Baseline Study
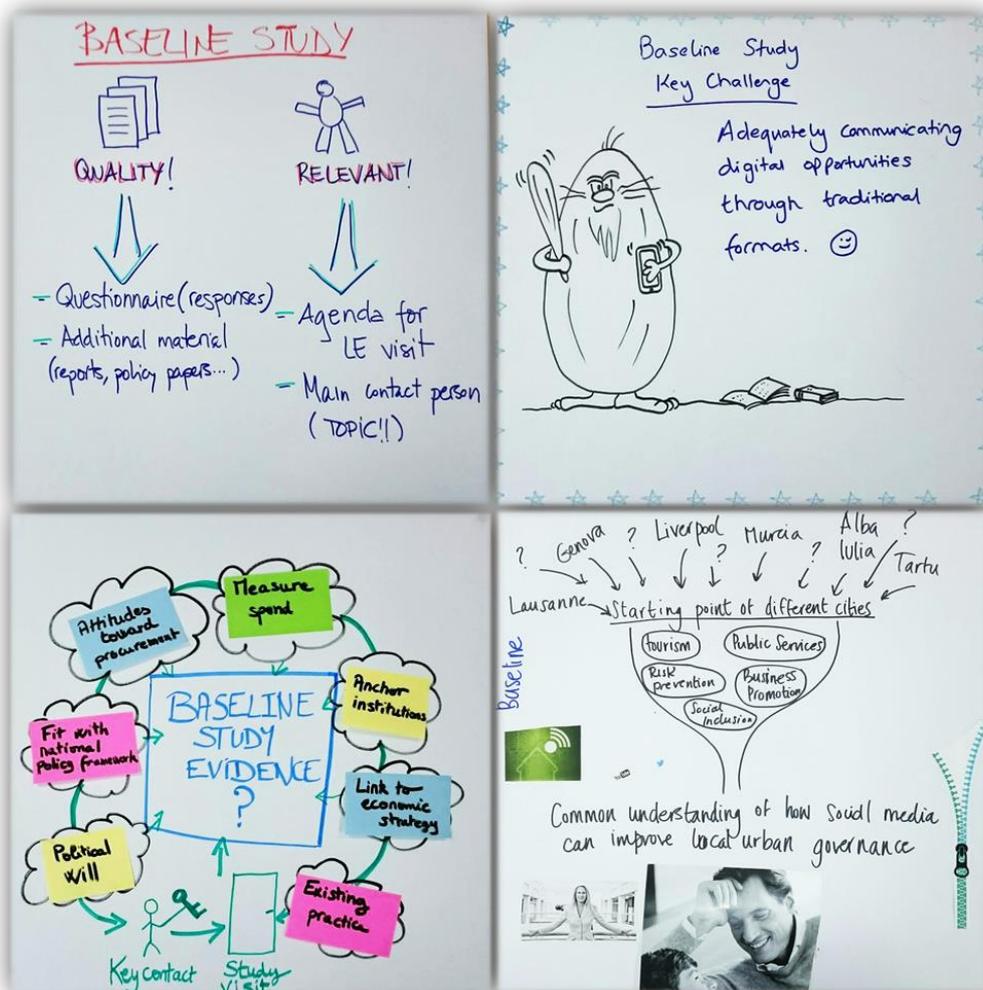
URBACT III Guidance Document for URBACT Networks

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1. WHAT IS A BASELINE STUDY?

The baseline study is a development phase requirement for all URBACT networks. It is a capitalisation exercise, providing partners with an opportunity to start their work with a sound underpinning of knowledge combined with an awareness of the state of play in other European cities, including each of the partner cities. It involves the Lead Expert working closely with the Lead and Project Partners in a process that strengthens understanding amongst the key actors and provides the foundations for the network.

The concept of a baseline is familiar in evaluation as a way of establishing the starting position, before activities start. This provides a yardstick against which progress can be measured. It is to be envisaged that the baseline document will be finished before the final (real or virtual) meeting of the partnership during the development phase in order to inform the final work programme and application form for phase 2.

2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE URBACT III BASELINE STUDY?

The URBACT baseline study comprises three separate but related components as follows:

1. **A 'State of the Art'** providing a European level overview of the topic being addressed by the project and existing knowledge/ projects/ programmes/ good practices, etc. related to the policy challenge to be addressed.

2. **Partner Profiles** providing an analysis of the state of play in all cities/ partners to be involved in the phase 2 application, regarding the local policy challenge to be addressed, existing policies/ action plans, possible focus of the action plan to be developed, reflection on implementation challenges (for Implementation Networks), etc. This will include a baseline of capacity-building needs and it will also establish each city's position in relation to the URBACT III programme level indicator.

3. **A Synthesis** paper bringing together the issues arising from the two previous sections: cross-cutting analysis of the situation in the partner cities, the "state of the art", synthesis of capacity-building needs as well as the baseline for the result indicators. This section will outline and analyse the issues or sub-themes, and the challenges and sub-challenges that the project will address.

The sections below provide more information on the expected content and format of each component.

3. COMPONENT 1 OF THE BASELINE: THE 'STATE OF THE ART'

3.1. Content and target audience

The State of the Art paper should present a *broad picture* of the current state of play related to the project theme. It should include discussion of reports or policy guidelines at the EU level on the topic on which the project will develop its activities. There should be a review of existing knowledge and projects working on the issue. This will establish the existing knowledge base on which the project could build, and any gaps the project could address. NOTA BENE: It will also ensure that networks do not duplicate the activities of others: it should make reference to any previous URBACT projects relating to the theme.

This document should be considered as a briefing paper aimed at the city partners in the network. This document should be accessible (not overloaded with academic references), and it should focus on practice in the field in cities across Europe (and if necessary beyond). It needs to reference the successes in urban policy in the particular domain the project is addressing, and use desk research to draw out any lessons learnt in terms of critical factors and preconditions for success. The paper should draw on evidence from evaluations and academic work where this can support the argument that certain practices have proven to be more effective than others.

Others in the wider URBACT community and beyond will be interested in such content. The 'state of the art' will be published on the URBACT website for dissemination, as a stand-alone publication.

3.2. Style and format

It should be a short paper (around 15 to 20 pages) written in journalistic style. It should contain embedded hyperlinks so that the online reader can see directly the references that have been used. References to books and journal articles in the text should follow the Harvard system where the author and year is included in the text [either as (Ramsden, 2013) or Adams (2013) implied that....]. All references need to be fully included in a Reference Section at the end of the text[1]. All other references such as weblinks should be footnoted (even if you have them in the text as hyperlinks).

3.3. Time frame

NOTA BENE: The 'State of the Art' paper should be completed first, within 2 months after the approval of the project. This will be the first principal output produced by the Lead Expert during the 6-month development phase, and it should be prepared and circulated – at least in draft - prior to the first partnership meeting. As such, it will help focus partner discussions on future actions in the development phase. It will also provide a shared vocabulary for the network[2].

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[1] Using the Harvard system which for a book is author, (year). title. publisher, city of publisher

[2] The 'State of the Art' report produced by the *Sustainable Food for Urban Communities* network provides a good example of the way in which this document can summarise good practice in the field.
http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/sustainable_food_baseline-study.pdf

4. COMPONENT 2 OF THE BASELINE: THE PARTNER PROFILES

4.1. Content and target audience

The 2nd component of the baseline study is a series of "Partner profiles". It is a key component as it will directly provide an input for the Application Form for phase 2. During phase 1, the Lead Expert, ideally accompanied by the Lead Partner, will visit all partner cities that will be involved in the network Phase 2.

The partner profiles are primarily aimed at an internal audience. They will allow all partners to get to know their respective local challenges, expectations and potential contributions in regard to the policy issue to be tackled by the network. This will provide important information about the relationship of each partner to the network.

The profiles will provide a common snapshot of each city partner in relation to the network activities for phase 2: local context, nature of the problem in each city, previous local experience in tackling it, focus of the integrated action plan to be produced (APN) or on implementation challenges to be tackled (IN), local stakeholders to be involved in the URBACT Local Group, possible fit with the ERDF and ESF operational programmes as well as potential links with related Managing Authorities. The template provided in annex will ensure that the appropriate information is collected right from the start.

The partner profiles will aim at demonstrating the relevance of the network as a means to achieve the results expected in each partner organisation. NOTA BENE: This is an important dimension for the qualitative assessment of phase 2 applications.

4.2. Style and format

The profile should be clear and focused –10 pages max per partner. It will be produced using the template annexed to this guide but this template will be used to collect information only. Lead experts are invited to present and edit the collected information in the format they consider most appropriate.

4.3. Time frame

Partner profiles will be developed by the Lead expert over the 4-5 first months of phase 1, so as to be ready in time for the preparation of phase 2 application. This component should be circulated to all partners for discussion and validation (as part of the agenda of the last meeting of phase 1, involving all partners if possible).

4.4. Template

In order to align the collection of information for the baseline partner profiles to the requirements of the phase 2 applications, the URBACT Secretariat has elaborated a template for the baseline exercise. This template is provided in Annex of the present guidelines.

NOTA BENE

- The partner profiles should be completed addressing all questions included in the template provided in Annex. These questions are part of the phase 2 application form to be submitted at the end of phase 1. Lead Experts will thus collect all necessary information when producing the baseline.

- Lead Experts and Lead Partners are of course invited to build on the template provided in Annex to complement with questions to collect information they need in relation with the topic addressed by the network and to design their own template (or whatever tool they intend to use to collect the related information).

- The answers to these key questions will provide important baseline data at programme level relating to the URBACT indicators. They will be included in the application form for phase 2. This exercise will be repeated in the final stage of the network, in the closure report.

4.5. How to prepare the partner profiles?

The Lead Expert, along with the Lead Partner whenever possible, will visit all partners to be involved in the partnership for phase 2. These visits will provide an opportunity to work with partners to gather information for the partner profiles. In addition, they make it possible for the Lead Expert (and ideally the Lead Partner) to engage with the potential stakeholders to be involved in the URBACT Local Group in each city.
It is recommended that:
- the template for data collection be sent to the partner in advance of the visit; some experts will opt for collecting first information asking partners to fill in and submit the template prior to the visit so as to use the visit as an opportunity to review and complete the answers provided by the partner;
- brief guidelines on "how to organise the Lead Expert's visit" be elaborated by the Lead partner and Lead expert and circulated to all partners so that they are also well briefed about these visits, expectations on both sides in terms of timing, meetings with local stakeholders, etc.;

Preparing the city visits
Although the visit may seem time consuming, this method has proved very effective in the past and has a great number of advantages, among which clarifying what partners can expect of taking part in the network, what partners are expected to do and how they shall contribute to network activities, meeting with a number of local players to ensure political support to the project, refine local priorities with regard to the integrated action plan to be produced, etc.

Certain principles will help to maximise the time spent in each city.

- Tight planning and good preparation in advance:
  ✓ Informing the local players to be met of the purpose of the meetings
  ✓ Having city officials complete questionnaire (or parts of the questionnaire) on time and in advance of the meeting
  ✓ Preparing a draft agenda for the visit
  ✓ Finalising the agenda with precise timing (city partner and lead expert)
  ✓ Asking the partner to support the organisation of the visit (fixing appointments, arranging accommodation, transfer from one place to another if needed to help respecting the schedule, booking rooms for meetings, etc.) without leaving it all to the partner (check the list of local players proposed for meetings, ask to meet specific persons based on needs for the partner profiling, etc.)

- Stakeholder consultation:

A number of stakeholders should be involved in these visits including, beyond the local URBACT coordinator, a key elected representative (e.g. mayor, deputy mayor), heads of different city departments, Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes as much as possible, person who should/ could be in charge of coordinating the URBACT Local Group…
It will be up to the Lead expert to go for individual meetings/ interviews or collective meetings or a mix of both. Collective meetings tend to turn into meetings where the Lead expert will have to explain what URBACT is about and what the network is about, etc. rather than provide opportunities for the collection of information to complete the partner profiles.

- Appropriate resources to support the expert in their work:
  ✓ Transport and guide
  ✓ Interpretation
  ✓ Time allocated to meet with the lead partner for briefing and debriefing

5. COMPONENT 3 OF THE BASELINE STUDY: THE SYNTHESIS

The synthesis should be a short document of about 5-10 pages. It is a more forward-looking document than the previous two, which helps shape the work programme and also refines the issues to be addressed (possible sub-themes, sub-challenges, etc) at both the transnational and partner levels.

The synthesis shall summarise the key issues emerging from the 'state of the art' paper and take account of the respective partner's positions in order to refine the definition of the policy challenge to be addressed and sub-topics to be explored by the network.

The synthesis shall present a consolidated picture of the partner profiles along the main sections of the "Partner Profiles" component (expectations vis à vis the network activities, potential focus of the integrated action plans or implementation challenges showing consistency across the partnership, orientations for the URBACT Local Groups and their coordinators, baseline situation regarding the URBACT programme indicator, etc.).

The synthesis should bring together partners' needs/ challenges and the broader picture in a coherent way. Partners should be able to use this summary, possibly at the final meeting of the development phase, to guide their thinking about the activities needed to achieve the outputs and results that the project is trying to deliver.

The synthesis can be presented by using several tables can be developed to present an overview and synthesis of the capacity-building needs, URBACT Local Groups, Implementation Challenges, programme indicators, etc.

NOTA BENE:
A good baseline study will help partners define the issues (the main theme, sub-themes, challenges and sub-challenges) that the partners are willing to address. It will facilitate a common understanding of the issues that are going to be addressed, to ensure consistency across the partnership and to feed into the Application Form for phase 2. It will also help to position the project (e.g. avoid too large or too ambitious thematic coverage or help to focus the challenges).

ANNEX – TEMPLATE FOR THE COLLECTION OF DATA AND INFORMATION FOR THE PARTNER PROFILES – IMPLEMENTATION NETWORKS

This template includes questions that will be part of the Application Form for Phase 2. Lead experts are invited to build on this template, in close collaboration with their respective Lead partner, and add all questions that are relevant to better understand the local contexts in each partner city, the topic and challenges tackled by the network.

This template is a standard form to be used for the collection of information (incl. during the partner visits to be performed by the Lead expert). The collected content (or part of it) can then be presented, edited and published in a different format for dissemination purposes.

Section 1 – Data related to the policy challenge/ issues to be tackled by the partnership in the framework of the URBACT network

Key generic indicators

Key generic indicators for all partners shall be considered such as:

- Size and main cities of the Functional Urban Area (FUA)[3]
- Location of the partner city relative to FUA (peripheral, core, etc.)
- Population size of partner city
- Demographic profile – age, gender, ethnicity
- Economic profile – per capita GDP, key industry sectors
- Employment levels
- Etc.

Network specific indicators

The profiling exercise shall also gather baseline data relating to the project theme, which might include:

- Business-start up rates
- Percentage of derelict land/ brownfield
- Social housing stock
- Health-related data
- Migration levels
- Scale of local retail sector
- School drop-out rates
- Innovation levels
- Air quality
- Etc.

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[3] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/European_cities_%E2%80%93_the_EU-OECD_functional_urban_area_definition

Section 2 – Information related to the partners in the perspective of the network activities for phase 2

NOTA BENE: all questions outlined below are all already part of the Phase 1 application form; the Lead Expert should review and update them. They must all be answered.

About your strategy

Describe your strategy:

- title/name

- what is the local policy challenge that the city's Integrated strategies/ action plan addresses?

- what are the objectives of Integrated strategy/action plan?

- when was this integrated strategy/ action plan designed? What period does it cover?

- what are the main actions/ measures included in this strategy/action plan?

- what are the main expected results of the strategy/ action plan?

- what is the area that the strategy/ action plan covers? (e.g. specify neighbourhood, municipality, grouping of municipalities)

- what financial resources have been allocated to your integrated strategy/action plan?

Implementation challenges

	How would you define this challenge for your city?
1. Ensuring the integrated approach in the delivery of the strategy and their related actions/projects	
2. Maintaining involvement of local stakeholders and organising decision-making for delivery	
3. Setting up efficient indicators & monitoring systems to measure performance	

	How would you define this challenge for your city?	How would you rank the relevance of this challenge for your city? (*example of ranking below*)
4. Moving from strategy to operational action-plan		*1 highly relevant*
5. Setting up Public Private Partnerships for delivery		*3 relevant*
6. Designing smart public procurement frameworks		*4 less relevant*
7. Enhancing funding of urban policies by exploring financial innovation (urban development funds, crowd-funding, etc.)		2 *very relevant*

NOTA BENE: Challenge n°3 and 4 need to be very clearly explained. They will help assess whether the city partner's action plan is indeed ready for implementation or whether further work will need to be done at the very start of Phase 2 to upgrade it.

URBACT Local Group

Who are the key local stakeholders to be involved in the partner's URBACT Local Group (ULG) in terms of city departments, local organisations/ agencies, NGOs, civil society, private sector, etc. ?

How will the ULG engage in transnational network activities?

Capacity-Building

What specific capacity building needs have been identified by the partner?

URBACT Programme Indicator

NOTA BENE & REMINDER: Answering the following four questions is compulsory. Partners should select one of the five answers provided.

- **Has the city been identified as the article 7 urban authority for the ERDF Operational programme? If yes, will it be funded as an ITI dedicated programme or urban axis? Please explain the state of play?**

- **Does your city take a sectoral approach to implementing a strategy/action plan?**

1. My city predominantly delivers action plans through individual departments.
2. My city sometimes delivers action plans by involving several departments.
3. My city mostly delivers action plans by involving several departments.
4. My city mostly delivers action plans by involving several departments and sometimes builds multidisciplinary teams for this purpose too.
5. My city always has multidisciplinary teams working across departments to deliver an action plan.

- **How would you describe the approach of your city to maintaining participation* of relevant local stakeholders in the implementation of an action plan?**

1. My city never applies a stakeholder participation approach to the implementation of an action plan.
2. My city rarely applies a stakeholder participation approach to implementation of an action plan.
3. My city sometimes applies a stakeholder participation approach to implementation of an action plan.
4. My city often applies a stakeholder participation approach to implementation of an action plan.
5. My city always applies a stakeholder participation approach to implementation of an action plan.

- **How would you define your city's performance in using a results framework** in the implementation of a strategy/action plan?**

1. My city never uses a results framework when implementing a strategy or action plan.
2. My city rarely uses a results framework in the implementation of strategies or action plans.
3. My city sometimes uses a results framework when implementing a strategy or action plan.
4. My city often uses a results framework when implementing a strategy or action plan.
5. My city always uses a results framework for all the strategies or action plans that it delivers.

* Participation implies bringing together a variety of actors - from public, private and third sectors - in the URBACT local group. Different units in the same municipality, but also the regional and national level can be included. Participation is also the engagement of local citizens in policy-making and delivery, whether in their role as service users, entrepreneurs, residents, tenants etc.
**The results framework is about defining results from the outset of the action plan; what is to be achieved through the action, by when, and how it will be measured. By keeping measurable and timely objectives in sight, practitioners can monitor progress, adjust their activities if necessary, and assess whether they have met their initial objectives or not. The results framework is thus considered a key tool for effective and sustainable project management.