URBACT CITY FESTIVAL

31 March - 01 April 2026 - Nicosia, Cyprus

Programme

URBACT City Festival

Nicosia, 31 March - 01 April 2026

#URBACTfest

urbact.eu/city-festival-2026

NICOSIA

URBACT

Co-funded by
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Δήμος Λευκωσίας
Nicosia Municipality

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Day 0 — Monday, 30 March

17:30 - 21:00 — **Royal Hall**

Preparatory meeting for Action Planning Networks *(upon invitation)*

Closed meeting followed by dinner, for invited representatives of URBACT Action Planning Networks only.

Day 1 — Tuesday, 31 March

08:45 - 09:30 — **Eleftheria Square (under the bridge)**

National networking coffee

Get your badge at the registration desk and join your country corner for a coffee with your National URBACT Point - find a home base before diving into the Festival!

09:30 - 10:15 — **Eleftheria Square (under the bridge)**

3, 2, 1... action! Opening plenary

The URBACT City Festival kicks-off in a dynamic way!

After a warm welcome by the Mayor of Nicosia and the Cypriot Presidency of the Council of the European Union, find out what is happening over the next two days and what are the stories to discover. Understand the flow of the URBACT City Festival and don't miss a thing!

Speakers:

- **Corinne de La Mettrie,** *Deputy Director-General for Urban Policy at the French National Agency for Territorial Cohesion, URBACT Managing Authority*
- **Constantinos Ioannou,** *Minister of Interior of the Republic of Cyprus*
- **Charalambos Prountzos,** *Mayor of Nicosia*
- a video message from **Themis Christophidou**, *European Commission's Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy*

10:15 - 10:45 — **Eleftheria Square (under the bridge)**

A trailer to the marketplace

Get a taste of what awaits you at the local actions marketplace. Uncover where each city shines in the exhibition space, and hear short teasers from a few of them: just enough to make you want to see more.

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Local actions marketplace

Discover 273 local actions from European cities driving sustainable urban development!

The local actions in the marketplace are clustered under five thematic areas: climate action, local economy, participative governance, social cohesion, and urban planning.

Walk around the stands, find out the story behind each action and think how this could work in your city.

13:00 - 14:00 **National networking lunch**

14:30 - 15:30

273 local actions in sessions

In these thematic sessions, discover the local actions carried out by URBACT cities to make a change on common challenges, and get inspired from them.

Each session builds on the actions implemented by different cities on a selected topic. These sessions showcase collaboration in practice, and the impact of URBACT Action Planning Networks on driving real change.

Session 1 **Local economy**

Many local economic challenges do not appear as sudden crises. They unfold quietly: talent leaves, city centres lose everyday life, new forms of work reshape neighbourhoods, and inequalities widen. This session is for city practitioners aiming to act earlier and more deliberately on these slow-moving changes. Drawing on the experience of six URBACT Action Planning Networks— C4TALENT, Cities@Heart, Residents of the future, Cities After Dark, Remote-IT, TechDiversity— the session explores how cities are rethinking local economic development in practice. Participants will gain concrete insights into people-centred, place-based and governance-driven approaches that focus on everyday users rather than short-term promotion or attraction.

Session 2 **Digital transition**

How can we keep up with the pace of digital evolution while ensuring that everyone can benefit and that no-one is left behind? This session builds on insights and experience of the URBACT Action Planning networks DIGI-INCLUSION, METACITY, NextGen YouthWork and TechDiversity and will explore how cities are harnessing the benefits of technology and working to ensure that everyone benefit from the opportunities offered by the digital world through an interactive exchange between participants and representatives from city networks working on tech, inclusion and how we build the bridge between them.

Session 3 **Nature-based solutions**

As cities face climate change, biodiversity loss, and the pressure of urban sprawl, Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) offer an holistic approach that benefits both people and the environment. Beyond ecological gains, NBS create jobs, foster social innovation, and support resilient local economies. Learn from the URBACT Action Planning Networks BiodiverCity, Re-Gen, and GreenPlace how cities are renaturing spaces through biodiversity conservation, restoring urban–peri-urban connections, and promoting sustainable mobility. Explore brownfield regeneration, soil sealing mitigation, adaptive land reuse, and sustainable urban farming. Discover key tools and resources such as the Nature-Based Solutions Knowledge Hub, URBACT's Good Practices and the Urban Agenda Partnership on Greening Cities.

Session 4 — Health and wellbeing

Drawing on experiences from cities across Europe involved in the URBACT networks One Health 4 Cities, Breaking Isolation and Re-Gen, this session presents concrete approaches to tackling social isolation, empowering youth through urban regeneration, and advancing integrated health strategies. Speakers will share a three-step story: a short pitch on the public challenge they face, a visual snapshots of existing policies and gaps, and the innovative solutions developed through cross-city collaboration. Participants will gain practical insights and inspiration for strengthening social cohesion, youth participation and integrated urban policies.

Session 5 — Mobility

This session brings together cities from five URBACT Action Planning Networks, S.M.ALL, ECONNECTING, SCHOOLHOODS, PUMA and Beyond the Urban, to explore what it takes to move from mobility plans to real-life implementation. Moving beyond "best practices", the discussion focuses on lived experience: political choices, governance dilemmas, difficult trade-offs and lessons learned when strategies and action plans meet reality. In a conversational, talk-show-style format, the session explores what changed, what remained challenging and what happens after an URBACT project formally ends in terms of ownership, governance and long-term implementation.

Session 6 — Welcoming cities

This session looks at how municipalities incorporate civic participation to address declining trust in democracy, drawing on the experiences of the cities of Genk and Timișoara. Genk presents a new model for living together in a superdiverse city developed through the URBACT network Agents of Co-Existence while Timișoara showcases the bottom-up vision for becoming a Welcoming City through the URBACT network WELDI, based on human rights-based migrant integration. Together, these cases highlight the capacities needed in municipalities to use civic participation to address contested issues and re-build civic trust.

16:00 - 17:00

273 local actions in sessions (continues)

Pursue the thematic exploration of the 273 local actions implemented by URBACT Action Planning Networks' partner cities.

Session 7 — Social data management

How can cities use social data to shape fairer, healthier, and more inclusive urban policies? This session brings together cities from the URBACT networks Cities@Heart, U.R. Impact, One Health 4 Cities and NextGen YouthWork to explore how data on well-being, civic participation, health, and youth engagement can be collected, managed, and turned into action. Participants will hear practical city stories and engage in an open discussion on how social data can inform policy, strengthen citizen participation, and align with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Session 8 — Urban planning

How can urban planning move beyond traditional land-use to actively shape fairer, greener, and more connected cities? This session brings together cities from the URBACT networks Cities@Heart, METACITY and Beyond the Urban to explore how integrated planning can deliver on digital, environmental, and social priorities. Participants will hear how cities are using data, participatory tools, and innovative governance to plan vibrant centres, sustainable mobility, and inclusive digital futures.

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Session 9 Greening urban economies

This session explores how green urban economic transformation takes place in practice. Through concrete experiences from the URBACT Action Planning Networks LET'S GO CIRCULAR!, GreenPlace, In4Green, COPE and EcoCore, it examines concrete actions, key achievements and ongoing challenges. The discussion highlights how change unfolds over time through the interaction of local policies, public and private investments and everyday practices, offering practical insights into what enables greener and more resilient urban economies.

Session 10 Gender equality

How can gender equality be embedded in everyday local policy and practice? This interactive session brings together cities at different stages of gender mainstreaming to share concrete approaches, tools and lessons learned. Drawing on experiences from the URBACT networks networks FEMACT-Cities and GenProcure, cities will show how ambition is translated into action across areas such as data, procurement, communication and participation – and what others can take away for their own cities.

Session 11 Youth

Today's youth face many stereotypes, from high expectations of digital competences, a strong sense for a healthy work-life balance, striving for meaningful school and work careers, down to prejudices of short attention spans and overprotection. While young people face a rapidly changing world, the real question is whether the world is changing to meet their needs. The YOUTH FLASH talk show, drawing on experiences from the URBACT Action Planning Networks NextGen YouthWork, Re-Gen and SCHOOLHOODS, explores how youth work can connect with young people's digital realities, create welcoming spaces in public life, and empower them to move confidently and independently in the city. Participants will gain insights into co-creating a vibrant, inclusive future with and for youth, supporting their wellbeing and their role as active shapers of our cities.

Session 12 Storytelling for citizens' engagement

Urban change is full of stories, but some of the most important ones are also the hardest to tell. Cities face complex challenges: climate action, social inclusion, democratic participation, health, heritage and long-term transformation. These processes are rarely linear, involving uncertainty, negotiation, trade-offs and slow, sometimes invisible change, realities that are difficult to communicate and often left out of official narratives. This interactive session asks: when a story is hard to tell, is it the story itself, or the format? In a live conversation, four URBACT networks (ARCHETHICS, Agents of Co-Existence, One Health 4 Cities, Cities for Sustainability Governance) share one challenging story each and explore with the audience how visual, written, audio and digital formats can make these hard stories more meaningful and engaging, positioning storytelling as a strategic tool for urban change.

08:30 - 09:00

Royal Hall

Welcome coffee

09:00 - 10:00

Royal Hall (Plenary)

Spotlight on new URBACT call & EU opportunities

Start early and fresh with getting to know the latest developments about the Cohesion Policy post 2027, the new Policy Agenda for Cities, and the new URBACT call for networks, presented by representatives of the European Commission and the URBACT Secretariat. A good snapshot about what's yet to come.

Speakers:

- **Laura Liger,** *Policy Officer at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.*

- **Florian Marin,** *Rapporteur on the EU Agenda for Cities at the European Economic and Social Committee.*

- **Kieran McCarthy**, *Elected member of the Cork City Council, Member of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), and rapporteur on the EU Agenda for Cities.*

10:00 - 10:45

Royal Hall (Plenary)

Speed dating on the new URBACT call for networks

11:00 - 12:00

Royal Hall

Funding stories

How and why does an urban project or action receive EU funds for implementation? Each of these sessions will dive into examples of cities having received funding for their actions or ideas through the European Urban Initiative, Integrated Territorial Investments, the LEADER/CLLD programme, and other more. Representatives of funded cities will be there to respond to your questions about their journeys.

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(**Funding story 1**)

This session will focus on the success story of Suceava (RO), from participating in the URBACT networks Electric Vehicles in Urban Europe (EVUE) (2009-13) and EVUE II (2013-15) to leveraging regional funding to create a fully electric metropolitan transport system, and develop a fleet of electric vehicles and free public charging stations.

Speakers:

- **Laura Morar**, *Suceava (RO).*

- **Wiktor Szydarowski**, *EGTC Director of the European Territorial Observatory Network (ESPON).*

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Funding story 2

This session will showcase the example of Celje (SI) and Gabrovo (BG), two cities where the participation in URBACT networks paved the way to the approval of larger investment projects, particularly under the Integrated Territorial Investment tool.

Speakers:

- **Saša Heath-Drugovič**, *Celje (SI).*
- **Pencho Koychev**, *Gabrovo (BL).*

Funding story 3

This session will put the spotlight on Tartu (EE) and on the several different funding sources the city used after participating in the URBACT Action Planning Network Food Corridors (2019-22), navigating the opportunities offered by Interreg, LEADER, and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD).

Speaker:

- **Kristiina Tammets**, *Tartu (EE).*

Funding story 4

This session will explore the story of Câmara de Lobos (PT) and its path from the URBACT network Remote-IT (2022-25) to the European Urban Initiative (EUI) Co.nTe project.

Speakers:

- **Joel Viana**, *Câmara de Lobos (PT).*
- **Eleni Kefallinou**, *Communication Officer at the European Urban Initiative (EUI).*

12:00 - 12:30　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Royal Hall (Plenary)**

Happy ending: closing plenary

Before we split in city visits, let's look back at the highlights of the 2026 URBACT City Festival.

12:30 - 14:00　　**Lunch**　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Royal Hall**

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14:30 - 16:30

Walking tours of Nicosia

These walking tours, implemented in collaboration with the Nicosia Tourism Board and other local actors and associations, will take you to discover the rich history and dynamic present of our host city.

Each of these itineraries will showcase Nicosia under a different angle, including cultural diversity, architecture and recent innovation created with European support.

Participation requires prior registration. A dedicated online form will be sent to confirmed participants of the City Festival only, for them to register to the walking tour of their choice.

19:00 - 24:00   Old GSP Square

Nicosia After Dark Party

Let's wrap up the URBACT City Festival 2026 with an unforgettable Goodbye Party at the OLD GSP Stadium in Nicosia!

Live performances, DJ sets, interactive urban art, and local food experiences powered by the URBACT Action Planning Network "Cities After Dark"-- all in a unique riverside industrial space.

As we say goodbye to the 2026 edition, let's celebrate the cities, people, and ideas that are shaping the future of urban Europe!

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