

URBACT Harvesting Report

on the INTERREG consultation 2024 on the future Cohesion policy (post 2027)

Executive Summary

To promote the reflection process on the **future Cohesion policy (post 2027)**, the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) has launched a **consultation process for the INTERREG community** running throughout 2024. The **URBACT IV programme** as one of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes of INTERREG is **taking part in this debate**.

With its **special focus on cities** encompassing small, medium and big cities, **URBACT promotes urban cooperation** in the European Union, accession countries, Norway, and Switzerland. Through comprehensive **capacity-building** programs and specially curated **URBACT tools and methods**, URBACT provides cities of diverse contexts and needs with much-required **skills for sustainable urban development** that is co-created with diverse stakeholders and citizens.

For the **INTERREG stakeholder consultation 2024 on the future Cohesion policy**, URBACT was running an **online survey** from March to July 2024 to find out more about the cities' needs and ideas on the future urban cooperation. The survey was open to the general public and in total, 228 contributions were submitted. In addition, URBACT launched a series of **consultation workshops** to collect further results and to engage in an active discussion with stakeholders and citizens. A **special focus** was put on **young people** to know more about how they experience and imagine their cities and the urban exchange. In total, around 330 people participated in these consultation workshops all over Europe.

The **consultation results** were analysed and evaluated by a **team of URBACT experts**. Recommendations were developed, and conclusions were drawn. The overall consultation process was steered by the **URBACT Managing Authority** and the **Joint Secretariat**, and closely followed and supervised by the **URBACT Monitoring Committee**.

The **main outcome** of the consultation is that the **key features of the URBACT programme** and the URBACT method have been **confirmed and are indeed proving to be its main assets**:

-) As a 'small programme with a big (leverage) effect', particularly for **small and medium-sized cities**, URBACT is empowering and creating **practical knowledge and skills** on the **integrated and participatory approach** in municipalities all over Europe.
-) URBACT is thus **fostering sustainable urban development in Europe** and supporting the **local implementation of European objectives and values**.
-) With its 'soft' measures, URBACT is accompanying and **enhancing the 'hard' investment measures** of other European programmes and **paving the way** for enlargement and the **integration of the EU**.

Based on these findings, the **URBACT harvesting report** is making a case for a **strong role of urban cooperation in the future INTERREG and the future urban dimension of Cohesion policy**. With the following **key messages from URBACT** to the European Commission and future policy and programme makers, it is inviting everybody to join the debate:

1. Urban cooperation is **key for cohesion** and the **European community**. It creates a **European identity**, and **empathy between countries and cultures**.
2. Urban cooperation is a **long-term engagement of many partners** that delivers **strong responses to complex societal challenges**.
3. Urban cooperation is a **powerful movement driving urban change** for a **better, future-oriented Europe**.