Urban Agenda for the EU partnerships translate the global development goals at other levels, bringing them closer to citizens.



SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

In 2017, the average temperature was 1.1 degrees Celsius above that in the pre-industrial period; evidence of the strong impact that human activity has had on global warming. Climate change implications represent an important cross-cutting perspective that has been tackled by several partnerships. The partnerships on Air Quality, Climate Adaptation, Energy Transition, Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions, and Urban Mobility have proposed actions that will contribute to the implementation of SDG 13 at the European level. Two actions of the Urban Mobility Partnership propose concrete measures to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions stemming from transport and traffic: *Scaling up innovative clean buses* and *Promoting sustainable and active mobility behaviour*.



SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries

Social inequality and socio-economic segregation are among the most complex challenges faced by towns and cities around the world. Increasing inequalities are an alarming global trend. The partnerships on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, on Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy, and on Urban Poverty are especially focussed on this goal. Ending poverty (a goal codified in SDG 1) and reducing inequalities are overarching aims informing the Urban Poverty Partnership's action plan, which focuses on child poverty, the regeneration of urban deprived areas and neighbourhoods, homelessness, and the vulnerability of Roma people.

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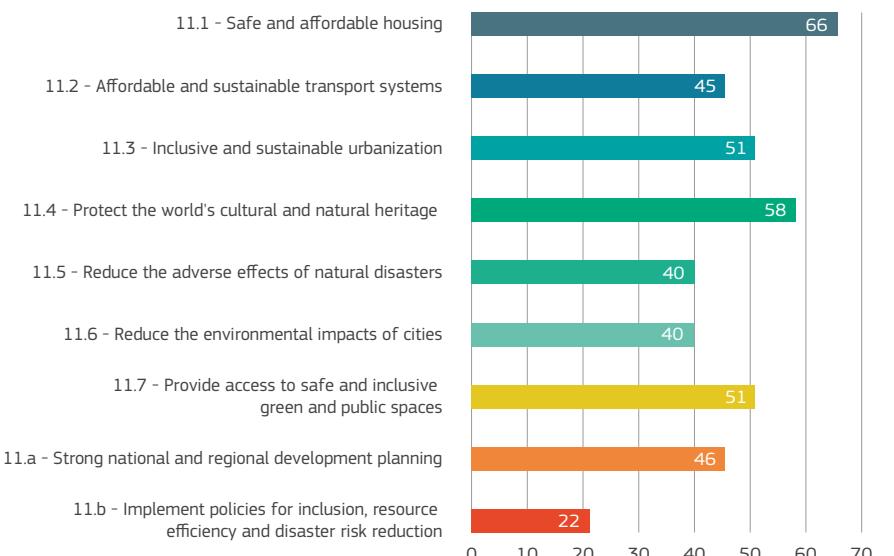
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Understanding the global dimension of housing: Insights from the Urban Agenda for the EU Housing Partnership

According to [Eurostat statistics on housing](#), 9.4% of the EU population spent 40% of their income on housing in 2019. In the same year, one sixth of the EU population lived in overcrowded dwellings, while around 5% of population suffered from severe housing deprivation in 2019.



Links between UAEU Actions and SDG 11 targets

Please note that the links between UAEU Actions and SDG 11 targets are indirect, meaning that they were identified through the contribution of UAEU Actions to the relevant New Urban Agenda paragraphs.

Adequate housing has been recognised as a basic human right globally. It goes beyond providing shelter.

"The right to housing does not mean that everyone is entitled to a government-provided home immediately. It means governments must ensure that everyone – particularly the most disadvantaged groups – should have access to housing that is adequate. How to accomplish the "right to housing"?"

[URBACT blogpost](#) by Laura Colini, 25 April 2019

The Housing Partnership has been leading by example in detailing and highlighting the international dimension of its work. An ex-post analysis presented by the partnership in 2018 describes the partnership's links with key international agreements, including the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The analysis concluded that the Housing Partnership has strong potential to contribute to implementing the New Urban Agenda, for example by promoting the development of adequate and enforceable regulations and by providing policy guidance for the provision of social and affordable housing.

Several New Urban Agenda Articles have a direct link with actions put forward by the Housing Partnership. Articles 13, 14, 31, 32, 33, 105 and 107 of the New Urban Agenda emphasise the direct need for people-centric housing policies at all levels and the promotion of a wide range of affordable housing solutions.



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Equipping European citizens to fully engage in the digital economy

What is it like to lack the skills and confidence to use digital technology? We live in a digital society, where smartphones, online services and digital resources enable better mobility, access to services, social connection, employability and more. These resources are central to our everyday lives and many of us take them for granted.

But millions of people across Europe still lack the basic digital skills needed to make use of these services and resources. This can be a real barrier to their ability to find work and to make use of everyday amenities.

The Urban Agenda for the EU includes a Digital Transition Partnership. This partnership tackled this issue by developing a [neighbourhood instrument](#) which pilots projects for access points where people can get support and training on using digital services. In addition, this action has led to stronger civic engagement and the involvement of more citizens in the process of new service co-creation. These access points are established in places where people usually meet. The pilot cities are Helsingborg (Sweden), Oulu (Finland) and Sofia (Bulgaria).

The partnership also participated in an initiative led by several cities in an attempt to find a common ‘European way’ for the digital transformation through means of a political declaration, the [‘Join, Boost, Sustain – Declaration on joining forces to boost sustainable digital transformation in cities and communities in the EU’](#). The declaration aims to define a financial, technical, ethical and legal framework for digitalisation in Europe, while seeking to ensure technological leadership in the EU and respect European values and diversity.

Being digitally included means being socially included

Digital skills and confidence are important, as you often need an email address to be able to access government services. Walking through the city of Helsingborg, you may come across a new digital access point. Here, residents and visitors can get free support and training on using digital services. These services range from buying bus or theatre tickets, to accessing information about sport, or purchasing a parking permit.



Source: Saskia Schreven

“You made my day, now I can register and apply for an apartment, when I have an email address.”

A citizen of Helsingborg, Sweden

This helps to make sure that citizens are not left behind. When it comes to being digitally skilled, there is an important social element. Being digitally included means being socially included, and neighbourhood-level solutions can be the easiest for citizens.

“Being digitally included means being socially included. That is what the neighbourhood is all about. Starting in the small community, with neighbours making the first step is the way to go.”

Eva Hveem, Helsingborg, partner city in the Digital Transition Partnership

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Success is based on inspiring and engaging with citizens across cities

In Oulu for example, there are already over 80 digital services. As Heikki Huhmo, one of the partnership coordinators in Oulu says, 'the world is digitalising faster and faster and we would like citizens to be able to participate and contribute to digital services'. Together with five other Finnish cities ([6Aika](#)), Oulu is using support from the ERDF to create smart services for its citizens, like sharing electric cars and involving students in testing digital learning tools.

Being involved as a student in developing skills to become active and engaged is something that the [URBACT project 'On Board' touched upon as well](#).

People sometimes need to be inspired to get involved, especially if they do not trust their abilities when it comes to digital technology. So, the service model is about inspiring and enhancing the digital skills of citizens. Services in Oulu are offered in both Finnish and English, and citizens can talk to staff to ask questions and enjoy in-person support.

Making digital the heart of the city's sectoral focus

Another city building its reputation as a digital front runner is Cluj-Napoca. At the heart of Transylvania, Cluj plans to capitalise on its knowledge industry assets and related human capital to focus the local economy on higher added-value sectors. The city's growing creative and cultural industries (CCI) sector is a good example of this.

Cluj was successful in its application for funding from [UIA](#) to support its [Future of Work](#) project. The project kicked off in 2019 and aims to prepare the city's residents and businesses for future technological and social change. This includes investments to enhance the technological infrastructure and to boost knowledge and skills around new digital tools and processes. Cluj was also a partner of the Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy Partnership.

A model based on multi-level cooperation...

The success of the Digital Neighbourhood Instrument action shows that it is possible to increase the digital participation of citizens and to broaden their digital horizons. This cooperation extends to national level as well. In 2017, EU Member States signed the Tallinn Declaration, to work to increase the readiness of European citizens and businesses to interact digitally with public administrations – strengthening the digital connection between citizen and public services.

The Digital Neighbourhood Instrument action is a good example of multi-level governance in action – the cities delivering on what the Member States have agreed when signing the Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment, namely implementing the user-centricity principles for design and delivery of digital public services. The action ensures that digital services can be used by all in a non-discriminatory manner, with appropriate assistance available upon need.

...and aligned with European policy

This support action links to EU efforts to build digital skills in Europe. It is also helpful for cities to know that they can make use of European funding (as in Oulu) and rely on European support at local level:

"Since many citizens need to familiarise themselves with the new eGovernment tool, the EESC believes that Member States and their regional and local authorities should provide citizens with digital skills training and be asked to provide a digital help service or a local support service to be co-financed by EU funds."

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

The Urban Agenda for the EU action has helped the three cities to learn and share lessons about what really works in public services. The Digital Transition Partnership also collected experiences which have been shared with other European cities. For more information on this, please visit the [Futurium page of this Partnership](#).



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Re-thinking cities by reusing buildings and spaces

Walking through your city and seeing abandoned buildings can be heart-breaking, with nothing seemingly left of old glory and better times. Did you ever wonder how such under-utilised spaces could be reused and become attractive again – and how citizens can help shape this process? And what the circular economy might have to do with redesigning and reusing under-utilised buildings and places?

The circular economy represents an opportunity for citizens and urban authorities to re-think their cities. In a circular vision of the city, abandoned or unused buildings are recognised as opportunities and valuable resources. They are seen as places of interaction that support their neighbourhood and allow for the reuse of existing buildings and spaces.

Using temporary space to boost circular economy: Examples from Oslo and Prato

The Vollebekk Fabrikker in Oslo is a good example of an old industrial area being redeveloped into a residential area. The centre has become a multi-functional space for developing and testing new ideas, based on the recycling and reuse of buildings and materials. The centre brings together local citizens, businesses and the public sector to develop new circular business models, based on experiences from all over Europe. A start-up entrepreneur at Vollebekk Fabrikker, Oslo, observes:

'Being part of this initiative, I got to share a lot of experience with other start-ups on the topic of circular economy. This initiative is supported by the local council which improves my working conditions. Finally, this space became popular very fast, welcoming many visitors interested in circular economy, so I got a free platform for publicity.'

The city of Prato, Italy, used to be a hub for the Italian textile industry. A deindustrialisation crisis left many areas and buildings abandoned. Today, many industrial buildings are being redeveloped into dynamic business units, spaces for new start-ups, innovative residential studios, laboratories, and creative hubs. Mr Valerio Barberis, Councillor for Urban Planning and Environment for the City of Prato, speaks about the importance of this change:

"The concept of circular economy provides an extraordinary opportunity to re-think our cities. A solution is to develop innovative models for urban regeneration of spaces and buildings by reducing new land use."



Lindeberg locality

Source: Agency for Waste Management, City of Oslo

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Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU join forces

The Circular Economy Partnership has developed actions to help cities and Member States drive circular economy solutions forward. The Partnership has joined forces with another partnership, Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions, which also decided to identify and manage under-used land. Together, they aim to map under-utilised buildings, assess their reusability potential, and finally to transform them. Such a new management model calls for co-creation between the urban authority and citizens.

New model of governance: How to make abandoned buildings and spaces come alive

Every city has unused buildings and spaces and it is important to make sure that new and innovative solutions can be shared across Europe. This is why the Circular Economy and Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions Partnerships believe that there is a need for a new model of governance, such as an 'urban re-use agency', which can act as a facilitator between existing public and private spaces and buildings ready for reuse, and the demand for private/public space. The challenge is represented by the transition from restricted urban planning management and processes toward more flexible models, in which planning and management tend toward each other, through an ever-increasing streamlining of processes. Therefore, the Partnerships have developed [a handbook with guidelines for cities and regions to develop strategies for the better use of abandoned buildings and spaces](#).



Refurbished business units, Prato

Source: Macrolotto Zero



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From the side-lines to the arena – The European Migrant Advisory Board

In 2019, Europe registered over [9 million asylum claims](#) from refugees attempting to escape dangerous living conditions in their countries of origin. Each hoped to build a new future in a new country. But as a newcomer, it is not easy to integrate in society. Many were not allowed to choose where to live and experienced discrimination in the labour and housing markets. Many refugees ended up in cities and more than half, including doctors, teachers and engineers, did not manage to find a job.

Migrants often share the same difficulties. A partnership within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU decided to address these issues and to improve the integration of migrants and refugees. The Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees Partnership found that experts with migrant, minority or refugee backgrounds are severely underrepresented in decision-making institutions. That needed to be changed.

Being part of the solution rather than just identifying problems

In 2018, the Partnership decided to create the European Migrant Advisory Board, composed of nine experts from different fields, all with migrant or refugee backgrounds. These experts acted as ambassadors of the cities and countries within the Partnership. They brought the perspective of migrants and refugees in their home cities to local, national and European policymakers.

The board decided to conduct a survey among migrants and refugees across seven EU countries to help policymakers understand what is really needed to improve integration. Their report, '[Ask the People: a consultation of migrants and refugees](#)', found that finding a home and recognising existing skills and talents are major issues. Most migrants and refugees live in their assigned homes far away from the city centre, where most of the jobs are. Why not give them a subsidy to find a home in a place offering conditions adequate for successful integration? This topic is also addressed in a UIA project, [Curing the limbo](#), led by the city of Athens (a partner within the partnership). Its aim is to provide affordable living space from the city's available housing stock to refugees, while in turn refugees can work to improve the quality of life in Athenian neighbourhoods. Read more about this topic in an article about [URBACT good practices](#).



The European Migrant Advisory Board in Brussels just before presenting the report 'Ask the People: a consultation of migrants and refugees', 4 March 2019
Source: City of Amsterdam

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Many migrants and refugees would like to learn local languages. But the quality of language classes often falls short. Local authorities should make sure that language lessons meet the necessary standards. Lowering language requirements for jobs, on the other hand, would allow migrants and refugees to integrate via work and training. One of the focus group participants in the Netherlands said: 'integration is not only about learning a language or adapting yourself to the Dutch culture, it is about getting the right economic opportunities'.

Ms Anila Noor, a board member who worked for the city of Amsterdam, told the CoR that 'expectations are not understood, neither met'. According to the board's survey, 73% of the migrants and refugees say that quality of skill assessment services for refugees and migrants is inadequate. Existing skills and talents are not recognised; migrants and refugees are forced to start their education again or work at a minimum wage. To make best use of the skills and talents, existing qualifications should be recognised.

Participation is a right, not a gift

The board members participated in meetings with local, national and European policymakers to convince them that there is a mutual interest in designing policies *with* migrants and refugees, instead of just *for* them. Ms Ayten Dogan, working for the Senate of Berlin, speaks positively about the board: 'they taught us that it is not enough to design good programmes. We can learn from refugees and migrants, and do a better job of informing them.'

The European Migrant Advisory Board is only one of the initiatives of the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees Partnership. In the 'to know more' section at the end of this report, there are links to several videos, including Ms Anila Noor's speech given at the 128th Plenary session of the CoR.



Multicultural faces

Source: Shutterstock



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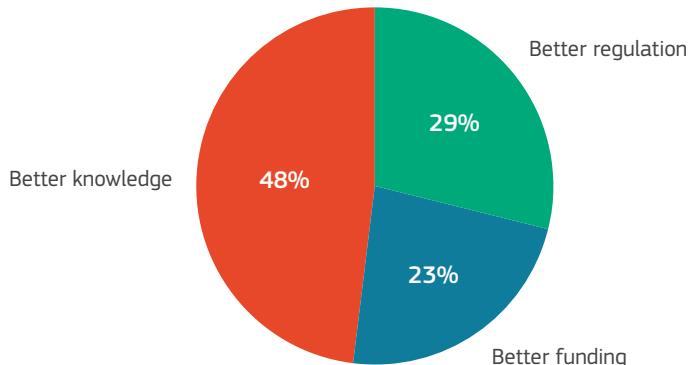
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Actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU in motion

This chapter provides a descriptive overview of some of the actions developed by the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships. The actions show the variety and breadth of the work of the partnerships since the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam in May 2016. The following pages highlight partnerships' achievements, shed light on which stakeholders are targeted by actions, and explore the relationships between action leaders and the institutional levels – local, national, or EU-level – that their actions target. The data is derived from the Monitoring Table of Actions update from March of 2021. Information on the Urban Agenda Partnership's activities has been updated on a quarterly basis.

Actions per pillars of the Urban Agenda for the EU

Each action developed by the partnerships targets one of the three **pillars of the Urban Agenda for the EU: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge (knowledge base and exchange)**. In the chart below the actions per pillar are illustrated. At the moment the partnerships have proposed **132 actions** which are part of action plans.



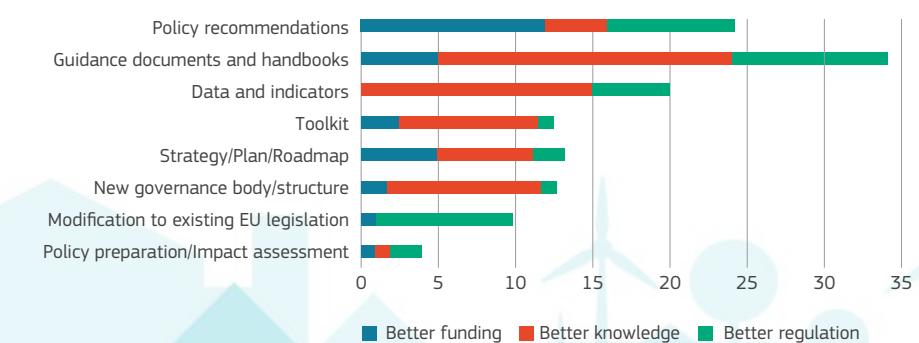
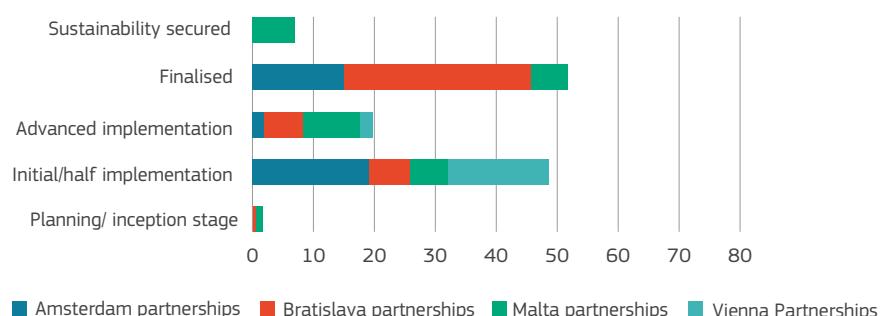
Partnerships' achievements

The actions developed cover a wide range of achievements. In the chart below, the different achievements are illustrated indicating that a majority of the actions are related to urban data and indicators, followed by policy recommendations and guidance documents/handbooks.

Implementation status

The first partnerships, the Amsterdam and Bratislava Partnerships, have finalised a substantial number of their actions, whereas Malta partnerships are in an advanced implementation stage. The latest partnerships launched in 2019, the Vienna Partnerships, are still in the initial implementation phase.

After delivering their actions plans, all of the 14 partnerships entered or finalised the **implementation phase**. Of all of the actions proposed, 52 actions are now finalised, and only 3 actions are in a planning or inception stage. One single action was dropped and 69 actions are currently being implemented.


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Helping waste legislation to support the circular economy in cities

As soon as products or materials enter the waste stream, a set of regulatory measures apply to protect human health and the environment against harm. Where hazardous substances are concerned, regulatory measures apply. There are, however, circumstances under which the rather strict waste legislation regime is not optimised, and may even be counterproductive for the circular economy. In cities, such barriers can become apparent when recycling source-separated household waste, like food waste and plastics; and when preparing reuse initiatives, such as setting up repair or second-hand shops. The Circular Economy Partnership assessed these legal and policy frameworks in order to gather more precise and comprehensive information on the regulatory obstacles and drivers for boosting the use of secondary raw materials from waste streams. The partnership produced **policy recommendations** to adapt or complement existing frameworks in order to better facilitate the use of secondary raw materials from waste streams.

The booklet produced under the action '[Better Regulation for a Circular Economy](#)' aims to report on the regulatory barriers and drivers for boosting an urban circular bio-economy, as well as explaining how waste legislation can support the circular economy in cities.



Setting up a talent office matching talent supply and demand

The Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy Partnership has been working on several actions to support the local economy. Its goal is to increase the capacity and skills of the workforce, to provide favourable preconditions for business development and to create jobs. Indeed, in the framework of a changing labour market, skill mismatches are one of the biggest issues that cities face.

In order to overcome this mismatch between demand and supply, the Partnership has developed an action called 'Talent Office'. A Talent Office is a **new governance structure** to support and enhance talent community development, acting as an enabler to connect talent and all of the stakeholders linked to talent supply and demand. This action is being delivered through four main initiatives. First, a Talent Observatory is being conceived to provide updated and integrated information on talent supply and demand. Second, aiming at raising awareness of the need to develop career guidance through life, a Lifelong Career Guidance programme was developed and is currently in a pilot stage. Third, a new concept – Skills Academy – focuses on promoting skills oriented to present and future economic needs. Fourth, there will be a digital platform to successfully attract and retain talent.

The Talent Office represents an integrated approach, combining short and medium/large-term solutions, all relevant actors and four initiatives that complement each other.



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Local pact for the regeneration of urban deprived areas and neighbourhoods

The [regeneration of deprived urban areas and neighbourhoods](#) has been identified as one of the main priorities of the Urban Poverty Partnership, recognising that social and spatial factors can concentrate poverty in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. At EU level, the Partnership recommended tackling this issue through Local Pacts. Local Pacts aim to assign urban authorities a leading role in the design of their urban regeneration strategies for deprived urban areas and neighbourhoods in post-2020 Cohesion policy. Based on a multi-level approach, it adopts a mixed place-based and people-based vision, allowing it to adopt the necessary flexibility to address the different dimensions of urban poverty through integrated strategies. The Partnership has produced **policy recommendations** to tackle poverty in urban deprived areas and neighbourhoods related to the urban dimension of 2021–2027 Cohesion policy.

Three Policy Labs were organised in July 2018 by the leader of this action, URBACT, to exchange experiences between four countries (France, Germany, Poland and Spain) about methods to tackle local deprivation. Detailed guidelines on how to set up a local pact are the result.



Fostering learning and knowledge exchange about providing affordable housing in European cities

Cities, urban areas, regions and countries across the EU are in need of a stable framework of conditions to ensure that their populations can find accessible and affordable housing. A critical issue identified by the Housing Partnership concerns the systemic lack of knowledge about existing social and affordable housing solutions, which hampers learning and knowledge exchange, and limits the development and supply of social and affordable housing. To address this challenge, the Partnership developed an 'Affordable housing good practice **database** on affordable housing' which gathers the best practices of the social and affordable housing sector in order to foster learning and knowledge exchange about the provision of affordable housing in European cities. This action is now finalised and a [policy toolkit](#), gathering best practices aiming to enable improving provision of affordable housing in cities, is available online.



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Improving the implementation of air quality legislation and identifying regulatory gaps in the urban environment

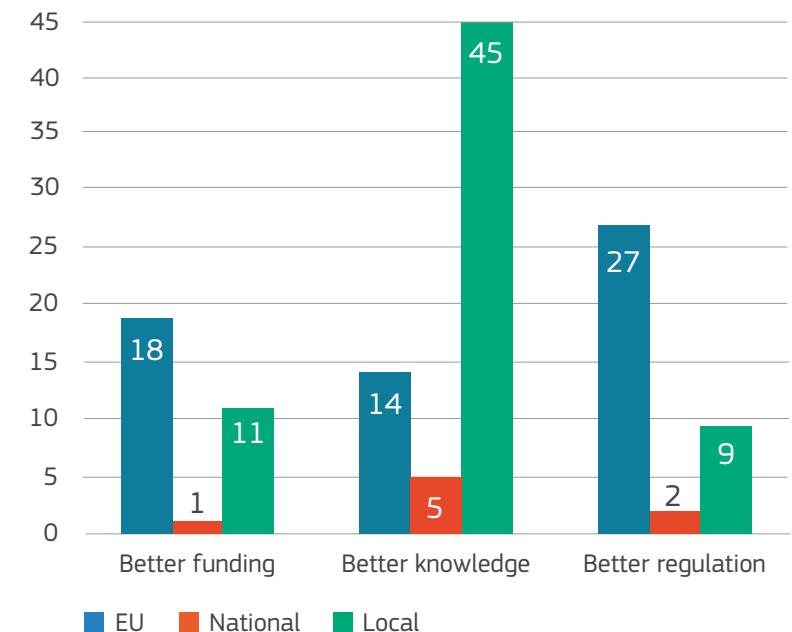
The Urban Agenda for the EU Air Quality Partnership has been working to place the healthy city higher on the EU agenda and to help realise healthy urban environments. One of the actions from this partnership – ‘Identification of gaps in regulation and implementation on air pollutant emission sources’ – has been carried out to help policy actors better understand and meet the requirements of European air quality directives.

One of the outcomes of this action is a joint position paper that reviews the interaction between different regulations and the implementation of air quality legislation, including funding mechanisms and knowledge sharing. The paper was developed in response to the open public consultation for the Fitness Check on the Ambient Air Quality Directives and includes **recommendations** to improve the implementation of air quality legislation and identify regulatory gaps in the urban environment through a cooperative and integrated approach.

[The position paper Ambient Air Quality Directives is available online.](#)

Which institutions are targeted by actions?

The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to have an impact at every institutional level, from local to EU-wide. Sharing knowledge and experience between cities is a clear focus area, as is the need to have Member States that inform and involve their cities directly within national and EU policymaking. And the EU level is also affected, demonstrating that the Urban Agenda for the EU targets EU-level policy change and is ambitious in its scope.



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Adoption of a European child guarantee

The Urban Poverty Partnership supports an initiative addressing the lack of political and financial investment in children and young people **at EU level**; the 'Child Guarantee'. The Child Guarantee is the future cornerstone of the fight against poverty in Europe. It is the tool to realise concrete investments that benefit children and young people in Europe, and particularly the most disadvantaged. This is why the Partnership invested time in keeping conversations about the Child Guarantee going. By doing so, the Partnership contributes to closing the inequality gap, affording equal opportunities for children, and ultimately fighting poverty for the benefit of all of European society.

If investing in adults and young people to improve their chances in the labour market is smart, then investing in children to close the gap before they are ready to enter the labour market is even smarter."

Partnership action plan

The Child Guarantee aims to invest in pillars 2 and 3 of the European Commission recommendation 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage'. The action also includes measures to make better use of current EU instruments.

In 2020, the European Commission published the [Feasibility study for a child guarantee](#).



Define a set of common indicators of net land take that takes into account urban greening and re-naturalisation processes

The Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions Partnership aims to ensure that changes in urban areas (expansion, contraction and regeneration) respect the environment and improve quality of life. At present, no clear measurement of net land take has been developed and definitions of net land take provided at EU level do not frequently adhere to those adopted in national and regional urban planning laws. This action aimed to define a set of common indicators of net land take that accounts for urban greening and re-naturalisation processes, as well as soil (de)sealing at various spatial levels. This provides a common reference **indicator for Member States and for the European Commission** in assessing the environmental impact of spatial plans and decisions and for setting reasonable targets for net land take.

Under this action, a public workshop was planned in 2019 and brought together land take data experts, Member States, partners and other interested stakeholders. The outcomes of the workshop, '[Understanding Land Take](#)' helped to define the final indicator outputs of the action.



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Urban Mobility: Reinforcing multi-level cooperation and governance

The Urban Mobility Partnership seeks to facilitate more sustainable and efficient urban mobility across Europe at **all levels of governance**. Developing and implementing comprehensive and integrated urban mobility policies for towns and cities, which cover the functional urban area and hinterland connections, requires close cooperation between different levels of government and across administrative boundaries.

This action helped to support better knowledge amongst urban planners, policymakers and stakeholders. The partners worked together to collect and share examples of partnership-based approaches to mobility issues with a high degree of horizontal and vertical integration. The Partnership [published a report](#) examining 10 case studies of successful projects from European cities.



Better focus on the protection and on the improvement of citizens' health

Air quality is a major determining environmental factor for quality of life in cities. An action developed by the Air Quality Partnership has produced a health impact assessment tool to measure the health gains and costs of urban planning measures. It thus aims to **help policymakers and practitioners at local level** in their decision-making processes through the better understanding of pollution health impacts.

This new tool has been developed in the form of a downloadable Excel spreadsheet, in which data (such as urban population and concentrations of atmospheric pollutants) can be inserted to [conduct a health impact assessment analysis](#). The tool is supported by user-friendly step-by-step instructions and a background document report.



Source: Iris van Den Broeck



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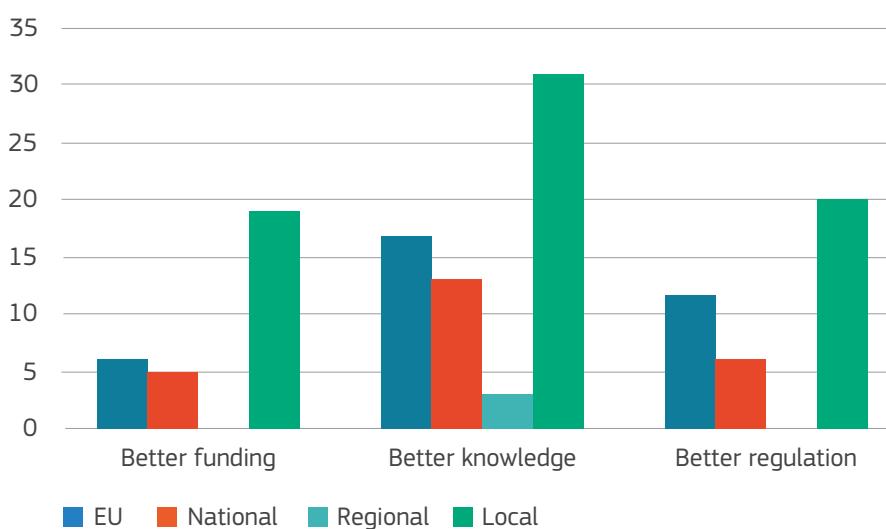
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Which institutions are leading actions of partnerships?

The institutional levels of action leaders

Participation in multi-level governance is a key aspect of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Across all three pillars, the local level is most commonly involved in leading actions. This chart illustrates the extent of action leader involvement, from EU-level institutions (the European Commission, the CoR, etc.) to the national and local levels.



Digital Skills Map: Online repository with good practices on digital skill development

In 2016, the European Commission adopted the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) aimed at making the right training, skills and support available to people in the EU. However, there is a need to better include the local level in the New Skills Agenda and to create mechanisms to exchange ideas, projects and good practices. To ensure and facilitate knowledge sharing, the Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy Partnership has developed an action to create an online repository of good practices. **Led by the city of Berlin**, this action aims to establish a permanent mechanism to ensure that best practices, notably related to digital competences in vocational education and training and further education, are widely shared, recorded and further developed.

The [Digital Skills Map](#) was launched in the summer of 2019.



A funding and financing guide for brownfield redevelopment

Brownfield redevelopment in cities presents a valuable opportunity to limit land take and prevent urban sprawl. In fact, brownfield redevelopment can be a competitive alternative to greenfield development. The main problem that this action addresses is the lack of comprehensive and up-to-date information for cities regarding how best to use EU-level funding and financing, and how to leverage private investment for brownfield redevelopment. This **action** is coordinated by the Partnership on Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions and **led at national level**, in this case by Luxembourg.

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Political training on climate adaptation

All cities and urban areas face the challenge of adapting to and mitigating the impacts of a changing climate. Climate adaptation measures sometimes require substantial up-front investment that can only be secured if there is sufficient political knowledge of this issue, and commitment. Where the commitment exists, there is sometimes a lack of political coordination when it comes to implementing such measures at city level.

The Climate Adaptation Partnership launched an action **led by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)** that targets this issue and provided political training on climate adaptation for local politicians. The training aligned with the [EU Adaptation Strategy](#), which aims to make Europe more climate-resilient. The aim of this action is to support local politicians to be able to better implement concrete adaptation measures in their cities.



Guidance on the use of state aid support for social and affordable housing in European cities

An increasing number of European citizens find it difficult to access adequate and affordable housing. This is most pronounced in cities and urban areas, with lower income households particularly affected. Social and affordable housing waiting lists have reached historical highs and homelessness has increased markedly. However, the overall increase in housing needs in Europe has not been matched with an increase in support for social and affordable housing. The evidence shows quite the opposite: state support, especially in the form of public investment in social and affordable housing, has actually declined in the last decade. The Housing Partnership, under the **leadership of the city of Vienna** and AEDES, the Association of Housing Corporations, has provided a [guidance paper](#) and an in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by affordable housing providers with regard to EU state aid regulations, and how such challenges can be overcome.



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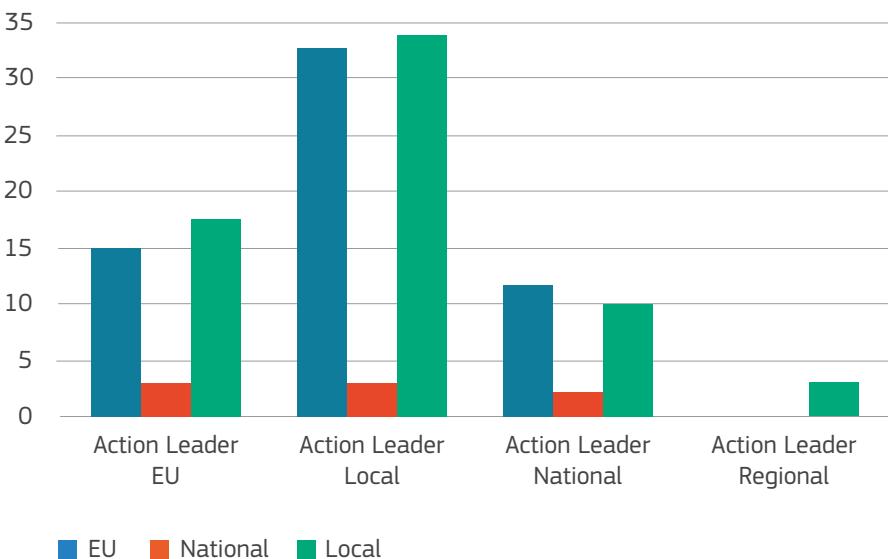
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Action leaders and their institutional target levels

The Urban Agenda for the EU targets a wide range of urban actors. Action leaders and their institutional target levels chart combines information about action leaders and the institution levels targeted by their actions. The inner circle shows the action leaders and the outer circle shows the institutional levels that they target. The value of this chart is that it illustrates the connection between local, national and EU levels, i.e. multi-level governance and impact.



Measuring where procurement spending goes and the impact it has (economically, socially and environmentally)

When building procurement strategies, cities need to understand where procurement spending takes place, both geographically and by industrial sector. By doing so, cities can confirm if their procurement strategy has indeed led to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and if they have used their funds on innovative (supporting new products or businesses), green or social procurement. To do this, cities need good data on how their funds are spent. At present, it is not always clear which European data standards cities can use when collecting and processing procurement information.

The specific bottleneck this action addresses is the need for objective data feedback loops, which can be used to help ensure that procurement strategies in cities are accountable and evidence-based. The partnership investigated the available data standards. It also looked into methodologies for expenditure analysis for exchange of procurement data between contracting authorities. Methods for identifying wider post-procurement impacts were explored.

The city of Preston's experience leading the URBACT project '[PROCURE](#)' formed the basis for this action. Its spend analysis methodology was transferred to six other cities as part of the '[Making Spend Matter](#)' URBACT network. The partnership deliverable, [A Guide to Measuring Spend and Wider Impact](#), provides support to cities and other institutions as to understand where their procurement spending goes and the process of measuring wider impact.

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Increasing energy efficiency by deploying retrofitting desks

For many European cities and towns, one of the major zero-carbon challenges is equipping buildings with sustainable heating systems. This energy efficiency challenge is immensely significant because of various building typologies, different models of ownership, and the different characteristics of the buildings. The retrofitting needs of these buildings include improving the insulation of the building envelopes, renovating their heating and cooling installations and installing smart meters, and control and management systems consistent with energy transition objectives.

'Deployment desks' were created and operated to act as dedicated public offices to impulse urban regeneration and energy retrofitting, an action coordinated by the Energy Transition Partnership and led by the region of Navarra, at local or regional level. These work not only as project development units, but as well as providers of advice (for the municipalities and the property owners). The partnership published a [Guidance document](#) which explains how to create, develop, and operationalise the deployment desks for city retrofitting.



Evaluating best practices in convenient access to public transport

Multi-modal public transport systems – such as buses, trains, trams and metro networks – can offer clean, efficient and accessible transport solutions for urban citizens. But, to meet this potential, public transport must be user-friendly and convenient to access. It must incorporate a mix of 'ingredients', from convenient payment systems (e.g. smart ticketing) to attractive and clean spaces for passengers. Every city faces a different set of challenges in designing access to public transport. To help overcome such challenges, this action by the Urban Mobility Partnership [developed recommendations](#) to understand, on a consistent basis, how accessible public transport systems are in cities and regions. This helps to identify the impact of different best practice strategies, which in turn can optimise decision-making at all levels.

Walk21, an international charity dedicated to ensuring the right to walk and opportunity to enjoy it, and **UITP**, the International Association of Public Transport, led the action at a Europe-wide level, along with the **city of Karlsruhe**.



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Helping cities develop a user-centric eGovernment model

Digital progress is transforming our economies and societies. Cities in Europe are searching for new ways to provide services for their citizens. Citizens expect services to be user-centric and delivered in a simple and transparent way. This action develops a strategy for cities to implement an eGovernment platform. To facilitate the implementation of the strategy, the Digital Transition Partnership has delivered an '[open source toolbox](#)' with all relevant instruments available to local actors such as the Digital Service Infrastructure Building Blocks (eID, eSignature, eDelivery etc.). In addition, an assessment instrument for ministers, mayors and CDO's to build a national and/or local digitalisation strategy has been delivered. The action is led by the **city of Eindhoven** and **primarily targets the city level**.



Competence building in circular/green procurement

Procedures for circular/green procurement can be difficult to understand. This is one of the reasons why circular procurement is not yet widely implemented. The difference between general public procurement and circular procurement is unclear to many buyers and their clients, managers, policy advisors and budget holders. Existing best practices are not sufficiently promoted, and there is a lack of available training and education on circular procurement for decision-makers, professionals and students. The Public Procurement Partnership has therefore developed an action to address this knowledge gap.

The goal of the action is to share and unlock experience, knowledge and insights on circular/green procurement with public buyers (managers, policy advisors, budget holders, procurement professionals, etc.). **The partnership** has organised training, which has already been replicated in several cities. Ultimately, [the main output of the action](#) equips public buyers in local and regional authorities across the EU with the knowledge needed to implement circular/green procurement.



Children playing cards
Source: CapaCITYES



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Raising awareness for Public Libraries

Every year, 100 million people visit the more than 65,000 public libraries in the EU. Libraries have a long tradition of offering access to information, and while libraries share a common mission, they are inherently local institutions, tailoring their services to the needs of the communities they serve. However, the contribution libraries make on a local level reflects shared societal challenges experienced across the continent. Education, social inclusion, digital inclusion and democracy are just a few of these challenges.

The aim of this Action is to raise awareness for public libraries and their additional responsibilities, as well as their contribution to successful social urban development on a European and national scale. The objective is to involve public libraries in European policies, programmes and initiatives, as well as to assist them in becoming places for the entire European society and key institutions for democratic participation, not just financially. The Partnership for Culture/Culture Heritage published a [report presenting an analysis](#) of where public libraries make important contributions, where their potential is neglected, and how the EU can better integrate this potential in the future.



Collective impact model and its application in European cities

Urban security is a multifaceted problem that encompasses many types of crimes, several participants, and various preventative and repressive measures. It addresses physical but also psychological security concerns that might impact residents and affect trust in local administration. Discussions on existing tools, techniques and actions to address these difficulties have been fuelled by the continued challenge of urban security. The collective impact models have increasingly become more popular as a 'new' way to tackle tough societal challenges.

Led by the City of Mechelen, this action by the Partnership on Security in Public Spaces looks at measuring the impact of social cohesion and inclusion on security in public spaces of urban and peri-urban areas. The [published report](#) aims to provide a new method that local security managers can implement to find new innovative solutions for complex and persistent urban security challenges. The Collective Impact Model (CIM) is primarily used in the North American context and is still relatively unknown in Europe.



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Achievements leading to a common frame for the consideration of urban challenges at EU level



New governance model

The Urban Agenda for the EU represents a new governance model, involving all levels of government and stakeholders more closely at all stages of European and national urban policy cycles.



Sustainable development goals

International urban commitments are on the agenda. The New Urban Agenda is delivered through the Urban Agenda for the EU.



Urban issues are on the EU agenda

The Urban Agenda for the EU supports policymakers at various levels in understanding the important role of cities in progressing towards resilient, inclusive and sustainable development



Europe becomes closer to its citizens

Cities are the shortest link between Europe and its citizens. Through the Urban Agenda for the EU the distance between Europe and its citizens has been reduced



Enhanced national and regional urban policy-making

The Urban Agenda for the EU inspired some Member States and regions to set up and/or strengthen their urban policy, following the principles of the Urban Agenda for the EU



Cities are better positioned at EU level

Cities have an increased opportunity to be involved and have their voices heard on urban matters within national and European policymaking.



Direct access to European urban data and knowledge

The European Commission has made urban data and knowledge more accessible for cities, through the one-stop-shop for cities, URBIIS, the Urban Agenda for the EU website and the Urban Data Platform.



More cities act at EU and global level

The Urban Agenda for the EU has engaged almost 100 cities, contributing to actions addressing global, European and national urban challenges.



New Leipzig Charter and implementing document:

These documents highlight the important contribution of the Urban Agenda for the EU multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach to urban development and supported its continuation.



A unique instrument at EU level

The Assessment Study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the UAEU's implementation and performance. The Urban Agenda for the EU topics are being aligned with other EU programmes, policies and initiatives relating to urban policy.



Ljubljana agreement

This document provides for concrete steps to renew the Urban Agenda for the EU with a common goal to make it more impactful and efficient.



Strengthened urban dimension of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy

More than 5% earmarked of the total ERDF is being spent in cities to implement integrated urban strategies. The Commission proposed a reinforced dimension of Cohesion Policy for the 2021-2027 programming with an 8% earmarking for sustainable urban development, a new policy objective 'Europe closer to citizens', and a European Urban Initiative.

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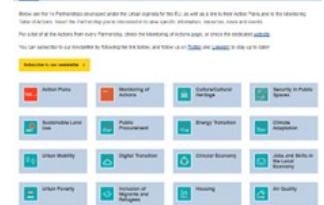
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If you would like to know more about the **Urban Agenda for the EU** and its **partnerships**, or if you would like to get in contact with the coordinators or read the underlying (political) papers, click on the information icon and on the seven pictures on this page. They will take you to an webpage with additional information.

1. If you are interested in finding out more about what the Urban Agenda for the EU brings and more specifically what the partnerships are undertaking, click on the image to the right.
2. The Commission is reaching out to cities to help them better address urban development challenges, and to capitalise on EU funding opportunities. In 2016, the European Commission launched the web portal 'One Stop Shop for Cities'. This city-centred information hub also provides an entry point for cities to other EU policies with an urban dimension. Click on the image to the right to visit the portal.
3. The urban dimension of Cohesion policy has been significantly strengthened in recent years. There is now a policy objective dedicated to integrated territorial development and increased urban earmarking, and the European Urban Initiative will be supporting innovative actions, as well as capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication. The URBACT programme will continue fostering sustainable integrated urban development in cities across Europe. Click on the image to the right to learn more about Cohesion policy.



4. If you are interested in the localisation of the SDGs, discover relevant EU resources at your disposal by clicking on the image to the right. You can also learn about international urban cooperation between cities and regions by clicking on the image to the right.
5. Each Partnership Action is directed towards one of the three pillars of the Urban Agenda for the EU: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. If you would like to see the Urban Agenda in action, click on the image to the right.
6. If you want to know more about important policy and research reports and data sources on sustainable urban development, like the State of the European Cities report, the Urban Data Platform+, the Future of Cities report, EUROSTAT Urban Europe (statistics on cities, towns and suburbs), and the OECD principles on urban policy, click on the image to the right.
7. And do not forget to click on the image to the right to follow us on social media.



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