

URBACT IV CALL FOR EXPERTS

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT PANEL



URBACT



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1. Call for Applicants

The “Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires” (ANCT), Managing Authority of the URBACT IV Cooperation programme, issues a Call for Applicants for the constitution of the External Assessment Panel (EAP).

As stated in the URBACT IV Programme Manual, the External Assessment Panel shall be in charge of assessing all the eligible applications submitted in the framework of the Calls for Proposal launched for the creation of URBACT Networks. The members of the External Assessment Panel shall be recruited through a Call for Applicants. More detail on the tasks of the EAP and the recruitment process are provided in the present Call.

The present Call for Applicants for the constitution of the External Assessment Panel refers specifically to the Call for Proposals for Action Planning Networks launched in January 2023.

This call aims to appoint up to 8 individuals specialized in a variety of urban themes. The panel of experts will be diverse in gender and nationality.

The deadline for submission of applications to become a member of the External Assessment Panel is 7th March 2023 15h00 CET.

2 . The URBACT Programme

For more than 20 years, URBACT has driven change all over Europe by enabling integrated and sustainable urban transformation. It brings cities together to experiment new ideas and put them into action, so all citizens can contribute for better cities.

Over 1 000 cities have already benefited from European funding through the URBACT programme improving their local policies and learning from peers.

For the programming period 2021-2027, URBACT IV builds on the legacy of past Programmes and includes even more opportunities for cities to make positive change. The current Programme integrates the crosscutting EU priorities of digital, green and gender-equal policy-making into its activities.

Previously successful types of Networks like Action Planning and Transfer will continue, while a new type of Network will exist to strengthen the connections between the Urban Innovative Action cities with the URBACT Method.

For the first time, URBACT supports towns and cities in pre-accession countries to the EU – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. These activities are co-financed by the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Fund.

URBACT IV is co-financed by the Member and Partner States, alongside the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – with a budget of EUR 79,679 million. The Programme also has funding from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance with a budget of EUR 5 million.

The [URBACT Cooperation Programme](#) (CCI 2021TC16FFIR001) was officially adopted on 19th September 2022 by Commission Implementing Decision C(2022) 6771. In addition to the Cooperation Programme, the official [Programme Manual](#) is also available laying down the principles and regulations for the implementation of the activities in the framework of the URBACT IV Programme.

The main objective of URBACT is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies.

To reach this objective URBACT IV has three aims:

-) Use transnational networks to improve the capacity of European cities;
-) Improve the capacity of urban stakeholders to design and implement sustainable urban development policies, practices and innovations in an integrated, participative and place-based way;
-) Ensure that URBACT knowledge and practice is made accessible to urban practitioners and policymakers to feed into local, regional, national and European urban policies, in particular through the European Urban Initiative; and contributing to the Urban Agenda for the EU.

Further details about the URBACT Programme can be found at www.urbact.eu

3 . URBACT IV Action Planning Networks

The core strand of activities of the URBACT IV Programme is composed of transnational exchange and learning networks. URBACT transnational networks aim to impact local policies and practices by supporting the design and implementation of sustainable and integrated urban policies. There are 3 different types of networks (please refer to the Cooperation Programme and programme manual for more details):

-) Action-Planning Networks
-) Transfer Networks
-) Innovation Transfer Mechanism

The focus of this particular call is on Action Planning Networks. It is the first call for proposals for Action Planning Networks under URBACT IV. Action Planning Networks allow cities to work together to find solutions to common urban challenges and exchange about the opportunities of sustainable urban development. Through exchange and learning with European peers, cities can develop and test solutions to the challenge they have identified. Using the URBACT Method of transnational exchange, integrated and participatory approach and co-creation, the cities will develop strong integrated action plans at local level to include concrete actions to deal with the challenge identified. Ultimately, the cities will improve their integrated urban policies and the delivery of these policies on the ground.

The main objective of Action Planning Networks is to improve the capacity of cities to manage sustainable urban policies and, more specifically, to improve the capacity to design integrated urban action plans in cities. Action Planning Networks are expected to support an organised process of exchange and learning among peers, with a view to improving local policies through concrete action planning.

Cities willing to get involved in Action Planning Networks shall commit to develop an Integrated Action Plan that will address their challenge. This Integrated Action Plan will, therefore, be both a driver of the transnational exchange and learning activities, and a key concrete output of their participation in the Action Planning Network.

Cities interested in participating in an Action Planning Networks shall also commit to work on their policy challenges with a participatory approach involving all relevant local stakeholders (from within the local administration and beyond, civil society, private sector, associations, etc.) in the action-planning process. These key stakeholders will be gathered in an URBACT Local Group. They will be actively involved in the transnational exchange activities and in the co-production of the Integrated Action Plan to be produced by the city. The participatory approach shall improve the action-planning process and the subsequent delivery of the local policies (strengthening the evidence base, ensuring understanding and ownership of the problems identified and of the solutions/ policies developed, creating the conditions for a successful delivery, etc.).

More information is available in the [Terms of Reference for APN](#).

4 . External Assessment Panel

The URBACT IV Programme Manual states that all applications submitted by candidates Lead Partners in the framework of a Call for Proposals and declared eligible by the Joint Secretariat shall be assessed by an independent External Assessment Panel (EAP). The External Assessment Panel for this call shall be composed by up to 8 members and they shall be recruited through a Call for Applicants.

The External Assessment Panel is in charge of assessing, scoring and ranking all eligible applications against a set of assessment criteria approved by the URBACT Monitoring Committee and available to all applicants in the framework of the Call for Proposals.

The External Assessment Panel Chair shall be appointed among the selected members. The role of the Chair is specifically outlined in section 4.2 below.

The External Assessment Panel shall be balanced in terms of thematic expertise so as to ensure adequate coverage of all relevant urban themes to be addressed by URBACT networks.

The panel shall also be balanced in terms of gender and geographical coverage. Regarding geographical coverage, and if made possible by the range of applications received, the up to 8 experts should be of different nationalities. Classification of candidates will be first and foremost based on skills and experience

4.1 Key Tasks of the members of the External Assessment Panel

The key tasks of the members of the External Assessment Panel for this APN call are structured around the assessment of applications including the following activities:

-) Kick off meeting with the Joint Secretariat to define the methodology for the assessment process, develop a shared understanding of the assessment criteria and define a detailed calendar for the delivery of the expected outputs – this meeting will take place in Paris on 28th March 2023.
-) Assessment and scoring of eligible applications by individual members of the EAP. Each application shall be assessed by 2 different assessors, allowing for a cross-analysis and assessment of each proposal. The assessment will be done remotely and will result in the production, by each assessor, of an Individual Assessment Sheet including detailed comments/ recommendations – the independent work will be carried out between 10-19 April 2023.
-) Consensus meeting with all members of the EAP and the Joint Secretariat to share the individual assessment and consolidate a final Network Assessment Sheet for all eligible applications – this meeting will take place on 20-21 April 2023 in Paris.

4.2 Key Tasks of the Chair of the External Assessment Panel

The key tasks of the Chair of the External Assessment Panel for this APN call are presented below:

-) Kick off meeting with the Joint Secretariat to define the methodology for the assessment process, develop a shared understanding of the assessment criteria and define a detailed calendar for the delivery of the expected outputs – this meeting will take place in Paris on 28th March 2023.

-) Review of all eligible applications in order to act as arbitrator during the consensus meeting discussion. This is not an assessment of the projects but a review of the key elements and an opinion on quality. This work will be carried out independently between 10-19 April 2023.
-) Production of tools and sheets to track progress of assessors and facilitate record keeping and consensus discussions.
-) Chair and guide the discussion during the Consensus meeting with all members of the EAP and the Joint Secretariat to share the individual assessment and consolidate a final Network Assessment Sheet for all eligible applications – this meeting will take place on 20-21 April 2023 in Paris.
-) Delivery of a final report which includes a description of the assessment process, the results of the assessment and the recommendations to the Monitoring Committee. This report should include all the Network Assessment Sheets produced by the EAP members – final deadline 26th April 2023
-) Present the results of the EAP to the URBACT Monitoring Committee (probably on line)

4.3 Skills and Competences of the EAP

The external consultancy, recruited through a call for tender for the selection and assessment of URBACT experts, will be in charge of selecting the candidates according to the following criteria:

- Proven track record in similar work (i.e. of assessing applications for transnational cooperation projects)
- Good knowledge of issues related to integrated and sustainable urban development (varied themes to ensure good coverage).
- Understanding and experience of exchange and learning practices at European level
- Understanding and knowledge of European Cohesion Policy
- Other skills and competences considered relevant
- Independence from cities, national authorities, and National or European networks involving local authorities
- Fluent in English (level C2 written and spoken)
- Excellent communication skills (written and verbal) and experience of committee work
- Ability to work in a team, under pressure and to tight deadline

All the above skills are required for the Chair of the EAP as well as the ability to mediate discussions and design tools suitable for monitoring.

4.4 Conflict of Interest for EAP members

EAP members must certify, through a declaration of non-conflict of interest, that they do not have any professional relation with the actors potentially involved in URBACT IV project proposals nor any interest in the projects that could be developed by cities and other public authorities within the framework of the Call for proposals they are involved in. In case there should be any change in the EAP member situation with regard to the above-mentioned elements, he/she should immediately inform the URBACT Secretariat Director of the new situation. The latter will determine what action is required.

The position of EAP member is not compatible with the positions of Network Expert (neither Lead nor Ad-hoc Expert), Methods & Tools Programme Expert, National URBACT Point contact person, Programme Evaluator.

5 . Application Procedure

Applications shall include the following:

1. a detailed resume in English, using the Europass format¹
2. a signed cover letter in English outlining:
 - indication if the candidate wishes to be considered for EAP Chair with motivation
 - why the candidate is suitable to be part of the URBACT External Assessment Panel,
 - main experience with regard to the skills and competences requested
 - Confirmation of availability on the dates stated in section 4.1 above

NOTA BENE: In order to avoid potential conflict of interest, the covering letter will include the following mention:

"I hereby certify that I do not have any professional relation with the actors potentially involved in URBACT project proposals to be assessed nor any interest in the projects that could be developed by cities and other public authorities within the framework of the Call for proposals for Action Planning Networks. In case there should be any change in my personal situation with regard to the above-mentioned elements, I commit to inform immediately the URBACT Secretariat Director of the new situation. The latter will determine what action is required."

The deadline for receipt of applications is 7th March 2023 at 15h00 CET.

Applications shall be sent by the deadline via e-mail to the URBACT Secretariat at the following address:
a.bucella@urbact.eu

¹ The template for the Europass CV can be found at
<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/vernav/Europass+Documents/Europass+CV/navigate.action>

6 . Contractual Information

6.1 Subject Matter and Duration

This call for applicants concerns the recruitment of up to 8 experts to fulfil the role of the External Assessment Panel for the Call for Proposals for Action Planning Networks.

A contract will be signed between the Managing Authority and each selected EAP member. The URBACT External Assessment Panel for Action Planning Networks will be set up and will work specifically on this call for proposals in the timeframe established above.

While specific calls for EAP are normally foreseen for each call for networks, it can be decided by the URBACT Managing Authority, after consultation of the Monitoring Committee and the independent consultancy in charge of assessing expert applications, to use the EAP experts of one call, as a panel or individually, for a single other call or some other assessment purposes in the frame of the URBACT IV Programme. This would be implemented by mean of amendment to the EAP member contracts.

6.2 Financial Terms of the Contract

The fees for this work are calculated as follows for members of the EAP:

- Fixed rate of 650€ VAT included per assessed application. These fees are calculated to include all the tasks outlined in section 4.1 above. It is estimated that each EAP member will need to assess between 20 and 30 proposals. Travel costs are paid separately and are refunded in addition to these fees based on the URBACT refund conditions.

The fees for Chair of the EAP are calculated as follows:

- Variable rate between 230€ and 300€ VAT included per eligible application depending on the number of applications. These fees are calculated to include all the tasks outlined in section 4.2 above. It is difficult to estimate the number of proposals expected but we estimate between 50 and 100. Travel costs are paid separately and are refunded in addition to these fees based on the URBACT refund conditions.

All costs are VAT included.

The URBACT Secretariat is paying its providers VAT inclusive. It is therefore up to the providers of the URBACT Secretariat to collect and pay VAT in their own countries according to their national tax rates to their tax authorities.

The URBACT Secretariat provider which is exempt of VAT must provide the URBACT Secretariat with the reasons (specific status, law articles, ...) and proof of this exemption when signing the contract and must refer to this in its invoices.