

**URBACT**



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# URBACT IV

## Guide for applicants to the Call for Transfer Networks

2025 – 2028



## Introduction

URBACT offers a unique opportunity to learn from peers in Europe in order to improve the way cities are managed. URBACT networks foster the exchange of experience and good practices across cities, building urban stakeholders' capacity to develop efficient solutions. One could say that URBACT is an accelerator of sustainable integrated urban development in Europe enabling cities to benefit from the tried and tested [URBACT Method](#).

The Transfer Networks will kick off in November 2025 and be completed by April 2028. The 30-month long transfer activities will be structured around 3 stages:

- UNDERSTAND – Approximately 10 months (November 2025 – August 2026)
- ADAPT – Approximately 12 months (September 2026 – August 2027)
- RE-USE – Approximately 8 months (September 2027 – April 2028)

This guide will provide potential beneficiaries with a better understanding of what one can expect by joining an URBACT Transfer Network. It also clarifies the commitment and contributions expected from partners as well as the added value of being a partner in an URBACT network.

It contains detailed information for drafting a high-quality proposal for the Transfer Networks, including the main features of the network journey, how to set up a partnership and shape network exchange and learning programme of activities as well as what to take into consideration when building the network budget.

In the **introductory part** of this guide, you'll find **essential information** about what you can expect when joining an URBACT Transfer Network and what is being expected from you as a partner.

**Part I** of this guide provides an overview of the **transfer journey** with the related activities and milestones. Each stage includes a defined set of essential transfer activities and the expected outputs.

**Part II** of this guide explains the nature of each **work package** and provides details of the set of activities and outputs in the project proposals.

Finally, in **Part III**, you'll find **recommendations** to be followed when preparing the application.

This guide should be read alongside the Terms of Reference for the creation of Transfer Networks, which detail the procedure and conditions for the submission and selection of the Transfer Networks. In addition, the [URBACT Programme Manual](#) (version October 2024) shall be used as the main reference document for detailed information on the management of networks including the main URBACT rules and procedures and the development of the network budget. Links are provided in the guide where relevant.

We hope this Guide to Transfer Networks will provide all potential beneficiaries with useful advice on building a successful proposal. Join us! Together, we drive change for better cities!

# TABLE OF CONTENT

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<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>The URBACT Glossary</b> .....	4
I. What can you expect from URBACT?.....	5
II. What is expected from you?.....	7
<b>PART I - THE TRANSFER NETWORK JOURNEY</b> .....	9
Stage 1 - UNDERSTAND (approximately 10 months from November 2025 to August 2026) .....	10
Stage 2 – ADAPT (approximately 12 months from September 2026 to August 2027) .....	11
Stage 3 - RE-USE (approximately 8 months from September 2027 to April 2028).....	13
<b>PART II - The organisation of key network activities &amp; outputs</b> .....	14
Work Package 1 - Network Management .....	14
Work Package 2 - Network level (transnational) Activities .....	15
Work Package 3 – Local level activities .....	20
Summary of network outputs.....	24
<b>PART III - Hints &amp; Tips to shape your Transfer Network Application</b> .....	25

## The URBACT Glossary

### Transfer Network (TN)

Transfer networks are one of the three types of networks developed under URBACT IV. They operate over 3 stages – UNDERSTAND/ADAPT/RE-USE - and allow up to 8 cities to collaborate over a 30-month period. The network focus is on the adaptation and transfer of an established good practice, already identified by the URBACT Programme. All URBACT Networks are composed of a Lead Partner and Project Partners.

### Network Lead Partners (LPs) and Project Partners (PPs)

Each network has to appoint a Lead Partner with full responsibility for network management, coordination of activities among the transnational partners, and implementation of the work programme. The Lead Partner also bears financial and legal responsibility and liability for the whole partnership towards the Managing Authority. In the case of Transfer Networks, the Lead Partner role belongs to the URBACT Good Practice City. Project Partners in a Transfer Network are cities interested in the transfer of the good practice and are known as Transfer Cities.

### URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The ULG is a fundamental building block of the URBACT programme. In every partner city, the ULG brings together all relevant local stakeholders related to the chosen policy challenge that the city wants to tackle. The ULG is the vehicle for a participatory process allowing relevant stakeholders to be involved in the effective transfer of a good practice.

### URBACT Joint Secretariat (JS)

The URBACT Joint Secretariat, housed within the French Managing Authority (Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires), is in charge of implementing and managing the Programme on behalf of the Member and Partner States of the European Union. The Joint Secretariat supports networks in all aspects of their work from peer-learning processes, capacity building, communication activities, and knowledge-sharing efforts to management & financial support.

### The URBACT Method

It is an ensemble of processes and tools that enable an environment for promoting integrated sustainable urban development through effective learning and practice. The building blocks of the method are:

- ✓ Applying the integrated and participatory approaches at local level to solving concrete challenges with variety of stakeholders within the framework of the URBACT Local Group.
- ✓ Networking amongst EU cities to exchange good practices and find solutions to their policy challenges with expert support
- ✓ Expertise support, capacity-building and training for urban practitioners to empower them to drive change within cities.
- ✓ Capitalisation and communication of knowledge and practices to reach and provide a wider community of urban practitioners in Europe and beyond with concrete solutions.

## I. What can you expect from URBACT?

Since 2002 (from URBACT I to URBACT IV), more than 1 000 EU cities involved in URBACT have experienced the added value of transnational cooperation, the exchange of knowledge beyond national borders, and support around participatory and integrated approaches to policy-making.

**Transfer Networks** build upon successful experiences carried out since URBACT II (2007-2013). After this successful pilot experience, two waves of Transfer Networks – 30 networks in total – were carried out under URBACT III (2014-2020) which allowed the URBACT programme to refine the transfer methodology and help cities in transferring identified good practices.

### *An URBACT Transfer Network is the right place if your city wants:*

- methodological support to tackle an urban policy challenge by exploring pertinent solutions in an integrated way.
- financial support to work with other cities around Europe to replicate and scale good solutions coming from peer cities.
- to involve relevant key local stakeholders in the transfer process and in policy-making and implementation.
- a safe space for experimentation of new approaches for local and organisational impact.
- to benefit from tailor-made URBACT capacity building activities on participatory and integrated policy-making, including on topics like: digital transition, gender equality and green transition.

Throughout the Transfer Network journey, you can expect:

#### ▪ **Transnational exchange & Inspiration**

Europe's cities often face similar challenges. Yet, although there are many solutions, it can be difficult to share these in a structured way. URBACT provides a learning environment, innovative approaches and the know-how to help cities co-design solutions to urban challenges. By bringing together cities from diverse backgrounds URBACT widens the scope of shared experiences and approaches. Through peer review with partners across Europe and exposure to different perspectives and practices you will generate new ideas for your own city as well as support other local authorities to build better solutions to their local challenges.

By participating in the transnational activities organised by the networks, you will also have the opportunity to benefit from the thematic inputs provided by European urban experts, academics and researchers as well as practitioners and policy and decision makers at different levels.

#### ▪ **Method & guidance on how to develop integrated policies**

As a network partner you will have the opportunity to practice integrated and participatory approaches within the framework of the URBACT Method This includes experimenting through testing actions, applying the integrated approach - considering different policy areas and governance levels at the same time - and ensuring the active engagement of relevant stakeholders by practicing effective participatory methods & tools in the URBACT Local Group. URBACT offers a wide range of tools to co-design integrated policies with citizens, NGOs, public partners, businesses to co-produce the strategy and a plan for specific policy challenge.

- **Bespoke expertise support for the network and local activities**

One of the benefits of taking part in an URBACT network is access to expert support. URBACT grants each network with the appointment of URBACT validated experts to support the network over its entire duration and to maximise the impact of exchange and learning activities.

Lead Experts are assigned to the networks for the whole network journey and provide thematic and methodological expertise. They are appointed to design and deliver efficient exchange and learning activities, support in the production of the network deliverables (outputs, events, etc), and supply thematic expertise related to the good practice. They also bring coaching skills.

Ad hoc Experts may also be commissioned by networks at certain moments of the network journey to provide support on specific needs concerning the methodology for exchange and learning, thematic expertise or support to partners.

- **Tailor-made Capacity-Building activities to enhance participatory and integrated policy-making skills**

The URBACT Programme offers regular support to partners over the entire duration of the networks. This includes targeted guidance for specific outputs and activities as well as exclusive training and capacity-building activities, notably:

- tailor-made trainings designed exclusively for network partners;
- support on URBACT's cross-cutting priorities – Digital transformation, Gender equality, Green transition;
- targeted training schemes for specific stakeholder groups, including elected representatives and local practitioners, among others.

- **Communication, knowledge and dissemination activities**

Over the years, URBACT has developed different communication channels and tools to showcase the work of URBACT networks and cities.

**At EU level**, the URBACT website, [www.urbact.eu](http://www.urbact.eu), gives visibility to all approved URBACT networks through dedicated network pages to host articles, videos and materials produced by the partners for an external audience. In addition, the work of URBACT networks and cities is promoted to a wide EU audience through URBACT newsletters, social media, reports, publications, infographics and videos.

The URBACT programme also connects these networks with initiatives/organisations/programmes focusing on sustainable urban development (European Commission, European Urban Initiative, Urban Agenda for the EU, Council of European Municipalities and Cities, European Investment Bank, and others).

Finally, the URBACT Knowledge Hub brings together, analyses, and synthesises content and good practices coming from URBACT networks and other organisations when necessary.

**At national level**, 32 National URBACT Points (NUPs), representing 34 countries, are in charge of communicating and supporting URBACT-related activities. NUPs communicate about URBACT and the work of URBACT cities to their countries in their native languages. Depending on the country various organisations can take on the role of NUPs: ministries, associations of cities, universities, or consultant agencies.

## II. What is expected from you?

A successful participation in a Transfer Network requires that all partners commit to the following activities.

### ▪ Gaining inspiration from transnational activities

Commitment to take an active part in the transnational exchange and learning activities is mandatory. The active contribution of all partners in the transnational activities is a key condition for a rich and effective exchange and learning process for all partners. For this reason, professional proficiency in English is recommended.

The tasks to be performed by network partners are:

- ✓ preparation and active contribution to the transnational exchange and learning network activities around specific policy content,
- ✓ possible hosting of a transnational event,
- ✓ ensuring a proper administrative management related to transnational activities.

Transnational activities are conceived as a logical sequence of exchange and learning moments that will feed into partner activities at local level. Consistent participation to transnational meetings is crucial. While involving new participants, based on the themes of each meeting is encouraged, it is recommended to ensure that the project coordinator overseeing the URBACT Network at partner level is always on board.

### ▪ Ensuring impact with local actors

The transfer of the Good Practice as well as the drafting of a Transfer Plan by the URBACT Local Group are compulsory requirements for all partners involved in Transfer Networks. This is a co-creation process which requires ongoing commitment. Partners should link the local activities to what is happening in transnational meetings and should record key learnings throughout the duration of the network.

You will have to set up and run an URBACT Local Group that will bring together representatives of different departments within the local administration (in order to ensure horizontal integration), including elected representatives, decision-makers, in charge of the policy areas being addressed. This participatory process should involve representatives of communities, residents, beneficiaries linked to the policy you intend to deal with, as well as representatives of delivery agencies, third sector and private interests when relevant. The requirement to develop a participatory approach through the URBACT Local Group should not lead to duplication, as partners can build on existing local partnerships when appropriate.

All partners must be committed to engaging with local stakeholders and to mobilising the resources needed (in terms of human, time and financial resources). This includes identifying the “right” local coordinator for the network as soon as possible.

### ▪ Communication

Communicating about ongoing activities and final results is crucial. Besides meeting the necessary EU publicity and visibility rules (as described in the [Programme Manual](#)), the network’s findings and lessons learnt should be shared more widely, with all urban practitioners who may be facing similar policy challenges across Europe. This will be done in

various ways during the URBACT journey, for instance reports and articles shall capture and reflect network exchange and learning activities, the uptake of thematic knowledge and progress in partner cities.

Most of the dissemination outputs will be produced by network experts with the help of Network Communication Officers, nevertheless, partners' active contributions will be essential for making these sharing materials meaningful for wider audience. These shall be published on the respective network webpages on the URBACT website and promoted via social media, newsletter or during events.

- **Active participation in Programme activities**

The URBACT Programme Secretariat organises a variety of training and capacity-building sessions for partners and local stakeholders involved in approved networks. Attendance and active participation of partners in these activities is expected. The Programme will also facilitate various knowledge sharing activities, inviting partners to share their experience with wider audiences.

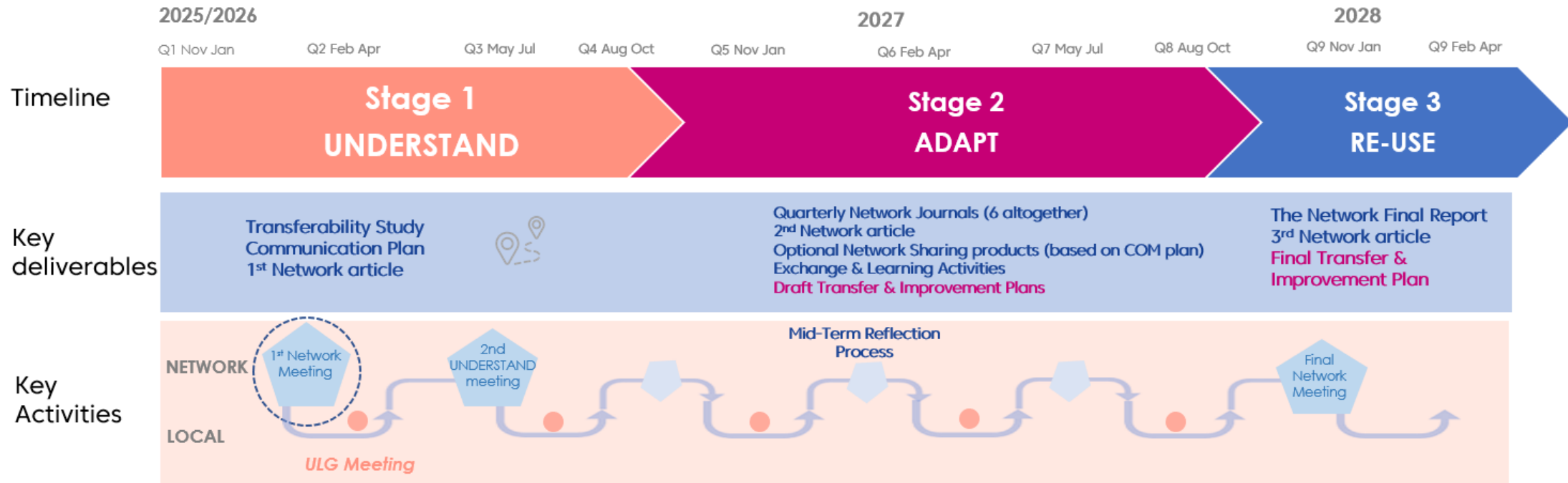
Specific training sessions will be organised for the Lead Partner's team to cover key topics for successful project, such as project management, public procurement, cost reporting, audits and network communications. These sessions are often organised as virtual meetings.

In addition, all network Lead Partners and Lead experts will be invited to attend general information and guidance sessions as well as hands-on workshops. These meetings will also aim at cross-network sharing and exchanging about the learning experience.

**→ All partners shall ensure and commit all the necessary resources – financial and staff - over the network lifetime.**



# PART I - THE TRANSFER NETWORK JOURNEY



**PROGRAMME SUPPORT**

Network experts

URBACT Toolbox

Digital Gender Green

URBACT KNOWLEDGE HUB

Activities organised by National URBACT Points

Transfer Networks will have a total duration of 30 months which will be organised around 3 distinct stages, each having a distinctive purpose with related objectives and milestones. Communication and visibility activities shall be implemented as part of all three stages. More information about communication/visibility requirements are provided in the [URBACT Programme Manual](#) (pages 94-105).

All networks will have a minimum set of standard activities, benefiting from bespoke support from network experts to carry them out.

## Stage 1 - UNDERSTAND (approximately 10 months from November 2025 to August 2026)

The first 10 months will be dedicated to the development of a deep and shared understanding of the good practice, supported by the visits from the Lead Partner and Lead Expert to network partners and the production of a Transferability Study. This stage will also involve developing detailed network activities and forming a well-balanced and coherent partnership. Communication activities will start already in this stage with the appointment of a network communication officer and first communication materials.

The main activities and deliverables of Stage 1 shall include:

- Lead Expert & Lead Partner's visits to Transfer partner cities (1 visit/PP);
- Consolidation of the partnership;
- Completion and submission of the Transferability Study (and network roadmap) with the support of the Lead Expert.
- Organisation of at least two transnational meetings with all network partners and possibly other online or in-person meetings:
  - The 1<sup>st</sup> network meeting should take place early in the UNDERSTAND stage, in the Lead Partner city, to facilitate a deep understanding of the Good Practice and the exploration of the project's potential for modularisation.
  - A second network meeting, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the UNDERSTAND stage, to co-create and agree on the network roadmap (programme of activities for the network) through a dedicated workshop with all network partners.
- Production of the network Communication Plan and first communication materials
- Production of the 1<sup>st</sup> Network Article;
- Set-up of the URBACT Local Group with relevant stakeholders in each partner city.

For a more detailed description of the expected deliverables, see Part II of the present guide.

In addition to these activities, the URBACT Secretariat will host a Transfer Network kick-off event (in-person), to familiarise attendees with the Transfer Network framework, methodology and tools. This event will take place in Paris on 3-4 December 2025 and is mandatory for Lead Partners and Lead Experts of approved Transfer Networks.

To smoothly undertake the activities of Stage 1, partners should foresee the following resources (in addition to the ones related to project management):

- Network partners will be required to identify a ULG coordinator early in stage 1, who will be tasked with setting up the URBACT Local Group. This stage will in fact foresee the identification of relevant local stakeholders to be involved in the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs), which will be key to linking the transnational and local work. The analytical work

undertaken for the Transferability Study as well as the exchanges organised for partners to get a good understanding of the Good Practice, will support and inform the set-up of the ULG at local level.

- The Lead Partner of each network shall appoint a communication officer in charge of the design and implementation of the communication plan. The communication officer will be in charge of the network's branding and communication activities (respecting EU publicity and visibility requirements, maintaining a network webpage on the URBACT website, social media, developing communication materials), and will receive specific support from the URBACT Secretariat in this period.

**→ Stage 1 will be dedicated to the development of detailed network activities and ensuring a well-balanced and coherent partnership. The main objective is to establish a clear and thorough comprehension of the original good practice.**

## Stage 2 – ADAPT (approximately 12 months from September 2026 to August 2027)

The following 12 months will be dedicated to exchange and learning activities focusing on the adaptation of the good practice to different city contexts.

Throughout this stage partners will focus on mapping and visioning, which includes breaking down the Good Practice into different modules and identifying which of its elements will be adapted and implemented in each transfer partner city and which are the conditions for the transfer to happen at local level. Partners will then prepare the transfer process and should capture the learning process in a first draft of their Transfer Plan. For the Lead Partner this will be the time for examining how they will sustain and enhance their original project, gathering their ideas in a first version of their Improvement plan. Communication and visibility activities will continue during this stage through the network's dedicated webpage on the URBACT website and other digital means.

The main activities and deliverables of Stage 2 shall include:

- Organisation of at least three transnational meetings with all network partners and possibly other online or in-person meetings.
- Organisation of ULG meetings at local level to examine how to transfer the Good Practice
- Production of the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the Transfer Plan by partners, including initial reflections on the transfer roadmap of the specific Good practice modules and its adaptation within the context of each partner city.
- Production of first draft of Improvement Plan for the Lead Partner city
- Production of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Network Article
- Production the quarterly network journals (4 in this stage but 6 altogether) to provide insights about the network progress from transnational and local activities. These Journals shall be published on network webpages and can feed the production of the Network Final Report to be delivered at end of the journey.
- Realisation of the Mid-Term Reflection process

Networks are expected to connect their transnational and local activities by using the insights gained from the Transferability Study and by following the agreed network roadmap. Various types of network exchange and learning activities can be envisaged, i.e.:

- the in-person core network meetings,

- bilateral staff/ stakeholder exchanges,
- online masterclasses in specific topics or policy-making tools,
- workshops on particular modules of the Good Practice, etc.
- regular reviews of partner progress and results;

The combination of online and/ or in-person formats for these activities shall be well thought through, taking into consideration the related carbon footprint. The use of Ad hoc experts is strongly encouraged during this period for enriching the overall learning experience with tailored inputs around the specific thematic areas or support around the use of specific methods & tools.

Secondly, at local level, partners will mobilise relevant local stakeholders to test actions inspired by the Good practice. The lessons learnt from these activities will drive the development of respectively the Transfer/Improvement Plans. These can be also used as the 'trigger tool' to build relationship with key delivery agents including the relevant national authorities of EU funds. **Partners are highly encouraged to think about ways to capture their knowledge throughout the Transfer process as this will feed in the different network and local deliverables.**

Upon request from URBACT beneficiaries, National URBACT Points can have an emphasised supporting role at local level during this stage. They will act as enablers for networking with key local stakeholders and decision-makers (notably the relevant Managing Authorities in charge of operational programmes) by organising meaningful networking events at national level and providing communication support to partners.

Throughout this stage, targeted and tailor-made programme capacity building activities will complement the network activities by offering support on all the key aspects of integrated and participatory policy-making including support with defining most adequate funding opportunities. In addition, the programme will offer support to take into consideration the cross-cutting thematic dimensions - Digital transition, Gender equality, Green transition - in partners' local activities. The use of the [URBACT Toolbox](#) will be strongly encouraged with possible live tutorials around various tools.

Knowledge Hub and communication activities initiated by the URBACT Secretariat will focus on both identifying relevant content coming from different networks or partner cities and providing needed knowledge to networks, in order to create or reinforce synergies and contributions among different parties and external partners.

The Mid-term Reflection (MTR) process starting towards the end of this stage will enable to pause and reflect on the progress being made at the mid-point of the network journey. It will be a well-structured and guided process with an aim to optimise the design and delivery of network exchange and learning activities for the remaining period. Based on the results of the MTR, networks will have the possibility to adjust and reprogram their network's activities, outputs and budget. Further guidance will be provided on this point following the approval of networks.

**→ The ADAPT stage is the engine room of the Good Practice transfer. This is where the core activity is undertaken to extract the essential components of the Good Practice, assess which are most relevant for each transfer city, and prepare the ground for the transfer.**

### Stage 3 - RE-USE (approximately 8 months from September 2027 to April 2028)

During this 8-month stage, partners will continue their transfer process and produce their Final Transfer Plans, reflecting on the results and future prospects of the transfer process.

The RE-USE stage is the concluding phase of the networks which will be characterised by the completion of the Transfer network outputs and the dissemination of key lessons.

The main activities and deliverables of Stage 3 shall include:

- Organisation of at least a final network meeting
- Production of the 2<sup>nd</sup> part and finalisation of the Transfer Plan by partners
- Production of the Improvement Plan by the Lead Partner
- Production of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Network Article by Lead Expert
- Capturing & Sharing network results
- Development of the final network product/report and dissemination of the Network results
- Closure of the Network

A meeting focusing on the peer-review of Transfer Plans shall be incorporated in network workplans at the beginning of this stage. This meeting shall have the aim to compare and review partners' draft plans for final improvements related to the delivery of actions and stakeholder's involvement. Lead Partner reflections on their Improvement plan can provide an additional dimension to these reflections.

A final network meeting is expected at end of the Journey. The first part the meeting can be a closed session for partners where the focus will be on reviewing the final Transfer Plans including Lead Partner reflections on their Improvement plan. The second part can be an open session with a focus on sharing network results and lessons, aimed at an external audience of cities and wider urban stakeholders (as identified in the network Communication plan).

To complement this, each city may choose to host its own local event, aimed at a city/regional audience. This can be done as part of the URBACT Local Group activities with the purpose to celebrate the city's achievements, to explain how the Good Practice has been adapted and to showcase and promote the Transfer Plans to key stakeholders.

Lead Partners may also host their own local event, with a slightly different twist by focusing on their experience of customising their Good Practice with other cities, underlining how it has been adapted and reused. They can also explain how their initial Good Practice has been enhanced or upgraded in their own city and use the Improvement plan to reinforce the city's political support and commitment to the project.

Dissemination of network results. The network must make public and easily accessible the transfer plans of partners, the improvement plan of the Lead Partners, articles, and final network output by the end of the network, through the network's dedicated webpage on the URBACT website.

**→ Just as importantly, at the end of this stage it will be also important to include main network management and coordination activities related to the network formal closure.**

## PART II - The organisation of key network activities & outputs

The activities in URBACT networks are always structured around 3 Work Packages (WPs).

- WP1 — Network Management
- WP2 — Network Level (Transnational) Activities
- WP3 — Local Level Activities

Each work package has its own aim. **Work package 1** focuses on network management and coordination and is crucial to ensure the correct functioning of the network. **Work Package 2** and **Work Package 3** are intertwined and shall feed each other - a continuous flow of knowledge between the transnational and the local level activities should therefore exist, for effective results.

Communication and dissemination activities are spread throughout all Work Packages.

Each work package outlines activities that shall take place in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Regardless of uniqueness of network journeys, all networks shall follow the same framework for shaping the network activities.

Work Package 2 and 3 define a set of standard outputs that should be produced by all networks. All proposed standard outputs shall be considered in network proposals. Proposed standardised outputs allow plenty of space for diversification and creativity within the given frames.

All applicants are invited to propose as well customised network activities/ outputs in addition to standard (expected) network outputs. Based on the principles and ideas defined in the application form these will be further developed and elaborated during stage 1 on the basis of the Transferability Study (and Communication plan) which shall provide detailed description of different network activities responding to specific network needs for maximising the impact of exchange and learning in URBACT.

### Work Package 1 - Network Management

The activities to be developed under Work Package 1 aim to ensure the sound management and coordination of the network concerning both the overall project management and all aspects of administrative and financial management. These also include organisation of responsibilities between the partners by building a strong collaborative relationship and ensuring the effective communication flows within the network and external audience.

#### ) Key activities include:

- To sign all the contractual documents at Programme and Network level
- To recruit, if necessary, appropriate staff to ensure efficient project management and communication
- To organise regular coordination meetings to ensure strong communication between partners concerning project coordination
- To appoint and coordinate network Lead and Ad hoc experts in line with expertise framework provided by the programme
- To coordinate the submission of official reporting documents by all partners
- To organise the Mid-term reflection process and possible budget reprogramming during the second half of the Adapt stage

- To have regular network 'health checks' with the URBACT Joint Secretariat
- To coordinate the submission of the final closure documents (end of the project) by all partners
- To receive and transfer ERDF/IPA/NDICI funds to partners
- To ensure ongoing communication on the network's activities and results with contribution from all project partners in compliance with EU publicity guidelines
- To deliver operational actions to implement the network communication plan (producing and publishing content on the network website and other channels)
- To assist and guide all project partners related to administrative and financial management including external communication activities with the support of URBACT Secretariat
- To attend information and training sessions and other relevant events organised by the URBACT Programme

→ **Further details and information about different elements related to functioning and management of URBACT networks including administrative, financial and communication aspects is provided in the Programme Manual – Book 1 – The URBACT Networks.**

## Work Package 2 - Network level (transnational) Activities

Work Package 2 is about the transnational exchange and learning activities, which form the core of all URBACT networks. The lessons learnt during the transnational activities will inspire partners to adapt this knowledge at local level, develop skills relating to the good practice and co-design a robust Transfer process with peers.

The transnational exchange and learning activities in Transfer Networks should be built on the following principles:

- Sharing: To explore the Good practice solutions and foster the exchange of experience among partners
- Learning: To strengthen the practical knowledge and skills of partners in the policy area related to the Good practice
- Mainstreaming: To draw lessons from the exchange on an on-going basis and to help shape the local thinking and proposals that will be reflected in partners' Transfer/Improvement Plans
- Supporting: To support all partners in improving their local policies in relation to the Good Practice policy theme, including Lead Partners through their Improvement Plans

Past URBACT experience indicates that a detailed methodological approach to structuring and organising transnational exchange and learning is key to a successful URBACT network. As transnational exchange is, by definition, collaboration between languages, learning styles, culture, governance models, a clearly defined framework is vital.

→ **Every Transfer Network is unique and therefore the detailed methodology for the transnational network activities will be determined during the 'Understand' stage based on the Transferability Study, responding to distinctive partner situations. Nevertheless, all applicants are invited to present (in the application form) key principles and ideas for shaping their network activities in line with the general networking framework set out in present guide for Transfer Networks.**



## Developing the Transfer Methodology and Network Roadmap

### ) The Transferability Study

The Transferability Study is a key network deliverable to be produced during the UNDERSTAND stage. It will comprise three core elements:

First, it will describe in detail the Good practice and its transfer potential, placing it within the context of the EU's urban policy priorities and analysing its transfer potential to Transfer Partners' local contexts.

Second, it will review the transfer context in each of the transfer partner cities - the local conditions, as well as the ambition for the transfer of the different Good Practice components. This will take account of key factors such as local strategic priorities, levels of political support and potential funding sources. This review will also highlight local assets and barriers to transfer and implementation.

Finally, the Transferability Study will set out the network's bespoke exchange and learning methodology based on the identified assets and barriers to transfer and implementation. Every network will develop a unique "network roadmap" with a detailed workplan of activities to be undertaken at transnational and local level, including the methodology for exchange and learning.

The production of Transferability study is the main responsibility of the Lead Expert, but requires the input of all partners in the network. The Lead Expert (ideally accompanied by the Lead Partner) is required to visit and interview all partners in order to develop the partners' profiles for the study. The study will build on the different contributions provided by partners (local data, strategic priorities, delivery structures, related interventions, existing funding possibilities etc.)

During these visits the Lead Expert (and Lead Partner) should present the URBACT framework and explore the potential and scope of the Good Practice transfer. The partner visits should be organised in close cooperation with the partners and include possible meetings with the relevant project coordination staff, possible URBACT local group coordinator, elected representative(s), civil servants concerned with the policy challenge addressed, relevant delivery bodies and other local stakeholders identified as potential members of the URBACT Local Group.

Clear political support for the participation of the city in the Transfer Network should be demonstrated by all partners involved and shall be investigated during the visits from the Lead Expert and Lead Partner.

### → **Specific guidelines for the Transferability Study will be available for approved Transfer networks.**

### ) Network Communication Plan

The Communication Plan shall be designed to help your network communicate effectively to achieve its core objectives. It provides a useful roadmap for identifying who has to be reached, and what they need to hear, so as to ensure the project is a success.

Each network shall develop its own plan for ensuring that its own visibility ambition and objectives at network level are met. This can include further activities and outputs beyond the standard compulsory ones.



Communication is everyone's business and, both for transparency but also increasing visibility reasons, all project partners should be involved with the development of the communication plan, setting objectives, messages, target audiences, channels and planning at network-level. The plan shall include specific content and milestones to be shared widely, as showcasing results from network activities optional events open to attendants beyond project partners, news and articles. The communication plan should cover communications activities at local level (by project partners in local languages), at national level with the help of National URBACT Points, and at network/EU level (in English) through the network's dedicated webpage on the URBACT website and social media.

Communication is a crucial process embedded into every step of an URBACT network. It ensures that URBACT cities can create a positive legacy, making project live beyond its life cycle.

- **Network communications activities and main features of network Communication plans are thoroughly described in the [Programme Manual, Book 1, Section F - Communication at Network level.](#)**

## Organising Exchange & Learning activities

These network activities can include different components - specific thematic inputs, workshops, field visits, peer review sessions, staff and stakeholder exchanges as well as dissemination activities.

### ) At least 6 in-person transnational network meetings

These are in-person network meetings gathering all partners. At least six of these meetings are expected to be organised during the network journey in order to ensure the sufficient exchange and learning between partners. Several of these meetings shall have a specific focus with related types of exchange and learning activities foreseen:

- ✓ The first network meeting in the UNDERSTAND stage shall include the visit hosted by the Lead Partner city. The objective will be to facilitate a deep understanding of the Good Practice by the transfer partners. This will include assessment of the project's potential for modularisation, as part of the transfer process.
- ✓ One network meeting should focus on the mid-term reflection process, halfway through the network lifetime.
- ✓ At least one network meeting shall include the peer review of Transfer Plans designed and led by the network Lead Expert.
- ✓ A final network meeting with optional sharing event.

### ) Customised set of exchange and learning activities.

Various types of exchange and learning activities with in-person or online formats can be foreseen. Applicants are expected to suggest general principles and ideas for organisation of these activities, however, the exact number and formats of possible customised activities shall be defined during the UNDERSTAND stage based on the Transferability Study.

- **Any changes to the initial customised set of activities proposed in the application form might also have an effect on the overall network budget. The reprogramming of the network budget planned at the mid-point of the network**

**project cycles will be used to balance the spending and costs foreseen by partners in different budget lines. Further guidelines for shaping network activities are provided in Part III of the guide.**

## Capturing & Sharing network results

Production of various thematic and methodological outputs shall take place during the lifetime of the network in order to ensure an effective uptake of knowledge. Nevertheless, structured process of interim updates on network progress is suggested. We expect different specific thematic and methodological outputs produced by networks to be captured and summarised within unique standard network outputs. Therefore, a minimum set of outputs with three standard formats are proposed for capturing and sharing network results – Quarterly Network Journals, Network Articles and Network Final Report.

### ) 6 Quarterly Network Journals

Different thematic and methodological productions shall be captured and summarised within a specific network output – Quarterly Network Journals. Each network is expected to produce 6 Quarterly network journals reflecting network activities to be delivered every 3 months from June 2026 to October 2027.

These reports should aim to capture and connect learning for the partners in the network but these shall also have an adequate format for network communication - the knowledge generated by the network is interesting and useful for a wider audience of local, regional, national and EU-level policy makers and practitioners not directly involved in the network activities. Therefore, these shall include at least:

- ✓ Highlights from network bespoke exchange and learning activities
- ✓ Thematic inputs related to the Good practice transfer and related policy areas
- ✓ Partners' local activities and progress made in relation to the transfer of the Good practice components as well as the production of the Transfer/Improvement plans
- ✓ Brief presentation of tools developed and/ or used demonstrating integrated and participatory approaches

Networks are free to design their own unique visual identity which can be inspired and combined with a variety of formats showcasing network activities in concise and effective way. While networks are welcome to design visuals, illustrations and colour palette for their products and activities no network logo should be created. The only logo that networks can use for their products and activities under URBACT is the URBACT IV logo presented in the [Programme Manual on page 97](#).

The quarterly network journals will be produced by the network experts and shared as regular network webpage updates. These can feed the production of the Network Final Report to be delivered at end of the journey.

### ) Three Core Network Articles

At least three network articles shall be produced throughout the network duration in order to showcase the results of the network activities to a wider audience in a concise format. These will be produced by the network Lead Expert. Each network article will reflect the state of play linked to the specific milestone of the network journey:

- ✓ The first network article shall present network challenges and ambition. It will be published on the network webpage during the UNDERSTAND stage as a first network output dedicated to wider audience.

- ✓ The second network article shall be shared during the ADAPT stage summarising network exchange and learning activities and the key insights from the transfer process
- ✓ The third article shall be shared in final stage and reflect network results, impact at local level, as well as future prospects

### ) The Network Final Report/Product

The Network Final Report should focus on what the network partners have learnt in this process. It is the Lead Expert who is responsible for its production. There is no predefined format for the network final report but the objective is to document the network journey, including activities and results. The audience will be urban policy-makers and practitioners interested in the lessons from these pilots. This output should include the following elements which are considered of interest for other cities:

- ✓ Introducing the Good practice and the network partners in their diversity
- ✓ Demonstrating the added value of working in a transnational URBACT network to transfer a Good Practice
- ✓ Presenting the highlights and challenges of the journey and the main learning from partners
- ✓ Suggesting next steps for the network partners for sustaining and upscaling the Good Practice

➔ **Any other additional outputs for capturing and sharing network results can be foreseen and produced depending on the network ambition. These can be used for knowledge sharing purposes or advocacy by using various possible formats (e.g. focused articles, policy papers, policy recommendation, case studies, videos, etc.). These can be detailed during the UNDERSTAND stage and included in the network communication plan. The production of these outputs can be supported by network Lead and/or Ad hoc experts as part of their work plans.**

## Work Package 3 – Local level activities

Local level activities within the URBACT network are centred on the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs), established in each participating city. The ULG aims to have an impact on local governance and practices by enabling safe space for the city administrations. It promotes the environment for active involvement of local stakeholders in co-creation and production of Transfer/Improvement Plans. It shall foster:

- ✓ The development of organisational culture by building bridges inside the city administration as well as with external actors.
- ✓ Building relationship with key stakeholders involved by exploring and testing solutions i.e. including concrete pilot experiments, organising creative workshops and sharing events etc.
- ✓ Improved professional capacity by practicing tools & methods for effective project design and implementation processes and ensure the financial sustainability of the actions.
- ✓ Creating links with national managing authorities of EU cohesion funds. This can be done also with National URBACT points acting as brokers (i.e. with networking events).

### The Local level activities include:

- Setting up and running a URBACT Local Group for the co-production of Transfer/Improvement Plans
- Taking part in the exchange activities at transnational level and contributing to these activities (participation to seminars with relevant delegates, organisation of study visits, production of inputs, etc.)
- Testing actions activities as an integral part of the transfer process. It can be used as a tool for triggering the stakeholders' engagement and try out the coherence and operationalisation of specific elements of the Good Practice
- Taking part in the capacity-building activities organised by the URBACT Secretariat for local stakeholders involved in URBACT Local Groups.
- Share results and lessons learnt and good practices to local stakeholders involved in urban development and wider EU community.
- Translating the network communication plan into communication activities at local level (e.g. local events, social media channels in local languages and coordinated efforts with the National URBACT Points).
- Respecting EU visibility rules when communication about their URBACT network at local level (for instance publishing local news, posters with URBACT IV logo and mention of EU funding)
- Making links with EU cohesion policy funds by building cooperation relationships with Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes.

## The URBACT Local Group (ULG)

### ) What is an URBACT Local Group?

The ULG is a fundamental tool that enables experimentation for city administrations based on the participatory approach. As the programme promotes multi-level participation, we expect the composition of these groups to reflect the project's thematic focus. This means that a network on digital transformation will have a different stakeholder mix to one promoting carbon reduction. Cities should think carefully about the composition of their ULG, ensuring appropriate coverage. Partners should also seek the participation of their relevant Managing Authority, to promote the visibility of their planning work, and to ensure

alignment with the National Cohesion Policy Framework. The [URBACT Online Toolbox](#) includes tools on [identifying appropriate stakeholders](#) and [establishing the ULG](#).

### ) What's the role of the ULG Coordinator?

Each city will appoint a coordinator for its ULG. This key person will function as the main contact point for other partners by attending transnational network sessions, as well as being the pivotal link within the ULG on the ground. The ULG Coordinator will be responsible for the delivery of the city activities and outputs described below.

S/he will also be the key point of contact for the [National URBACT Points](#) (NUPs), throughout the lifespan of the project. NUPs should play a key role in capitalising network activities and results and supporting the networking activities with relevant national decision-makers.

### ) What's the format for ULG sessions?

The ULG is an active working group that will be at the heart of the transfer learning process in each city. It may be a group designed especially for the URBACT project, or be a relevant group that is already in place. Each ULG will be different, reflecting local structures, priorities and actors. The core ULG members are expected to meet on a regular basis and to take account of the URBACT principles and tools to work efficiently and interactively. The [URBACT Toolbox](#) provides guidance around how to design and run these sessions well. ULGs will organise a series of meetings and events, in line with the network framework, to drive the transfer process and draft a Transfer/Improvement Plan. The network level activities can provide inspiration to try out ideas, concrete solutions, and tools with the relevant stakeholders. The ULG process should be closely linked with the overall network methodology and feed the exchange and learning at transnational meetings.

The ULG can be used as laboratory to experiment and learn by doing. Testing actions described below can be used to involve different stakeholders in the transfer process in order to assess the possible upscaling of specific Good practice elements, test stakeholders' engagement and build closer relationships. This is one of the essential factors for the successful integrated approach.

### ) How often should the ULG meet?

Once set-up, each ULG should define its working patterns based on the general networking framework agreed within the network during the UNDERSTAND stage. This will include regular working sessions which are often linked to the transnational network meetings. For example, it can be very helpful for the core ULG members to meet prior to a transnational meeting to prepare and ensure that the opportunity is optimised. Following the transnational sessions, it is also helpful to meet in order to share feedback and key learning points. ULGs have also found it useful to come together when key activities or outputs are due, such as Transfer Plans.

The ULG Coordinator is responsible for the organisation of the ULG working sessions.

## The Transfer process & Transfer Plan (for Transfer Partners)

Each project partner transferring the Good Practice shall produce a Transfer Plan during the network lifetime. This plan will be structured around two parts, the 1<sup>st</sup> one to be worked upon

during the ADAPT stage, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> part to be worked upon during the RE-USE stage. The transfer plan will include:

- ✓ A needs analysis establishing the rationale for transferring the Good Practice
- ✓ A detailed description of the Good practice, including its results and evidence of impact
- ✓ A detailed outline of the modules of the Good practice to be adapted
- ✓ Details of the partnership delivery model – including roles and responsibilities
- ✓ A schedule of activities, outputs, outcomes and expectations
- ✓ Lessons learned during the transfer process
- ✓ Expected ways to further work on the Good Practice after the end of the Transfer Network

The development of the Transfer Plan will be led by the local ULG Coordinator, supported by the wider local group. The network Lead Expert will also assume an active role in facilitating the development of the plan.

The initial Transfer Plan should be seen as a working document. Its primary audiences will be the ULG members, other city stakeholders, the wider network membership and the URBACT Secretariat. The content gathered for the Transferability Study process will help inform its initial shape, and its iteration will be influenced by continual peer review with the other network partners, thus reinforcing the links between local and transnational activity. The final Transfer Plan will be aimed both at internal and external audiences. Transfer Plans will be of interest of course for local stakeholders and decision-makers but as well to the wider Transfer Network partners, the URBACT Secretariat and wider urban policy community.

- ➔ **Specific guidance for the production of Transfer Plans will be provided to the approved networks. All Transfer Plans should be drafted in English but can be translated in local language to facilitate local use. The final Transfer Plan should be published in PDF format – presumably, in both the national language and English.**

### The Improvement Plan (*for the Lead Partner*)

Each Lead Partner will develop an Improvement Plan. The objective of these is to help Lead Partners build on their initial Good practice activity. Each plan will be tailored to the Good Practice city's needs and priorities and each Lead Partner will determine its own set of activities, supported by the network Lead Expert. Several benefits will be derived from leading a Transfer network, notably:

- ✓ Enhancing the city's profile as a lead player in the network's policy area
- ✓ Gathering suggestions for improvement of their Good Practice from the network's peer review activities
- ✓ Sustaining, improving and possibly upscaling the practice and reviewing it considering the cross-cutting principles of Green transition, Digital Transition and Gender equality.

The departure point for Lead Partners will be an initial analysis of the current state of play in relation to their Good Practice. As part of this, local stakeholders will identify priorities that can be addressed throughout the network duration. These will be unique to each Lead Partner. However, examples might include a focus on the project's sustainability, the

development of mitigation plans, refining specific processes, or an aspiration to raise the city's influence in relation to the policy theme.

- **URBACT will provide support to Lead Partners of Transfer Networks but won't prescribe any pre-suggested format or shape of the Improvement Plans. Lead Partners will be free to suggest the output that they consider most relevant to serve the purpose they want to achieve in accordance with the objectives of the Transfer networks. The final Improvement Plan should be published in PDF format – presumably, in both the national language and English.**

## Testing actions

The philosophy of an URBACT network is to collaborate and identify possible solutions to a particular challenge. By including an opportunity for cities to test some of these solutions at a smaller scale before embarking on larger scale actions is an innovative way to bring about a culture change in city administrations. 'Starting small but thinking big' is perhaps a most suitable motto to use to explain testing activities in the URBACT network.

Within the ULG framework partners have the possibility to prototype solutions derived from the Good Practice adaptation process and carry out specific testing actions. During the UNDERSTAND stage, the network will explore and identify possible formats and scope of possible testing actions that would best suit network partners. This shall be explored within the Transferability Study and embedded in the customised exchange and learning methodology for the following stages.

Testing actions can be triggered by a specific solution integrated in the Good practice or an idea, a concept from exchange and learning activities. These can be tested to check the relevance, feasibility and added value of its implementation in a particular local context. These can be used to involve different stakeholders in the design process in order to assess the possibility for upscaling. Partners will be able to learn from these tests, measure the results and either adapt, upscale or reject specific actions to be included in the Transfer process based on this experience. These can improve the future delivery of actions by being aware of possible risks and hardships.

- **More details around testing actions from previous URBACT networks will be provided to approved projects. Please note, URBACT as a programme does not finance infrastructure investment and works, it mainly focuses on improving methods of working to solve urban challenges using soft measures. The testing activities will follow this principle and as such hard infrastructure projects cannot be supported by the programme.**

## Summary of network outputs

Standard network outputs as required in application submission system Synergie-CTE				Customised Outputs to be further discussed by the network during the 'Understand' stage	
WP	Type of Output	Quantity	When	Type of output	When
2	The Transferability Study	One per network	During UNDERSTAND stage		
2	Network Communication Plan	One per network	During UNDERSTAND stage		
2	Network in-person meetings (Transnational Network meetings)	At least 6	1st network meeting in UNDERSTAND stage 1 other Meeting in UNDERSTAND stage 1 Final Network Meeting in RE-USE Stage + others to be defined by the network	Customised set of exchange and learning activities (in-person and/ or online)	Notably in stages ADAPT and RE-USE
2	Quarterly Network Journals	6 per network (reflecting activities at the end of the UNDERSTAND stage and during the ADAPT stage)	To be shared every 3 months from June 2026 to October 2027	Optional set of sharing products to be foreseen by each network based on the communication plan	To be defined in the communication plan
2	Network Articles	At least 3 per network	1 <sup>st</sup> by the middle of UNDERSTAND stage 2 <sup>nd</sup> during the ADAPT stage 3 <sup>rd</sup> at the end of the network		
2	The Network Final Report/Product	1 per network	During the final quarter		
3	URBACT Local Group (contact list)	1 per partner	At the end of UNDERSTAND stage		
3	Transfer Plan	1 per Transfer Partner	At the end of the RE-USE stage		
3	Improvement Plan	1 by the Lead Partner	At the end of the RE-USE stage		

→ All required standard network outputs shall be considered in network proposals. All applicants are invited to propose as well customised network activities/ outputs in addition to standard network outputs. On the basis of the principles and ideas defined in the application form these will be further discussed and elaborated during the UNDERSTAND stage, based on the Transferability Study.



## PART III - Hints & Tips to shape your Transfer Network Application

This section provides additional reflections and guidelines to potential Lead Partners to be considered for the development of the network proposals.

### → The relevance of the policy challenge within the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy context

Relevance can be communicated in the application form in two ways:

- ✓ Firstly, the policy challenge must be relevant for a high number of cities across Europe. Although URBACT is initially interested in exchange and learning within the networks, ultimately the programme has a particular interest in solutions relevant for all European cities.
- ✓ Secondly, the policy challenge should reflect the European Union urban policy priorities which are reflected within the URBACT Programme objectives defined by EU cohesion policy objectives (2021 – 2027). These provide a coherent clustering of the topics and activities supported. Complementing these objectives, network applicants shall also consider other relevant activities under the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy notably Urban Agenda for the EU.

Within and beyond what is specifically foreseen within the new EU regulatory framework, notable policy strategic initiatives and programmes aimed at cities can be noted, in particular:

- The [Urban Agenda for the European Union](#) represents a multi-level working method, for urban policy and practice, promoting cooperation between Member States, cities, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. It was launched in May 2016 with the Pact of Amsterdam and reconfirmed as a valuable initiative in November 2021, with the Ljubljana Agreement. It focuses specifically on three pillars of EU policy-making and implementation, namely better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. Twenty thematic partnerships linked to sustainable urban development policies in the EU were launched and have produced action plans tackling specific issues within the three pillars.

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| - Water-sensitive Cities (2024)    | - Innovative & responsible public procurement      |
| - Building Decarbonisation (2024)  | - Jobs & skills in the local economy               |
| - Food (late 2023)                 | - Sustainable use of land & nature-based solutions |
| - Cities of Equality (late 2023)   | - Urban mobility                                   |
| - Greening Cities (2022)           | - Urban poverty                                    |
| - Sustainable Tourism (2022)       | - Security in public spaces                        |
| - Air quality                      |  |
| - Circular economy                 |  |
| - Climate adaptation               |  |
| - Culture and cultural heritage    |  |
| - Digital transition               |  |
| - Energy transition                |  |
| - Housing                          |  |
| - Inclusion of migrants & refugees |  |

Applicants are encouraged to take into consideration, when relevant, how the network can link to the partnerships developed for the Urban Agenda for the European Union particularly those under the same topic.

URBACT IV shall also complement the actions being delivered by the [European Urban Initiative](#) as part of the urban dimension of Cohesion policy<sup>1</sup>. Thus, a strong interconnection between the EUI and the URBACT IV transnational networks of cities and a capitalisation of urban good practices on integrated and sustainable urban development will be searched for.

Other considerations can include:

- **Relevant EU initiatives and programmes** such as the European Innovation Partnership on smart cities and communities, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the EU Mission on 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities, the Intelligent Cities Challenge, the Digital Europe Programme and Connecting Europe Facility Digital Programme.
- The **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** shares many key principles with the URBACT programme including cross-disciplinary working, participation, sustainability and inclusiveness.
- The **New Leipzig Charter** which puts forward a revised vision for sustainable urban development in Europe and considers the Urban Agenda for the EU as a key vehicle for its implementation. It places the emphasis on the transformative power of cities for the common good. This is to be achieved through actions taken within ‘Just, Green and Productive Cities’ as well as through one cross-sectoral dimension ‘Digitalisation’ that are implemented in a format of multi-level governance. It also enshrines the five EU principles of good urban governance: policy for the common good, integrated approaches, multi-level governance, place-based approaches and participation & co-creation.
- The **EU Territorial Agenda 2030** adopted on 1/12/2020 underlines the importance of and provides orientation for strategic spatial planning. It calls for strengthening the territorial dimension of sector policies at all governance levels and promotes an inclusive and sustainable future to help achieve Sustainable Development Goals in Europe. It contributes to key European objectives, a *Just Europe* that offers future perspectives for all places and people, and a *Green Europe* that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition.
- The **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** of the United Nations 2030 Agenda<sup>2</sup>, and in particular, the Goal 11 “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. Special attention will be given to the challenges of ‘localising’ the SDGs on the ground across EU cities and regions, with strategic correlations between Cohesion Policy, SDGs and the key principles laid out by the New Urban Agenda<sup>3</sup>.

### → [Considering the URBACT cross-cutting policy priorities](#)

In addition to the main policy challenge addressed by the Good Practice, the network proposals shall also reflect on the opportunities in relation to the cross-cutting thematic considerations, including:

- ✓ digital transition
- ✓ green transition
- ✓ gender equality (it can include also other equality, diversity and inclusion aspects)

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<sup>1</sup> Article 3(3)b of the ETC Regulation (EU) 2021/1059

<sup>2</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

<sup>3</sup> <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2019/05/nua-english.pdf>

Regardless of the main policy focus of the Good Practice, applicants are invited to take the extra mile and consider how these holistic themes can be part of the challenges. Capacity building support related to the consideration of the cross-cutting thematic dimensions will be provided by the programme to all approved networks.

### → Does the Good Practice have the potential for transfer?

A Transfer Network is built around a successful project (Good Practice) brought to the network by the Lead Partner. The Transfer Partners, transferring the Good Practice, will focus on the identification and adaptation of the original project processes and practices, in a format that reflects the local context. The full transfer of the Good Practice may take longer than the lifetime of the network, and the eventual output may differ markedly from the original. The transfer journey, although a shared experience, is ultimately a unique one for all partners including the Lead Partner. For Transfer Partners, the Good Practice will be relevant for a policy challenge they want to address at local level. For Lead Partners having opportunity to sustain original Good practice with an enhanced model should be the main aim to create this network.

The potential for transfer of the original Good Practice is the most weighted criterion for assessment of network proposals. Dimensions considered by assessors of network proposals can be used as the reflections when explaining your ambition for creation of the Transfer Network describing the motivation, commitment and expected results of each partner to join the network:

- ✓ Does the Good Practice address a challenge that is widespread across EU cities?
- ✓ Does the Good Practice have the potential to be transferred to other cities of different sizes and working in different contexts?
- ✓ Is the Good Practice clear and easy to understand?
- ✓ Can the Good Practice demonstrate impact?
- ✓ Can the Good Practice be modularised to facilitate adaptation and transfer?
- ✓ Does the Lead Partner have a clear motivation to transfer the Good Practice and learn from this process using the tools proposed by URBACT?
- ✓ Have the risks and challenges linked to transfer of the Good Practice been identified and explained?

### → Building the Partnership

An effective transnational partnership is central to the success of any URBACT network. Since 2002, the URBACT Programme has supported more than 1 000 cities in nearly 150 different networks; it has therefore extensive experience to draw upon. URBACT also has a good understanding of the essential ingredients for a successful transnational network. In this section, we share our experience in order to support the development of high-quality partnership.

Below are some key questions the Lead Partner can ask potential partners before choosing them for the network proposal to be submitted:

- ✓ Is the policy challenge tackled by the Good Practice relevant for the potential partner city?
- ✓ Does each partner have a shared understanding of the policy challenge to be addressed?
- ✓ Does each of the partners have an evident commitment to tackle the policy challenge with possible local links to Sustainable Urban Development through Cohesion Policy?
- ✓ Is the strategic environment of partner cities relevant to adapt and transfer the Good Practice?
- ✓ Do partners demonstrate a willingness and ability to undertake the activities (e.g. having appropriate competence, resources, political support and motivation) and a clear understanding of the work necessary to produce a Transfer Plan?

- ✓ Does each partner commit to provide sufficient resources for their network activities as required?

➔ **Lastly, it should be ensured that the proposed partnership is eligible in the proposed framework. The Terms of Reference – Section 4 of the call for proposals details the eligibility criteria for possible compositions of partnerships.**

### Relevance of partners

The relevance of partners operates at two levels. Firstly, there is the question of the relevance of participating cities. Secondly, within those cities, there is the issue of local stakeholders' relevance. The following considerations reflecting both levels should help cities acting as Lead Partners in selecting the partners and institutions to be involved.

- ✓ The challenge addressed must be a priority for all network partners. This can be evidenced in a number of ways. For example, it will be identified within local strategies and/or within the existing operating framework for EU funds, usually with identified resources attached. In some cases, the city will have previously tried to address this challenge, with limited degrees of success. Thirdly, different stakeholders within the city will have identified this challenge as being important, again reflected in their respective strategic planning.
- ✓ The experiences of all network partners are relevant and will contribute to the learning process of the whole partnership. Each partner city will contribute to the transnational exchange and learning activities with their own experiences and knowledge. These will be different for each partner depending on the local context, previous experiences.
- ✓ For certain topics the size and positioning of the city could be important elements for the coherence check of partners' local situations i.e. maritime cities working on maritime issues.
- ✓ There is a clear understanding of the added value that an involvement in an URBACT network will bring to the partner in relation to respective capacity building needs.

### Selecting potential transfer partners

As Lead Partner you might receive an expression of interest from cities interested in transferring your Good Practice. You can first send them a simple questionnaire (see example below and a more detailed one [here](#)). On that basis you will be able to do the shortlist of the most relevant candidates and follow up with more detailed questionnaire or a phone call before making a final choice.

#### ) EXAMPLE – SIMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSING RELEVANCE OF PARTNERS

Institution details:

1. Partner institution (Name, Address, Postcode, City):
2. Are you a public body?
3. What is the size of your city?
4. Type of area (more developed, less developed, transition...)?
5. Are you currently partner in an URBACT network or applying to join others? If yes which one(s)?
6. Contact Person (First name, Family name, Service, Function, Phone number, Mobile number, Email, Address, Postcode, City)
7. Who from your city would take part in transnational exchange meetings? (ability to speak English & in-depth knowledge of the topic needed)

Partner profile:

8. Have you already been involved in an URBACT Network? What is your motivation to join this network?
9. What are the problems and challenges faced by the partner city in relation to the theme?
10. What are the existing policies, strategic frames and concrete actions developed by the partner city so far in relation to the policy challenge?
11. What could be the scope of the Transfer process within the framework of the network?
12. Who will be involved in the initial URBACT Local Group to be set up by the partner city?
13. What is the potential contribution of the partner city to the network activities and what does the partner expect from the network?
14. What is the experience of the partner city in terms of working through transnational exchange in relation to the policy challenge?
15. What is the added value URBACT would bring to the city in terms of learning and capacity-building?

**→ In the application form it is necessary to provide detailed information on partners' local strategic framework, motivation, commitment and potential for the Good Practice to be transferred.**

#### Seven tips for building a “Great” partnership

##### ) There is no such thing as a perfect size

It is up to each network to decide about the ideal size of their partnership, as this depends on many factors. It is clear though that going for the minimum number of partners is very risky. It could be that one partner you want to involve drops out at the very last minute before you submit your application i.e. joins another Network proposal, does not provide the signed Letter of Commitment on time, etc. Anything can happen!

##### ) Ensuring the (geographical) balance of partnership

The partnership for Transfer Network shall, according to the eligibility criteria, include a minimum number of partners from EU Less developed and Transition regions and can include partners from Norway, Switzerland, Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA) countries as well as Ukraine and Moldova. At the same time, you should aim for geographical balance across Europe – a partnership cannot include two partners from the same country. In this regard, you should consider having a reserve candidate (possibly with the signed Letter of Commitment) that is ready to join, in case of a last-minute drop out. In addition, a sufficient number of partners from more developed regions is expected in a balanced and varied partnership.

##### ) Welcome newcomers

Not all cities in Europe have had the opportunity to take part in an URBACT network and experience the “URBACT learning journey”. Thus, URBACT’s guiding principle is to ensure participation of a maximum number of cities in URBACT networks. URBACT is particularly seeking to support cities which are new to the programme, i.e. the city has not been a partner in URBACT IV yet. You should consider all these elements when selecting partners without sacrificing the quality and relevance of your project proposal. The [Good Practice Database](#) and [contacting the National URBACT Points](#) are two good ways to look for cities that have never been involved in URBACT before and that have the same interest with yours in joining this network.

##### ) Be demanding, test the commitment

Besides considerations on the size of the partnership, the focus should be on the “quality” of the partners and on the relevance of their participation in a specific network. Aim for coherence and

complementarity in terms of partners' needs expectations and potential contributions. You should also make potential partners (and selected partners) aware of the 'URBACT networking framework' described in PART I and II of this guide and ask for commitment to these expectations. Therefore, the Lead Partner preparing a good questionnaire to collect information on partner cities in order to inform final partnership selection is very important.

### ) Beware of the “sleeping partners”

Once the network is approved and activities get started, some partners can turn out to be less active than expected. Therefore, developing a partnership with a minimum number of partners is also risky should some of them turn out to be “sleeping partners”. The dynamics in the partnership and the richness of the transnational exchange may be impacted.

### ) Be smart – connect!

The URBACT programme encourages you to use the [Good Practice Database](#) and contact the National URBACT points which can be very useful for finding right partners from different countries. These are provided in **section 10 – useful resources** of the Call document. **For questions regarding the eligibility of “non-city” partners you should always consult the URBACT Secretariat at TN@urbact.eu. Do it early enough during the selection process as the eligibility verification process of non-city partners might take time.**

### ) The best tip to avoid mistakes

Do not accept new partners on a “first come, first served” basis. Take time to speak with the relevant people in a candidate partner city before you decide on your final partnership. Try to avoid cities who reach you through consultants - this can be an indication that the city does not have real interest and/or capacity to become a committed and active partner.

Try to detect some potential flaws in candidate partners' interest:

- Just wants to become an URBACT city, no matter what topic (cities committed to more than 3 network proposals can already be considered questionable);
- wants to become an URBACT city with my topic, no matter what network;
- wants to become an URBACT city although not equipped to actually handle the topic and make a difference at local level;
- more interested in the budget than the policy challenge;
- ambitious politician with no commitment of wider municipality administration (incl. staff allowed to travel etc.);
- ambitious officer with no support from politicians who understand the importance of the project.

## → [Proposed workplan and deliverables](#)

There is no single preferred methodological approach to the customisation of the transnational exchange and learning in networks. URBACT does not adopt a prescriptive approach and welcomes innovative models and creative approaches. The most important thing is that the methodology proposed is realistic, clearly explained and has a rationale. It should also consider the specificities around the policy issues being addressed as well as the needs and the experience of all partners. Key success factors for effective learning in relation to the theme shall be clearly demonstrated. In addition, the methodological approach should generate a continuous flow of knowledge between the transnational and the local level for the appropriate application of knowledge generated during different network activities. Many networks in the past have encouraged transnational/local level synergy by planning their ULG meetings just before and after the transnational network meetings in order to enable an efficient knowledge flow.

Likewise, one should consider the following:

- ✓ Having the appropriate URBACT Local Group representatives participating at different transnational network meetings.
- ✓ Having regular attendees at transnational sessions to ensure proper follow up of actions
- ✓ Using learning tools that enable and record the knowledge transfer from the transnational to local level and vice versa.
- ✓ Producing tools for network learning and knowledge uptake that can be used for monitoring knowledge transfer and progress made at local level by the respective ULG participants.

### → Proposed Network Management & Expertise support

For a Lead Partner the management of a transnational project is a challenging and time-consuming task. Sufficient resource should therefore be allocated to ensure suitable project management. The project staff should:

- have experience in the management of transnational projects,
- be able to handle the challenges of different languages and cultures
- and have skills to animate the partnership.

The experience from previous URBACT Programmes has shown that the workload resulting from the tasks and responsibilities of a Lead Partner requires an investment in human resources which corresponds to at least 2 full-time equivalent posts for the overall network management and coordination.

It is strongly recommended that the administrative and financial management be led internally by the Lead Partner, when possible. In case of externalisation, the Lead Partner administration will need to demonstrate strong linkages and outline working methods in the application form to allow the External Assessment Panel to assess the impact of this arrangement. Yet the Lead Partner can in no way delegate the financial and legal responsibility for the project.

The Lead Partner should therefore appoint:

- A **Project Coordinator** who should have a sound knowledge of the issues and good practice addressed by the project and be able to work as a driving force to the partnership and people around it in order to achieve the objectives laid down in the Application form.
- A **Finance Officer** to ensure an adequate and orderly accounting practice and the proper management of the network budget.
- A **Communication Officer** responsible for implementation of information and communication measures.
- A **Local ULG Coordinator** who should work with the URBACT Local Group (ULG).

### → **More information is available in the Programme Manual – Part C “Managing an URBACT Network”.**

In addition, adequate expertise support has proven to be crucial for effective capacity building in cities. Transnational networking and learning between peers require careful design of events with inspirational facilitation techniques. Proper design and delivery of integrated sustainable urban development policies in cities demands a transdisciplinary approach. For this reason, expertise support for URBACT networks is structured around three types of expertise, for ensuring effective exchange and learning:

- Expertise for the design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities
- Thematic expertise (related to wide array of themes and related subtopics in relation to sustainable urban development policy challenges)



- Methods and tools for integrated and participatory approaches for the design and delivery of sustainable urban development policies.

➔ **Applicants are invited to think about what kind of expertise and expertise skills could be useful for their networks. It is not required to identify specific experts at the stage of the application.**

### ➔ Building the Network budget

While building their network budget, applicants are strongly recommended to refer to the Terms of Reference of the Call for Transfer Networks as well as to the URBACT IV Programme Manual which details the eligibility of costs. This guidance provides additional considerations to keep in mind while shaping the budget. An excel file is also available on the Call page in order to help applicants building their budget.

The budget is structured around five budget categories:

#### ) **Staff costs**

Staff costs are specifically for staff employed by the partner. External providers must be reported in the budget category External Expertise. Should staff costs be included, consideration should be given to the varying salary levels across Europe to ensure the most accurate budget estimation possible. Costs related to project management (management, finances, communication coordination) can fall under staff costs or external expertise and should overall not represent more than 35-40% of the total budget as a general rule.

#### ) **Office and administration costs**

Office and administration costs are calculated as a flat rate of 15% of staff costs. The flat rate covers all office and administration costs which partners do not need to document or justify.

#### ) **Travel and accommodation (T&A)**

This category is one of the highest, representing about one third of the network total costs. As a general rule the most economical way of travel must be used (for example travel should be economy class), and sustainability considered, eg train over flights where possible.

For this category of expenditure, you have two options:

- Either take into consideration real costs of Travel & Accommodation;
- Or calculate it, like the staff costs, as a 15% flat rate on staff costs.

Partners' budget should factor in:

- costs for participation in trainings organised by URBACT, i.e. specific trainings organised for Lead Partners and Lead Experts (max. 3 over the Transfer network journey) and larger URBACT training or events for all partners (e.g. URBACT Summer Universities, URBACT Campus or URBACT City Festival – presumably 2 such events);
- costs to participate in external events in line with the network's themes and activities. A small budget envelope for covering the T&A costs for such events is advised, as long as there is budget available and it does not impact on the participation in network activities.

#### ) **External expertise and services**

This budget category varies considerably between networks, based on the need for external support. It is recommended to review the needs of Project Partners in terms of possible costs for expertise before estimating the budget needed.



External expertise and services may include support for project management if external (in that case, these costs must be considered along with staff costs for the calculation of the 35-40% allowed for management costs in the network budget).

All travels costs for people not employed by the partner organisation should be included in this category,

Costs in this category also include those linked to the organisation of meetings (room and equipment hire, interpretation and catering). It is often possible to minimise room hire costs by using venues in project partner's premises.

In this budget category, there are also costs linked to production of a Communication Plan, network newsletters, brochures, leaflets, videos and/or outputs of any kind as well as printing and translation.

External expertise and services for control and audit purpose (external independent first level controllers in compliance with country specific control requirements) should be included under the "Expertise First Level Control" budget line.

### ) **Equipment**

This category covers expenditure for the financing of equipment purchased, rented or leased by a partner, necessary to achieve objectives of the network.

Due to the nature of the URBACT IV networks, costs for equipment should be moderate and clearly justified in the Application Form. Usually, the purchase should be made in the first 6 months of the project or related to the Testing Actions. As the purchase of equipment cannot be a core element in an URBACT network, it should remain exceptional.

→ **Further information about the eligibility of costs, the methods for calculation and programme specific rules is available as well in the URBACT IV Programme Manual, Book 1, Section D.2. - Eligibility of expenditure per budget category.**

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