

# URBACT IV Programme Manual

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**URBACT**



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# Table of contents

Table of contents .....	3
Glossary.....	9
Introduction. THE URBACT PROGRAMME.....	10
<b>A. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>11</b>
A.1. Core principles.....	11
A.2. URBACT IV (2021 – 2027).....	11
A.3. URBACT over the years .....	12
A.4. Using this Programme manual.....	12
<b>B. CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME .....</b>	<b>13</b>
B.1. Urban challenges in the European Union (full text can be found in the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme) .....	13
B.1.1. <i>Just Cities</i> .....	13
B.1.2. <i>Green Cities</i> .....	13
B.1.3. <i>Productive cities</i> .....	14
B.1.4. <i>Digitalisation, a major transformative, cross-sectoral trend</i> .....	14
B.2. An analysis of city needs.....	15
B.3. Increased importance of sustainable urban development in European Cohesion Policy	15
<b>C. URBACT IV'S STRUCTURE.....</b>	<b>17</b>
C.1. Transnational networks .....	17
C.2. Capacity building .....	18
C.3. Knowledge hub .....	19
<b>D. PROGRAMME AREA AND BENEFICIARIES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
D.1. Programme area .....	21
D.2. Beneficiaries.....	23
D.2.1. <i>Beneficiaries of transnational networks</i> .....	23
D.2.2. <i>Beneficiaries of capacity building activities</i> .....	23
D.2.3. <i>Beneficiaries of knowledge sharing actions</i> .....	23
<b>E. FUNDING .....</b>	<b>24</b>
E.1. Programme funding.....	24
E.2. Programme's budget breakdown.....	25
E.3. Co-financing rates for Projects' Beneficiaries.....	25
E.3.1. <i>General Principles</i> .....	25
E.3.2. <i>Categories of region (2021 — 2027)</i> .....	27

<b>F.</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE .....</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>Book one. THE URBACT NETWORKS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF THE URBACT NETWORKS .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>A.1.</b>	<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>A.2.</b>	<b>Common Networks Features .....</b>	<b>34</b>
	<i>A.2.1. Partnership .....</i>	<i>34</i>
	<i>A.2.2. Expertise.....</i>	<i>35</i>
	<i>A.2.3. A Workplan divided into 3 Work Packages .....</i>	<i>35</i>
	<i>A.2.4. A compulsory list of Deliverables / Outputs .....</i>	<i>38</i>
	<i>A.2.5. A Budget divided in 5 budget categories .....</i>	<i>38</i>
<b>B.</b>	<b>CREATING AN URBACT NETWORK .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>B.1.</b>	<b>Calls for Proposals .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>B.2.</b>	<b>Application &amp; Approval Procedure .....</b>	<b>41</b>
	<i>B.2.1. Eligibility.....</i>	<i>41</i>
	<i>B.2.2. Assessment.....</i>	<i>41</i>
	<i>B.2.3. Approval .....</i>	<i>42</i>
	<i>B.2.4. Contracting .....</i>	<i>43</i>
	<i>B.2.5. Compliance with State Aid rules .....</i>	<i>45</i>
<b>C.</b>	<b>MANAGING AN URBACT NETWORK.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>C.1.</b>	<b>Overview of Lead Partners &amp; Project Partners' roles and responsibilities .....</b>	<b>46</b>
	<i>C.1.1. Lead Partners' Responsibilities.....</i>	<i>48</i>
	<i>C.1.2. Lead Partner's recommended team.....</i>	<i>49</i>
	<i>C.1.3. Project Partners' Responsibilities .....</i>	<i>50</i>
	<i>C.1.4. Project Partner's recommended team .....</i>	<i>50</i>
<b>C.2.</b>	<b>A decentralised financial management system.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>C.3.</b>	<b>Monitoring an URBACT Network.....</b>	<b>51</b>
	<i>C.3.1. Monitoring Activities &amp; Outputs .....</i>	<i>52</i>
	<i>C.3.2. Monitoring Finances &amp; Budget.....</i>	<i>53</i>
	<i>C.3.3. Changes in the Project Implementation .....</i>	<i>57</i>
<b>C.4.</b>	<b>Closing an URBACT Network .....</b>	<b>58</b>
	<i>C.4.1. General principles.....</i>	<i>58</i>
	<i>C.4.2. The closure procedure.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<b>C.5.</b>	<b>Archiving, Record Keeping and Audit documents.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>MANAGING COSTS AND REPORTING PROGRESS .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>D.1.</b>	<b>Overview of the budget and budget categories .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>D.2.</b>	<b>Eligibility of expenditure per budget category .....</b>	<b>64</b>
	<i>D.2.1. Staff costs.....</i>	<i>64</i>
	<i>D.2.2. Office and Administration costs .....</i>	<i>67</i>

D.2.3.	Travel and Accommodation costs.....	69
D.2.4.	External Expertise and Services costs.....	71
D.2.5.	Equipment costs .....	73
<b>D.3.</b>	<b>Draft budgets.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>D.4.</b>	<b>Other eligibility considerations .....</b>	<b>75</b>
D.4.1.	Eligibility period.....	76
D.4.2.	Public procurement.....	77
D.4.3.	Value Added Tax (VAT).....	78
D.4.4.	Financial Charges.....	78
D.4.5.	In-kind contribution .....	78
D.4.6.	Revenue .....	78
D.4.7.	Expenditure already supported by other EU, national or regional subsidies.....	78
D.4.8.	Carbon Offsetting actions and other environmental considerations.....	79
D.4.9.	Financing activities outside the Programme area .....	79
D.4.10.	Ineligible costs .....	80
<b>D.5.</b>	<b>Accounting expenditure.....</b>	<b>80</b>
D.5.1.	Accounting in Synergie CTE.....	80
D.5.2.	The use of the Euro .....	82
<b>D.6.</b>	<b>Certifying expenditure.....</b>	<b>83</b>
D.6.1.	Designation of a First Level Controller.....	83
D.6.2.	First Level Control Systems.....	84
D.6.3.	Role of the First Level Controllers.....	85
D.6.4.	Certification process .....	86
<b>D.7.</b>	<b>Project Reporting.....</b>	<b>87</b>
D.7.1.	Reporting Requirements.....	87
D.7.2.	Reporting Package .....	87
D.7.3.	Reporting Procedure.....	90
<b>D.8.</b>	<b>ERDF/IPA/NDICI/Norwegian/Swiss Refunding.....</b>	<b>90</b>
D.8.1.	Network ERDF intervention rates .....	90
D.8.2.	ERDF Refunding to Lead Partner .....	90
D.8.3.	Transfer of ERDF to Project Partners.....	91
D.8.4.	Refunds to Norwegian and Swiss Partners .....	91
D.8.5.	Refunds to IPA and NDICI (Ukraine and Moldova) Countries Partners .....	91
<b>D.9.</b>	<b>Audits on projects .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>EXPERTISE AT NETWORK LEVEL.....</b>	<b>93</b>
E.1.	General framework .....	93
E.2.	Services to be provided by URBACT experts to networks .....	93
E.3.	Types of network Experts .....	94
E.4.	Budgetary and contractual elements for network Experts .....	94
<b>F.</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION AT NETWORK LEVEL.....</b>	<b>96</b>

<b>F.1.</b>	<b>Mandatory EU and URBACT activities .....</b>	<b>96</b>
F.1.1.	Communication officer .....	96
F.1.2.	Communication plan .....	97
F.1.3.	Network branding.....	98
F.1.4.	Programme branding and EU requirements .....	99
F.1.5.	A3 network poster.....	103
F.1.6.	Institutional website news .....	104
F.1.7.	URBACT network webpage.....	104
F.1.8.	Digital communication channels .....	105
F.1.9.	Final product.....	105
<b>F.2.</b>	<b>Complementary activities .....</b>	<b>105</b>
F.2.1.	Liaison with National URBACT Points .....	106
F.2.2.	Partnerships with other EU organisations/programmes.....	106
F.2.3.	Press releases.....	106
F.2.4.	Events.....	106

## Book two. THE URBACT PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES .. 108

<b>A.</b>	<b>CAPACITY BUILDING AT PROGRAMME LEVEL.....</b>	<b>109</b>
A.1.	Context & background .....	109
A.2.	Values & Principles .....	109
A.3.	Objectives & Focus areas .....	110
A.4.	Target audience .....	112
A.5.	Activities .....	112
A.6.	Available budget .....	114
A.7.	Monitoring & Evaluation .....	114
<b>B.</b>	<b>KNOWLEDGE HUB .....</b>	<b>116</b>
B.1.	Context & principles of the Knowledge Hub.....	116
B.2.	Focus areas .....	117
B.3.	Target audience .....	118
B.4.	Knowledge Hub Objectives .....	118
B.5.	Methodology for implementation .....	119
B.6.	Actions.....	120
B.6.1.	Thematic communities:.....	120
B.6.2.	EU urban policy focused knowledge sharing:.....	121
B.7.	Available budget .....	123
B.8.	Outcomes and indicators.....	123
<b>C.</b>	<b>EXPERTISE AT PROGRAMME LEVEL .....</b>	<b>125</b>
C.1.	Expertise in the URBACT IV Cooperation programme .....	125
C.2.	The URBACT Pool of Experts.....	125

C.2.1.	<i>The Open Call for URBACT Experts</i> .....	125
C.2.2.	<i>The Pool of Experts</i> .....	125
<b>C.3.</b>	<b>Different types of expertise at Programme Level</b> .....	<b>125</b>
C.3.1.	<i>External Assessment Panel (Project Assessment)</i> .....	125
C.3.2.	<i>Methods and Tools Programme Experts</i> .....	127
C.3.3.	<i>Thematic and Strategic Expertise at Programme Level</i> .....	127
C.3.4.	<i>Budgetary elements for expertise at Programme level</i> .....	128
<b>D.</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION AT PROGRAMME LEVEL</b> .....	<b>130</b>
<b>D.1.</b>	<b>Main objectives</b> .....	<b>130</b>
D.1.1.	<i>Raise awareness of URBACT's features to a wide range of (potential) beneficiaries</i> .....	130
D.1.2.	<i>Support beneficiaries and internal stakeholders when implementing and communicating on the actions and results of EU-funded projects</i> .....	130
D.1.3.	<i>Ensure programme calls, results and other relevant information is made available to the widest number of people</i>	130
D.1.4.	<i>Facilitate the uptake of URBACT knowledge</i> .....	130
D.1.5.	<i>Ensure a coordinated approach to programme activities and promotion, in particular with the European Urban Initiative.</i> .....	131
<b>D.2.</b>	<b>Target audiences</b> .....	<b>131</b>
<b>D.3.</b>	<b>Communication channels</b> .....	<b>131</b>
<b>D.4.</b>	<b>URBACT IV visual identity and graphic charter</b> .....	<b>132</b>
<b>D.5.</b>	<b>Coordination of communication activities at programme level</b> .....	<b>133</b>
<b>D.6.</b>	<b>Budget</b> .....	<b>133</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>NATIONAL URBACT POINTS</b> .....	<b>134</b>
<b>E.1.</b>	<b>National URBACT Points in the URBACT IV Cooperation programme</b> .....	<b>134</b>
<b>E.2.</b>	<b>Missions of National URBACT Points</b> .....	<b>134</b>
<b>E.3.</b>	<b>Target audience of National URBACT Points</b> .....	<b>134</b>
<b>E.4.</b>	<b>Profile of National URBACT Points</b> .....	<b>135</b>
<b>E.5.</b>	<b>Missions to be delivered by National URBACT Points</b> .....	<b>135</b>
E.5.1.	<i>Mandatory missions</i> .....	135
E.5.2.	<i>Complementary activities</i> .....	137
<b>E.6.</b>	<b>Green events and activities</b> .....	<b>139</b>
<b>E.7.</b>	<b>Framework for implementation</b> .....	<b>139</b>
E.7.1.	<i>Provisions in the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme</i> .....	139
E.7.2.	<i>Procedure for the appointment by national authorities</i> .....	139
E.7.3.	<i>Management and coordination of the National URBACT Points</i> .....	140
<b>E.8.</b>	<b>Budgetary elements, reporting and reimbursement</b> .....	<b>140</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>AUDIT AND IRREGULARITIES</b> .....	<b>142</b>
<b>F.1.</b>	<b>Second Level Audit</b> .....	<b>142</b>
F.1.1.	<i>Audit Authority</i> .....	142
F.1.2.	<i>The Group of Auditors</i> .....	142

F.1.3.	<i>Second level control process</i> .....	142
<b>F.2.</b>	<b>Irregularities</b> .....	<b>143</b>

# Glossary

<b>AA</b>	Audit Authority
<b>AHE</b>	Ad Hoc Expert
<b>APN</b>	Action Planning Network
<b>AN</b>	Action Network
<b>CA</b>	Certifying Authority
<b>EAP</b>	External Assessment Panel
<b>EUI</b>	European Urban Initiative
<b>FLC</b>	First Level Controller
<b>IPA</b>	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
<b>ITN</b>	Innovation Transfer Network
<b>JS</b>	Joint Secretariat
<b>LE</b>	Lead Expert
<b>LP</b>	Lead Partner
<b>MA</b>	Managing Authority
<b>MC</b>	Monitoring Committee
<b>MS</b>	Member State
<b>NUP</b>	National URBACT Point
<b>PP</b>	Project Partner
<b>PR</b>	Progress Report
<b>PS</b>	Partner State
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TN</b>	Transfer Network
<b>TNM</b>	Transnational Meeting(s)
<b>UIV</b>	URBACT IV
<b>UIA</b>	Urban Innovative Actions
<b>ULG</b>	URBACT Local Group
<b>WP</b>	Work Package

# Introduction.

# THE URBACT PROGRAMME



The following introduction will provide the main information on the context of the URBACT IV Programme, its structure, Programme area and beneficiaries, funding and management structure.

<b>A.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>URBACT IV'S STRUCTURE.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>PROGRAMME AREA AND BENEFICIARIES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>FUNDING .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE .....</b>	<b>29</b>

## A. INTRODUCTION

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### URBACT drives change for better cities

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

Over 1 000 cities have already benefited from **European funding to learn and exchange, activities to improve skills and knowledge-sharing initiatives.**

#### A.1. Core principles

Cities are at the forefront of today's greatest challenges and opportunities. Climate change, intergenerational gaps and digital disruption are just some common turning points for European cities. And yet, cities are also home to cultural diversity, economic opportunities and essential services. It's by sharing experiences with other cities that we can harness the many opportunities of sustainable urban development. This is where URBACT comes in.

URBACT promotes an integrated development as a means to support cities implement horizontal and vertical policy integration. Positive change can best be made by collaborating across organisations and in close collaboration with local stakeholders – from a wide range of groups, to different municipal departments and even neighbouring towns.

URBACT has developed a series of processes and tools, under the [URBACT Method](#). It encourages cities to re-think centralised governance structures and shift towards more inclusive and holistic models. URBACT's participatory approach recognises that sustainable urban development is driven by action-oriented strategies, which are co-created and implemented with local people.

#### A.2. URBACT IV (2021 – 2027)

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

Previously successful types of Networks like Action Planning and Transfer will continue, while new types of Networks will exist to strengthen the connections between the Urban Innovative Action cities and also to focus on the implementation and impact at local level while using the URBACT Method. For the first time, URBACT supports towns and cities in pre-accession countries to the EU – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine and Moldova.

URBACT IV is co-financed by the Member and Partner States, alongside the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – with a budget of EUR 79 769 799. The Programme also counts with funding from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance with a budget of EUR 5 000 000 and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument with a budget of EUR 2 000 000.

### A.3. URBACT over the years

URBACT IV follows on the previous Programme cycles over 20 years supporting cities:

- > **URBACT III**, 2014-2020, supported 679 partner cities across Europe, representing over 262 million people – over 50% of the EU population. URBACT III focused on sharing good practices through transfer networks and implementing integrated action plans.
- > **URBACT II**, 2007-2013, broadened the Programme's scope to focus on sustainable urban development across a wide range of policy areas and included capacity-building initiatives for the first time.
- > URBACT's first cycle – **URBACT I** – ran from 2002 to 2006 and built upon EU pilot projects starting in the late 1980s that developed integrated approaches to urban regeneration.

### A.4. Using this Programme manual

The Programme manual aims at supporting anyone involved in the implementation of the URBACT IV Programme. It is a reference document that should be read carefully.

- > The present **introduction** aims to provide the main information on the URBACT IV Programme: context, structure, funding principles, beneficiaries, etc.
- > **Book one** will be of particular interest for all potential applicants and approved beneficiaries, as it contains all the information on the networks supported by URBACT, from the application to the closing stage.
- > **Book two** will detail the activities developed at Programme level by URBACT, through the URBACT Secretariat and its ecosystem.

Throughout this document, orange boxes with the following icons will give different types of indication:



Reference(s) to either internal part of the Programme Manual or external links and documents.



Important information that should not be missed.



Tips or examples to support beneficiaries of URBACT networks.

## B. CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAMME

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### **B.1. Urban challenges in the European Union (full text can be found in the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme)**

The last decade has shown that crises can emerge with little notice and that cities are often in the centre. That was the case for the financial crisis in 2008, immigration crisis in 2014-2015, terrorism attacks in 2015, 2016, COVID-19 crisis in 2020, the war in Ukraine. In a longer-term perspective, cities play a crucial role in achieving sustainable development, especially mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The [URBACT Cooperation Programme](#) highlights some key challenges that European cities are facing. These can be summarised as follows:

#### ***B.1.1. Just Cities***

The urban environment affects health outcomes, resulting in both an 'urban health advantage' and an 'urban health penalty': differences in access to health infrastructure and services, unhealthy urban environment contributing to diseases and infections, lack of adequate ventilation and sanitation, poorer mental health, etc.

In 2017, of the 112 million EU inhabitants at risk of poverty or social exclusion, corresponding to 22% of the total population, 47 million were living in cities (13 million more than three years before). The COVID-19 pandemic is poised to increase these numbers significantly due to the unprecedented economic shock urban economies are enduring.

Particularly in recent years, wealth has increasingly accumulated among the few, and the polarisation of wealth is most concentrated in urban areas: high shares of people living at risk of poverty and in low work intensity households, and/or high unemployment rates, higher risk of death among residents in more deprived neighbourhoods.

As the right to housing is fundamental, cities will need to provide sufficient affordable housing to an increasingly varied population, ensuring inclusiveness and integration among its communities, and reducing environmental impacts

Growing polarisation can be addressed by inclusive and equitable place-based policies: avoiding anonymity and isolation (especially for older people), including migrants, improving labour market access for persons with disabilities, attract young professionals (in order to avoid depopulation in small and medium cities) and encourage intergenerational work. Buildings should be adapted to persons with disabilities and older generations and should be affordable to fight social segregation. Increasing the quality and accessibility of healthcare for all but especially the elderly.

All these actions are considered to create healthier habits and create a better wellbeing.

#### ***B.1.2. Green Cities***

Climate change is consistently mentioned as the most important long-term challenge cities face. Cities generate about 70% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and, at the same time, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The social consequences linked with these changes create new challenges for cities of all sizes, such as:

- > Reducing private car use for commuting and promoting environmentally friendly forms of urban mobility.
- > Using sustainable urban planning to reduce urban sprawl, organise amenities at walking distance and allow for the efficient organisation of public transport.
- > Increasing the energy efficiency of the housing stock which contributes at the same time to addressing of energy poverty.
- > Increasing the number of green spaces.
- > Sensitising residents to the different issues of climate change and involving them in the decision-making process. Tools and funding are however needed.
- > Reduce and ultimately reverse this loss in Earth biodiversity mainly due to urbanisation, by shifting to land-use planning that balances production and conservation objectives on all managed land, notably by reducing land take and soil artificialisation and supporting urban regeneration and green and blue infrastructures.
- > Limiting unsustainable tourism, waste and air quality.
- > Etc.

### ***B.1.3. Productive cities***

Cities are the motors of the European economy: GDP growth since 2000 was 50% faster in cities than in other areas.

However, cities are places where most of the world population live and work accounting for up to 80% of greenhouse gas emissions, two-thirds of total energy demand, and 50% of waste generation. The circular economy can provide a policy response to cope with the above challenges, as a driver for economic growth, jobs and environmental quality.

Cities and regions have a key role to play as promoters, facilitators and enablers of the circular economy. Municipalities have an important lever at their disposal through the public procurement of goods and services and adequate economic and governance conditions should be in place to unlock its potential. Community-based/collaborative sharing of resources should also be encouraged.

### ***B.1.4. Digitalisation, a major transformative, cross-sectoral trend***

The Future of European Cities report recognises that new and emerging technologies could help cities improve public services, better interact with residents, increase productivity, and address environmental and sustainability challenges. In sum, evolve toward smart cities. The COVID-19 pandemic has hugely accelerated existing trends towards remote working and the provision of commercial digital services such as online shopping. These trends could have both negative (vitality of urban centres, increase in commercial transport) and positive impacts (reduced transport to and from home, improved quality of life).

This same research found that large cities tend to be at the forefront of digitalisation due to higher demand for more complex services and interactions, and their capacities to develop and provide those services. The degree to which cities can capitalise on potential benefit of digitalisation will depend on a variety of factors - including the availability of co-working hubs /incubator space, and the provision of improved connectivity and digitisation to drive innovation and enterprise development and promote the regeneration of city and town centres. The main factors constraining the digital transition of cities are lack of funds and lack of skills. A lack of strategic vision is considered an additional constraint in smaller towns.

## **B.2. An analysis of city needs**

The disparity in Europe's urban configuration, polycentricity and demography, as outlined previously, naturally make it difficult on one hand to implement a one-size-fits-all approach to cities; on the other hand, it is the aim of cohesion policy to deal with these territorial disparities.

According to the New Leipzig Charter, urban governance needs to be strengthened in order to empower cities to transform. Therefore, cities need legal framework conditions, investment capacities, adequately skilled employees, access to and the ability to steer infrastructure, public services and public welfare.

The Future of Cities report identifies physical interventions, governance, new technologies and resilience as key means for cities to address their challenges. URBACT will support cities in the following ways:

- Governance – strengthening urban governance to increase resilience of cities
- Integrated Approach – strengthen cooperation between different sectors, levels of governance and balancing physical, environmental and social aspects
- Participation – encourage citizen participation with URBACT Local Groups
- Place Based – strengthen the principles of sustainable urban development in the context of the New Leipzig Charter

## **B.3. Increased importance of sustainable urban development in European Cohesion Policy**

The new regulatory framework for the period 2021 - 2027 is set out by the regulations for Cohesion Policy. These regulations offer a range of support for European cities with a view to addressing the disparities across the EU. The emphasis on sustainable urban development and territorial and local development strategies within this new framework is demonstrated by the set of cohesion policy tools which are made available to support cities in the design and implementation of their urban policies.

This new framework includes:

- > Article 5 Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 sets out five key policy objectives all of which are relevant for EU cities. Particular attention shall be paid to PO5 'a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives.
- > Article 28 Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 establishes that a Member State should use Integrated Territorial Investments, Community-led local development or another territorial tool designed by the Member State where it supports integrated territorial development through territorial or local development strategies.
- > Article 29 Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 lists several elements that should be included in territorial strategies that are funded by Cohesion Policy; a defined geographical area, an analysis of its development needs and potential, a description of the integrated approach and involvement of partners in its preparation and implementation.
- > Article 32 Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 lists several elements that should be included in a Community-led Local Development Strategy
- > Article 11 Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 requires that a minimum of 8% of ERDF resources per Member State be allocated to integrated territorial development focused on urban areas (sustainable urban development). Special attention shall be given to tackling environmental and climate challenges, notably the transition towards a climate neutral economy by 2050,

to harnessing the potential of digital technologies for innovation purposes, and to supporting the development of functional urban areas.

- > Article 12 Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 foresees the creation of the European Urban Initiative (EUI). The initiative shall cover all urban areas, including functional urban areas, and has two main strands of activity: support of innovative actions and support of capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication. The EUI shall ensure appropriate coordination and complementarities with URBACT.

Article 3 (3)b of this regulation defines the objectives of URBACT IV as follows:

*Interregional cooperation to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy (Interreg C) by promoting exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building in relation to the identification, transfer and capitalisation of good practices on integrated and sustainable urban development, taking into account the linkages between urban and rural areas, supporting actions developed in the framework of Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 and while also complementing in a coordinated way with the initiative outlined in Article 12 of that Regulation (the 'URBACT Programme');*

This regulation sets out three main tasks for URBACT IV:

- > exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building in relation to the identification, transfer and capitalisation of urban good practices on integrated and sustainable urban development, taking into account the linkages between urban and rural areas
- > supporting actions developed in the framework Article 11 Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 for sustainable urban development.
- > The activities undertaken by the URBACT IV programme shall be developed to complement in a coordinated way the European Urban Initiative referred to in Article 12 Regulation (EU) 2021/1058.

## C. URBACT IV'S STRUCTURE

URBACT IV addresses the capacity needs of urban authorities in designing and implementing sustainable urban development strategies and plans according to an integrated, participatory and place-based approach, replicating good practices and designing investment plans for innovative urban actions.

URBACT will build up the institutional capacity of cities needed to implement territorial strategies; it directly contributes to PO5 'a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives' in particular.

All operations supported by the programme will contribute to this goal and are of strategic importance. To reach this objective, URBACT IV has **three main actions**:

URBACT IV											
1				2				3			
TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS				CAPACITY-BUILDING				KNOWLEDGE HUB			
Action Planning Networks				National and EU Training				Thematic communities			
Transfer Networks				Online Toolbox				Knowledge Hub			
Innovation Transfer Networks								Knowledge Sharing			
Action Networks								National URBACT Points			

### C.1. Transnational networks

#### Objective

Use transnational networks to improve the capacity of European cities to:

- > co-design and implement Integrated Action Plans linked to common sustainable urban development challenges
- > transfer established urban good practices
- > design investment plans for replicating elements of Urban Innovative Actions
- > implement concrete urban actions addressing identified local challenges

## Expected results

Improved local policies through local actions designed in an Integrated Action Plan and the reuse of good practices, increased capacity of cities benefiting from territorial tools to use them, improved deployment of actions due to testing, promote replication of innovative actions through investment plans and improved concrete urban actions addressing identified local challenges using cohesion policy funds and programmes.

## Actions

In **Action Planning Networks (APN)** city practitioners will co-design integrated action plans with an URBACT Local Group comprising all relevant stakeholders (different city departments, different tiers of government, different policy relevant sectors and target groups). There will be an increased focus on implementation as networks will be able to test and experiment small actions from the integrated action plans. This tool is relevant for many cities working on sustainable urban development, including those receiving funding under Article 11 Regulation (EU) 2021/1058.

**Transfer Networks (TN)** will foster the transfer of validated urban good practices through a refined methodology with additional focus on supporting the upscaling of the good practice, if possible, through links to Cohesion policy funds and other funding programmes.

An **Innovation Transfer Network (ITN)** is specifically aimed at cities that seek to develop an investment plan to replicate elements of a UIA 2014-2020 and/or EUI 2021/27 project using Cohesion policy programmes and/or other European, and national public or private funding. This transfer mechanism will build on the pilot activities developed under URBACT III. It will be coordinated with the EUI using a dedicated tool to disseminate innovation created in EUI and to support cities in the transfer of innovative practices.

**URBACT Action Networks (AN)** support cities to implement concrete urban actions addressing identified local challenges, building on existing local strategies or policy frameworks. The main objective is to strengthen local institutional and stakeholders' capacities to manage and deliver sustainable urban development policies through action implementation, peer learning, and the production of transferable implementation knowledge.

URBACT networks will be supported by international experts in integrated sustainable urban development. Expertise shall include both the urban topic of the networks as well as tools and methods for exchange and learning.

## C.2. Capacity building

### Objective

Improve the capacity of urban stakeholders to design and implement sustainable urban development policies, practices and innovation in an integrated, participative and place-based way.

### Expected results

Urban practitioners in cities have increased their knowledge and capacity in relation to integrated sustainable urban development strategies. There is improved awareness of the entire URBACT community about carbon reduction and gender mainstreaming. Local stakeholders, lead partners and

lead experts have improved their ability to use digital tools in their networks and their capacity to innovate.

## Actions

At programme level URBACT will deploy **capacity-building activities** such as URBACT Universities, National Training Schemes and on-going and dedicated support to all beneficiaries. Participants will work together to improve skills needed for the design and implementation of Integrated Action Plans for sustainable urban development.

URBACT IV will increase the capacity building offer **linked to digital, green and gender as cross-cutting elements for all networks and activities of the programme**. Capacity-building on these topics may take the form of training targeted at the entire URBACT community or organised once in the lifetime of a network. Complementarity with EUI capacity building activities is ensured; and where synergies are identified, joint training will be organised.

Programme-level capacity building will be supported by international experts in integrated sustainable urban development and green, digital and gender equality.

## C.3. Knowledge hub

### Objective

Ensure that URBACT knowledge and practice is made accessible to urban practitioners and policymakers to feed into local, regional, national and European urban policies, in particular through the European Urban Initiative; and contributing to the Urban Agenda for the EU.

### Expected results

Urban practitioners and policymakers increasingly access URBACT knowledge and URBACT city experiences inspire local, regional, national and European urban policy.

### Actions

At programme level URBACT will play a role as a *knowledge broker* – bringing urban actors together to facilitate knowledge sharing, and as a *knowledge producer* – developing new products building on existing URBACT experience and those from EUI and from complementary European projects/programmes.

**Thematic communities:** these will allow cities to meet and exchange on topics cutting across URBACT networks. The exchanges will ensure a more integrated approach to the partner topic and produce up-to-date analysis of city policy and practice to share beyond URBACT, in particular through the EUI and through contributions to the Urban Agenda for the EU. The knowledge can be transformed for dynamic use (Conferences, thematic events, webinars, policy labs) or static reference (thematic publications, policy briefs, case studies, good practices).

**EU urban policy focused knowledge sharing**: URBACT IV will aim to inspire and inform urban policies by making knowledge available to the wider European urban community, in particular through the European Urban Initiative. URBACT will also contribute specifically to the Urban Agenda for the EU. Dedicated mechanisms for contributing to both will be developed in agreement with their governance bodies.

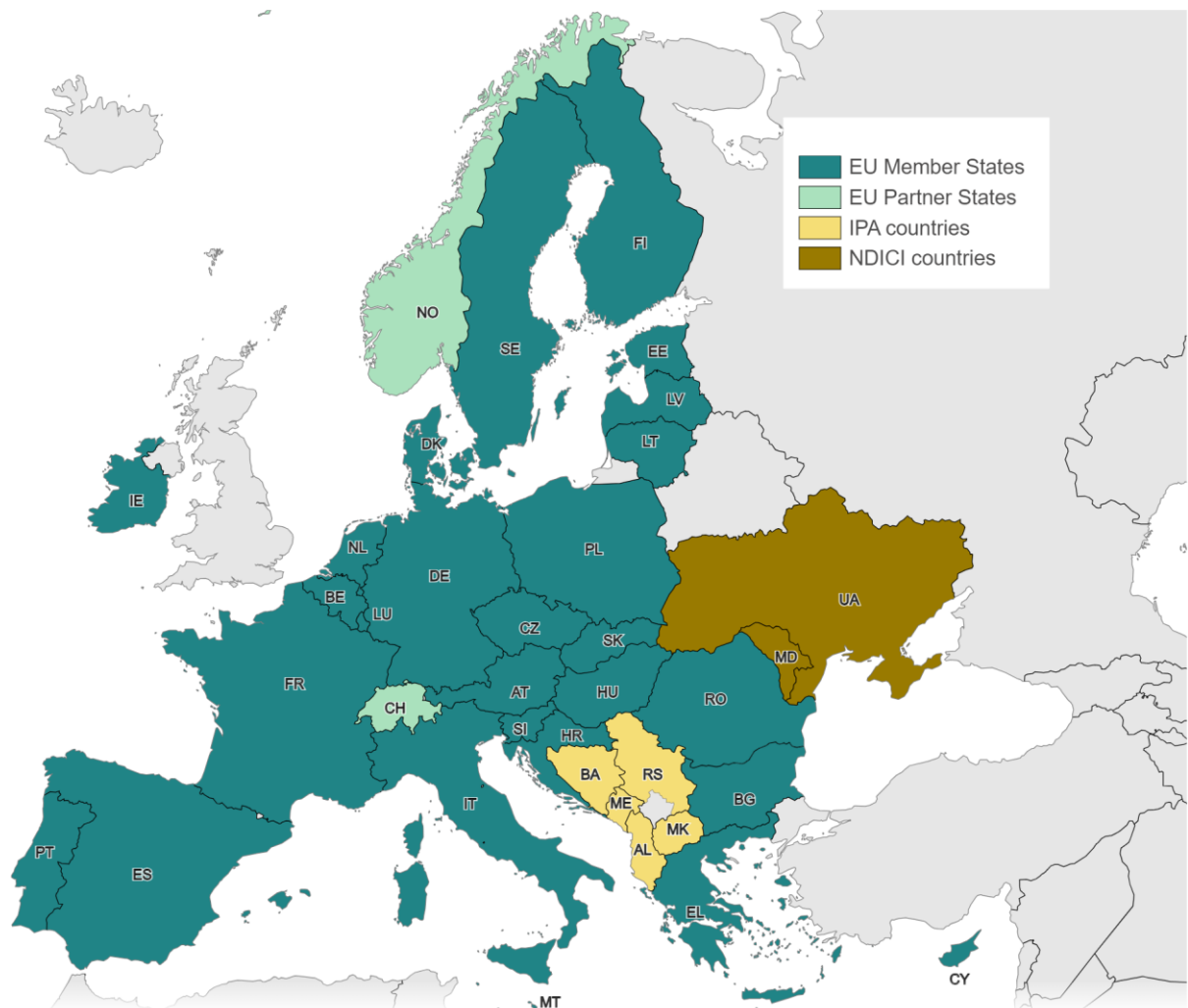
**Expertise support** is provided to build and manage knowledge on sustainable urban development. The **URBACT website** will operate as a knowledge hub providing open access to knowledge, good practices and know-how around thematic priorities. It will be interlinked with, and selected outputs will be available on, the EUI knowledge sharing platform. In addition to the strategic cooperation with EUI, URBACT IV will cooperate with other organisations (programmes, networks, etc.) operating in the area of sustainable urban development.

**National URBACT Points** are in charge of communicating on URBACT activities and disseminating URBACT results at national level in local language. They play an important role in linking URBACT knowledge to national and regional stakeholders and in stimulating a wide participation in networks and capacity-building activities. They can support programme capacity building efforts at national level, adapt and translate programme methods and tools into national language. Activities by the National URBACT Points will be coordinated with EUI Contact Points for maximum outreach. In line with 'Implementing the New Leipzig Charter', Member States are called, where possible, to avoid duplicating structures when setting up national contact points for URBACT, the European Urban Initiative and any other urban national point.

## D. PROGRAMME AREA AND BENEFICIARIES

### D.1. Programme area

#### Programme Area



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The URBACT IV programme covers<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> URBACT Cooperation Programme, par. 1.1.1 Introduction

## The 27 EU Member States

**Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.**

Partners from the 27 EU Member States can participate in operations using ERDF co-financing.

## 2 Partner States

Norway and Switzerland.

Partners from Norway and Switzerland cannot make use of ERDF allocations. Partners from Switzerland can be co-financed at 50% by a national fund. Partners from Norway may participate in Action Planning Networks with Norwegian national funds covering up to 50% of the costs<sup>2</sup>.

## Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) countries

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia.

Partners from IPA countries can participate in operations using IPA funding, covering up to 95% of the costs.

## Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) countries

Ukraine and Republic of Moldova.

Partners from NDICI countries can participate in operations using NDICI funding, covering up to 95% of the costs.

**Note:** co-financing rates are approved by the Monitoring Committee for each call and can be adjusted considering the need to respect the maximum co-financing rate allowed at the level of the programme.

## Other countries

Partners from other countries, anywhere in the world, can participate **with their own funding**.

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<sup>2</sup> Norwegian participants are asked to contact the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KDD) to receive information on the available funds. Swiss participants are asked to contact the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) to receive information on the available funds.

## D.2. Beneficiaries

### D.2.1. *Beneficiaries of transnational networks*

The main beneficiaries of transnational networks shall be cities from EU 27 Member States, Norway and Switzerland, IPA countries, and NDICI countries (Ukraine and Moldova) willing to develop integrated strategies and action plans for sustainable urban development. The beneficiary “city” refers to the public local authority representing:

- > **Cities, municipalities, towns;**
- > **Local agencies** defined as public or semi-public organisations set up by a city, partially or fully owned by the city authority, responsible for the design and implementation of specific policies (economic development, energy supply, health services, transport, etc.);
- > **Infra-municipal tiers of government** such as city districts and boroughs in cases where they are represented by a politico-administrative institution having competences for policy-making and implementation in the policy area covered by the URBACT network concerned in which they are willing to get involved;
- > **Metropolitan authorities and organized agglomerations** in cases where they are represented by a politico-administrative institution having delegated competences for policy-making and implementation in the policy area covered by the URBACT network concerned.

In addition, a number of non-city partners are also eligible. The list of other eligible beneficiaries is defined as follows:

- > **Provincial, regional and national authorities**, as far as urban issues are concerned;
- > **Universities and research centres**, as far as urban issues are concerned
- > **Managing Authorities of Cohesion Policy and EU Solidarity Funds**

All URBACT networks will link to the European Urban Initiative. Specifically, the work of the APN in developing the capacity of cities to co-design integrated urban action plans is relevant for many cities working on sustainable urban development as referred in the Art 11 of the ERDF Regulation. The involvement of Art. 11 cities and other cities benefiting from Cohesion policy funds will be sought for, as well as the alignment with Cohesion policy characteristics. Efforts will be made to attract cities that have not yet participated in URBACT networks and smaller cities for which international networking demands an additional effort. A balance between cities from EU more and less developed and transition regions will be ensured and monitored using eligibility criteria in the calls for proposals.

### D.2.2. *Beneficiaries of capacity building activities*

This is a cross-cutting aim for the entire URBACT IV programme, the target audience is therefore quite broad.

On the one hand, this concerns **the beneficiaries of all URBACT networks and local stakeholders** – URBACT Local Group members and elected city officials.

On the other hand, the target audience also comprises **other urban actors** such as non-URBACT cities implementing article 11, innovative actions or part of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

### D.2.3. *Beneficiaries of knowledge sharing actions*

Based on the proposed distinction between URBACT knowledge sharing actions and those of the EUI, there are two clear and distinct target audiences for sharing knowledge and know-how.

To ensure that urban practitioners and policymakers have access to URBACT thematic knowledge:

- > **Cities, urban authorities/policy makers, local practitioners and regional authorities** as the target of actions sharing and transferring good practice and project results, in particular those not involved in URBACT networks

To ensure that URBACT thematic knowledge feeds urban policies, in particular national and EU policies:

- > **European Urban Initiative target audience and governance**
- > **Urban Agenda for the EU target audience, governance and partnerships.**

Through these initiatives URBACT contributes to actions tackling regional, national and European level policy makers involved in sustainable urban development, 'translating' URBACT content into relevant policy contributions.

## E. FUNDING

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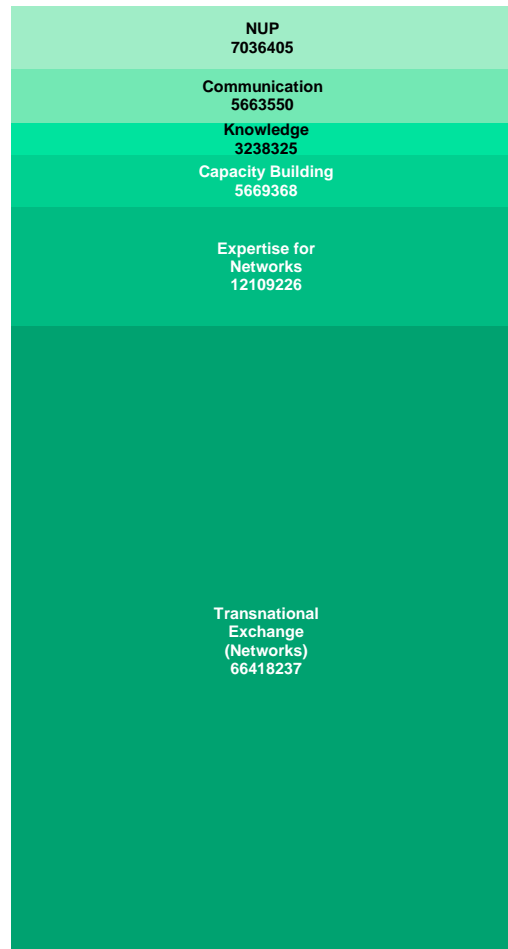
### E.1. Programme funding

The programme is co-financed by Member and Partner States, alongside the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** with EUR 79 769 799. The Programme also counts with funding from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance with a budget of EUR 5 000 000 and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument with a budget of EUR 2 000 000.

## E.2. Programme's budget breakdown

Total eligible costs for the URBACT programme activities can be summarised as follows: 66.5% of the Programme's budget shall be dedicated to **Transnational Exchange** (i.e., the exchange and learning activities undertaken by cities as part of URBACT Networks) with an additional 12.5% of the budget for the Expertise for Networks.

A further 21% of the budget shall be dedicated to **Programme activities** such as Capacity Building, Knowledge and Capitalisation, Communication and Dissemination and the National URBACT Points.



Total refundable expenditure in €

## E.3. Co-financing rates for Projects' Beneficiaries


### E.3.1. *General Principles*

The beneficiary cities and other eligible beneficiaries shall be co-financed for their participation in transnational networks as follows:

- Partners from **'more developed'** regions are co-financed up to the rate applicable for each call for proposal
- Partners from **'transition'** regions are co-financed up to the rate applicable for each call for proposal
- Partners from **'less developed'** are co-financed up to the rate applicable for each call for proposal<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the Terms of Reference for each call for proposals for the applicable rates as they may vary from one call to another.

- Switzerland is a partner state of the URBACT programme. Partners from Switzerland are co-financed up to 50% by a Swiss national fund<sup>4</sup>
- Norway is a partner state of the URBACT programme. Partners from Norway may participate in Action Planning Networks with Norwegian national funds covering up to 50% of the costs<sup>5</sup>.
- Partners from IPA and NDICI countries are co-financed by up to 95% by IPA or NDICI Funds, respectively<sup>6</sup>
- Partners from United Kingdom and other countries may participate in Action Planning Networks at their own cost for this call.

 Please refer to the Terms of Reference for each call for proposals for the rates applicable as they may vary.

The rest of the budget given to each Partner shall be co-financed by the Partner, e.g., with internal financial resources.

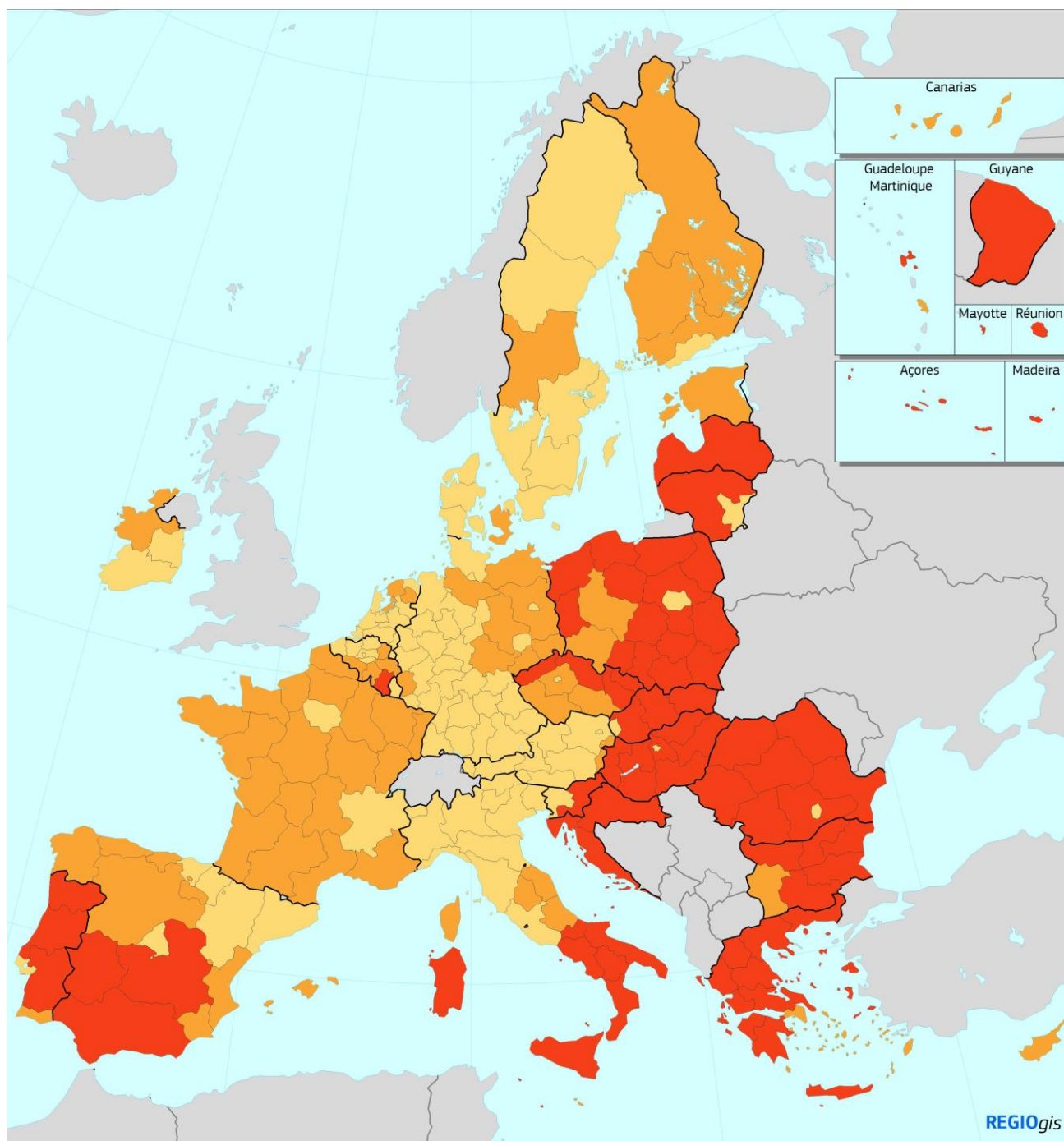
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<sup>4</sup> Swiss participants are asked to contact the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) to receive information on the available funds.

<sup>5</sup> Norwegian participants are asked to contact the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (KDD) to receive information on the available funds under this call.

<sup>6</sup> IPA and NDICI partners can apply as Project Partners provided that their legal status is coherent with the Programme rules and that the legal framework is fully set in the relevant IPA or NDICI countries.

### E.3.2. Categories of region (2021 — 2027)



■ Less developed regions    ■ Transition regions    ■ More developed regions

#### Outermost regions

##### Less developed:

- > Ciudad Autónoma de Ceuta (ES63)
- > Ciudad Autónoma de Melilla (ES64)
- > Guadeloupe (FRY1)

##### Transition:

- > Canarias (ES70)
- > Martinique (FRY2)

- > Guyane (FRY3)
- > La Réunion (FRY4)
- > Mayotte (FRY5)
- > Região Autónoma dos Açores (PT20)
- > Região Autónoma da Madeira (PT30)

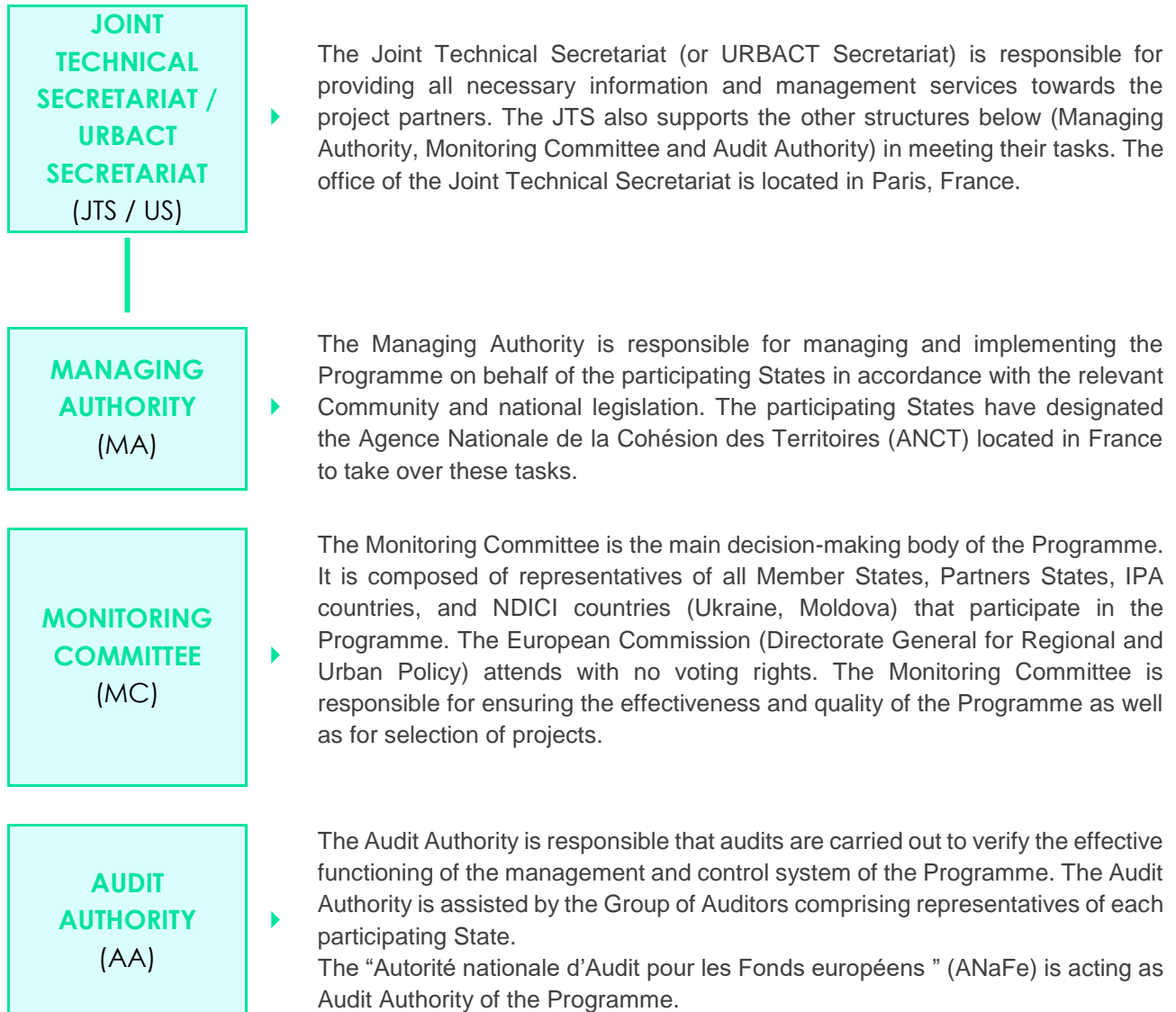


For the definition of More Developed, Transition and Less Developed region, a full list can be found in the [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2021/1130 of 5 July 2021 setting out the list of regions eligible for funding from the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus and of Member States eligible for funding from the Cohesion Fund for the period 2021-2027](#) and in the [detailed map](#) available in the DG Regional and Urban Policy website.

## F. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

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The management of this programme is based on the management structure applicable for a Structural Funds programme and is made up of:



# Book one.

# THE URBACT NETWORKS

The first book of the URBACT IV Programme Manual is **entirely dedicated to the URBACT networks**. It should be **read carefully by all potential applicants and/or by beneficiaries** once their network(s) have been approved: they will find here all the information about the **different types of networks** and **how to manage them after their creation and approval**.

A.	PRESENTATION OF THE URBACT NETWORKS .....	31
B.	CREATING AN URBACT NETWORK .....	40
C.	MANAGING AN URBACT NETWORK.....	46
D.	MANAGING COSTS AND REPORTING PROGRESS .....	63
E.	EXPERTISE AT NETWORK LEVEL.....	93
F.	COMMUNICATION AT NETWORK LEVEL .....	96

# A. PRESENTATION OF THE URBACT NETWORKS

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## A.1. Overview

The main activity of the URBACT Programme is the creation of **transnational exchange and learning networks**.

These transnational networks aim to improve the capacity of European cities to co-design and implement Integrated Action Plans linked to common sustainable urban development challenges, to transfer established urban good practices and to design investment plans for replicating elements of Urban Innovative Actions.

A total of **85 Networks** are planned to be created within the framework of URBACT IV Programme: 30 Action Planning Networks, 25 Transfer Networks, 10 Innovation Transfer Networks, 20 Action Networks.

Like URBACT II and URBACT III before, URBACT IV will keep the focus on **networks of cities for exchange and learning as the core engine of the programme**; 66% of the total budget of the programme is dedicated to the transnational networks.

Elected officials, officers and other city stakeholders are key targets of the transnational networks.

 For the list of beneficiaries, please refer to [Beneficiaries of transnational networks](#) and the different Terms of Reference that will be published on the URBACT website prior to each call.

# URBACT IV Programme Manual

The table below tries to summarise the main features of the four different types of Networks under URBACT IV:

	<b>Action Planning Networks (APN)</b>	<b>Transfer Networks (TN)</b>	<b>Innovation Transfer Networks (ITN)</b>	<b>Action Networks (AN)</b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	<p>Support an organised process of exchange and learning among peers across Europe, with a view to improving local policies through concrete action planning.</p> <p>Cities willing to get involved in Action Planning Networks shall identify a policy challenge they want to address at local level.</p> <p>Then, they shall commit to develop an Integrated Action Plan and test some small-scale actions in order to address this challenge using a participatory approach.</p>	<p>Support the transfer of good practices within cities in Europe building on the experience of a Good Practice City which will be the Lead partner of the Network.</p> <p>It is thus expected that, as a result of the adaptation and re-use of good practices successfully implemented, Transfer Cities of the network as well as the Good Practice City improve their integrated urban policies and the delivery of these policies on the ground.</p>	<p>Support the transfer of innovation within cities in Europe using UIA completed projects as good practice cases. Cities will design robust investment plans after gaining in depth knowledge on how the innovative project can work in their city. Cities will also explore how the innovative case can be financed.</p> <p>Another objective is for the URBACT Programme to develop and optimise synergies with European Urban Initiative.</p>	<p>Support cities exchange experiences, co-development of solutions and implementation of a portfolio of actions, generating practical knowledge on how urban change can be delivered in practice. Action implementation is the core driver of learning, allowing cities to experiment, adjust approaches, identify what works, and prepare for scaling up successful actions through local or European funding.</p>
<b>Tagline</b>	Empower > Change > Impact	Understand > Adapt > Reuse	Understand > Adapt > Prepare for Reuse	Co-create solutions > Implement actions > Transform your city
<b>Main Output(s) at local level</b>	<p><b>Integrated Action Plan</b></p> <p>Document defining actions to be implemented, covering the planned timings, implementation responsibilities, costings, funding sources, monitoring indicators and risk assessment of the actions.</p>	<p><b>Final Transfer Report</b></p> <p>Document capturing the key learning points emerging from the overall network experience, providing an overview of the transformation that has taken place.</p>	<p><b>Investment Plan (Project Partners)</b></p> <p>Document providing details of the UIA project, the partner city's starting point and an insight into the adapted version of the innovative practice, in addition to comprising a value proposition alongside a case for investment.</p> <p><b>Continuity Plan (Lead Partner)</b></p> <p>Document helping Lead Partners to build on their initial UIA project activity.</p>	<p><b>Action Portfolio</b></p> <p>The Action Portfolio documents the actions implemented, the learning generated through practice, and evidence of change resulting from their delivery.</p> <p>By the end of the Action Network, cities will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented concrete actions;</li> <li>• Documented what worked and what did not;</li> <li>• Demonstrated impact across people, institutions and the city system;</li> <li>• Identified pathways for scaling, replication or mainstreaming beyond the network lifetime.</li> </ul>

**[UIV Programme Manual]**  
**Book one. THE URBACT NETWORKS**

	<b>Action Planning Networks (APN)</b>	<b>Transfer Networks (TN)</b>	<b>Innovation Transfer Networks (ITN)</b>	<b>Action Networks (AN)</b>
<b>Main Output(s) at network level</b>	<b>Network Result Product(s)</b> Final materials capturing all the network results, relying on the most relevant outputs from the transnational exchange and learning experience. The Lead Partner coordinates the process of putting together this output. Project Partners, Lead Experts and — if necessary — Ad-hoc Experts, such as designers, can contribute and support this production			
<b>Prerequisite for the Lead Partner</b>	None	URBACT Good Practice label	Lead Partner in a completed UIA Project	None
<b>Duration</b>	31 months <i>(indicative)</i>	30 months <i>(indicative)</i>	24 months <i>(indicative)</i>	30 months
<b>Partnership</b>	Number of partners to be defined in each Terms of Reference Balance between cities from More Developed and Less Developed & Transition <sup>7</sup> regions to be defined in each Terms of Reference Number of partners from Partner States to be defined in each Terms of Reference			
<b>Expertise</b>	URBACT Programme provides each approved Network with an additional specific budget for the appointment and contracting of experts to support partners in implementing their transnational activities with both thematic content and methods for exchange and learning.			
<b>Reporting</b>	Annually <i>(indicative)</i>			
<b>Maximum amount<sup>8</sup></b>	850.000€ total eligible cost (indicative)	750.000€ (indicative)	500.000€ (indicative)	1.000.000€ total eligible cost (indicative)

<sup>7</sup> Refer to the detailed [map](#) available in the DG Regional and Urban Policy website. The full list of eligible areas is available in the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/1130 of 5 July 2021 at the link [here](#). For more details about the partnership, please refer to Terms of Reference published for each call.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the maximum total eligible budget for the different types of networks, refer to the Terms of Reference that will be published on the URBACT website prior to each call.

## A.2. Common Networks Features

### A.2.1. Partnership

#### Lead Partner

In the context of URBACT IV, for each project proposal, a Lead Partner shall be appointed by the beneficiaries among themselves.

Each network has to appoint a **Lead Partner**. Lead Partners are key actors of transnational partnerships for URBACT Networks. They have 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.

 A city may not be Lead Partner in more than one project at a time under the same call.

#### Project Partners

In addition to the Lead Partner, each network shall be composed of Project Partners, forming a coherent and relevant partnership.

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

- > The **challenge and/or good practice** addressed must be a **priority** for all network partners.
- > **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/good practices, the **size and positioning of the city could be important** comparable elements for the coherence check of partners' local situations i.e., maritime cities working on maritime issues.

The total number of partners will be defined in the Terms of Reference for each call for proposals.

### A.2.2. Expertise

After approval, each network will appoint a **Lead Expert** supporting the partnership over the entire duration of the network with the design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities the knowledge of EU thematic policy frameworks, and the design and delivery of integrated and participatory policies.

**Ad hoc experts** can also be appointed to provide support on specific needs identified by the network with shorter and/or more specific expertise missions.

 For more details, please refer to [EXPERTISE AT PROJECT LEVEL.](#)

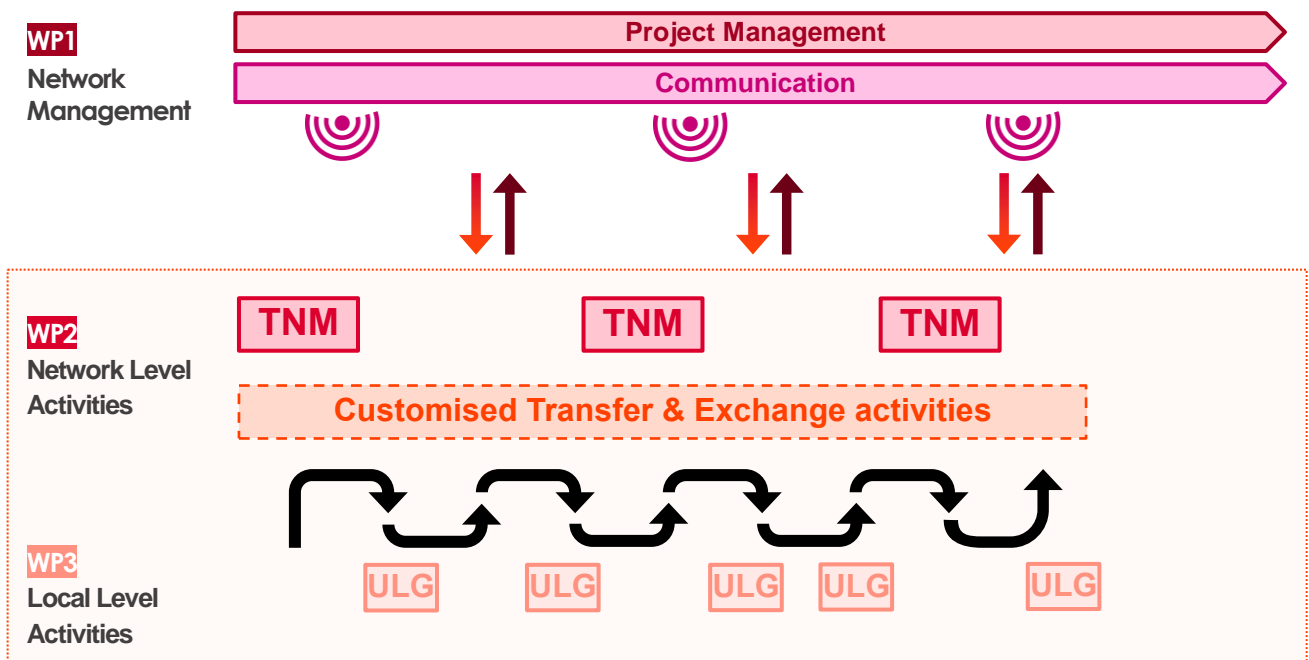
### A.2.3. A Workplan divided into 3 Work Packages

An URBACT Network shall be structured around 3 Work Packages:

- > WP1 — Network Management
- > WP2 — Network Level Activities
- > WP3 — Local Level Activities

**Work Package 1** focuses on network management and coordination and is crucial to ensure the correct functioning of the network.

As seen in the chart below, **Work Package 2** and **Work Package 3** are intertwined and shall feed each other and a **continuous flow of knowledge between the transnational and the local level** should therefore exist, for effective results.



## Work Package 1 — Network Management

The main aim of this work package is to **ensure a sound management and coordination of the network** concerning both the overall project management and all aspects linked to the administrative and financial management.

	APN	TN	ITN	AN
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To set up a <b>strong project management team</b> in order to ensure a sound management and coordination of the project concerning both the overall project management and all aspects linked to the financial management.</li> <li>▪ To organise the work between the partners by building a <b>strong collaborative relationship</b>.</li> <li>▪ <i>For the Lead Partner</i>, to <b>coordinate project partners</b> at transnational level to respond to administrative questions and ensure efficiency of work</li> <li>▪ To ensure <b>communication</b> on the network's activities on an <b>ongoing basis</b>, both to network partners and to urban practitioners outside the network</li> <li>▪ To ensure <b>dissemination of the project's results and findings</b>, both among project partners and beyond, to the wider community of urban practitioners <b>outside the network</b></li> </ul>			
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To <b>recruit appropriate staff</b> to ensure efficient project management. For the Lead Partner, the staff required will be significantly more than for a project partner. The Lead Partner shall appoint a project coordinator, a finance officer and a communication officer – these activities will require the equivalent of 2 full posts.</li> <li>▪ To hold <b>regular management meetings</b> to ensure strong communication between partners concerning project coordination</li> <li>▪ To submit the <b>reporting</b> documents</li> <li>▪ To attend <b>training sessions</b> and other <b>events</b> organised by the URBACT Secretariat</li> <li>▪ To receive and transfer <b>ERDF funds to partners</b> (responsibility of the Lead Partner)</li> <li>▪ Support implementation of network communication plan complying with EU publicity and visibility guidelines</li> <li>▪ Regular <b>updates</b> of the project mini-site on the <b>URBACT website</b></li> <li>▪ Production and dissemination of <b>promotional material</b> and other occasional communication activities i.e. participation to external events to promote the network, etc.</li> </ul>			

## Work Package 2 — Network Level Activities

**Transnational exchange activities** are the **core actions** to be implemented by the URBACT Networks. They are to be conceived as milestones for the network as they allow:

- > the exchange of experience among partners and their URBACT Local Group members,
- > the consolidation of knowledge on a specific policy issue,
- > the mutual support between partners (peer support),
- > *for Transfer Networks*, the understanding of all dimensions of the practice to be transferred and to receive support from the Good Practice City for a possible adaptation of the practice and effective transfer at local level, etc.

	APN	TN	ITN	AN
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Sharing:</b> To explore solutions and foster the exchange of experience among partners</li> <li>▪ <b>Learning:</b> To strengthen the practical knowledge and skills of partners in the defined policy area</li> <li>▪ <b>Applying:</b> To draw lessons from the exchanges on an ongoing basis and to apply them at local level</li> <li>▪ <b>Supporting:</b> To support partners in improving their local policies in relation to the topic selected/good practice/UIA policy them, and producing their main output(s)</li> </ul>			
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organisation of <b>transnational exchange and learning activities</b>. These activities should be a combination of different components including network meetings, learning sessions, field visits, peer review sessions, local dissemination activities, etc.</li> <li>▪ Production of thematic and methodological <b>outputs</b></li> <li>▪ Development and delivery of the <b>network communication plan</b> i.e. organisation of a <b>final event</b> open to all target groups, production of interim knowledge capture and sharing products as well as the final network results product</li> </ul>			

### Work Package 3 — Local Level Activities

Each Network partner city must establish an **URBACT Local Group (ULG)**. As the programme promotes multi-level participation, the composition of these groups is expected to reflect the project’s thematic focus.

The ULG should gather civil servants of different department, elected representatives as well as relevant stakeholders (representatives of other tiers of government, local agencies, NGOs, associations, etc.) linked to the policy area / good practice / UIA project topic.

Each city appoints a coordinator for its ULG. This key person functions as the main contact point for other partners, as well as being the pivotal link within the ULG on the ground. The ULG Coordinator is responsible for the delivery of the city activities and outputs.


	APN	TN	ITN	AN
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support transnational exchange activities through the <b>preparation of input for the network meetings</b> (e.g. case studies, site visits, etc.)</li> <li>▪ To foster the impact of transnational exchange activities on local policies</li> <li>▪ To <b>strengthen</b> the <b>capacity of local stakeholders</b> in integrated urban policies and participative action-planning</li> <li>▪ To develop <b>participative action planning processes</b> for the production of Integrated Action Plans / transfer and implementation of good practices in the field of integrated sustainable urban development</li> <li>▪ To ensure <b>dissemination of lessons learnt</b> (good practices, policy recommendations, etc.) to local stakeholders involved in urban development</li> </ul>			
<b>Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Setting up and running an <b>URBACT Local Group</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Taking part</b> in the exchange activities at <b>transnational level</b> and contribute to these activities (participation to seminars with relevant delegates, organisation of study visits, production of inputs, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Taking part in the <b>capacity-building activities</b> organised by the URBACT Secretariat for local stakeholders involved in URBACT Local Groups.</li> </ul>			

APN	TN	ITN	AN
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building <b>cooperation relationships</b> with <b>Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes when</b> relevant</li> </ul>		

### A.2.4. A compulsory list of Deliverables / Outputs

For **each Work Package** and **depending on the type of Networks** (APN, TN, ITN or AN), a series of **compulsory deliverables** will be requested.

Every proposal shall indicate and describe — in the Application Form submitted through Synergie CTE — a specific number of Network outputs, which shall be the reference framework for the project’s work plans and for building the Network’s budget.

 These outputs, in addition to a description, their quantity, deadline/frequency, and who is responsible for their production will be detailed in a guide that will be available with the Terms of Reference for each call for proposals.

The **delivery of these outputs shall be monitored closely by the Lead Partner** as they are integral part of the reporting package that need to be submitted once per year and which allows ERDF reimbursement.

### A.2.5. A Budget divided in 5 budget categories

For each call, the Terms of Reference will define the total eligible cost per network. However, the budget will **always be presented using 5 budget categories as follows:**

- STAFF COSTS**

▶ Expenditure on staff members employed by the partner organisation, who are formally engaged to work on the project.
- OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS**

▶ Operating and administrative expenses of the partner organisation that support delivery of project activities – fixed at 15% of staff costs.
- TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION COSTS**

▶ Expenditure on travel and accommodation costs of staff of partner organisations that relate to delivery of the project. This category includes travel costs, accommodation costs, costs of meals, visa costs, and/or daily allowances/per diems.
- EXTERNAL EXPERTISE**

▶ Expenditure for external expertise and services provided by a public or private body or a natural person outside of the partner organisation. This category covers costs paid on the basis of contracts or written agreements and against invoices or requests for reimbursement to external experts and service providers that are requested to carry out certain tasks or activities, linked to the delivery of the project. All additional costs related from external experts (e.g., travel and accommodation expense for external

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experts). This category also includes all costs linked to the organisation of meetings.

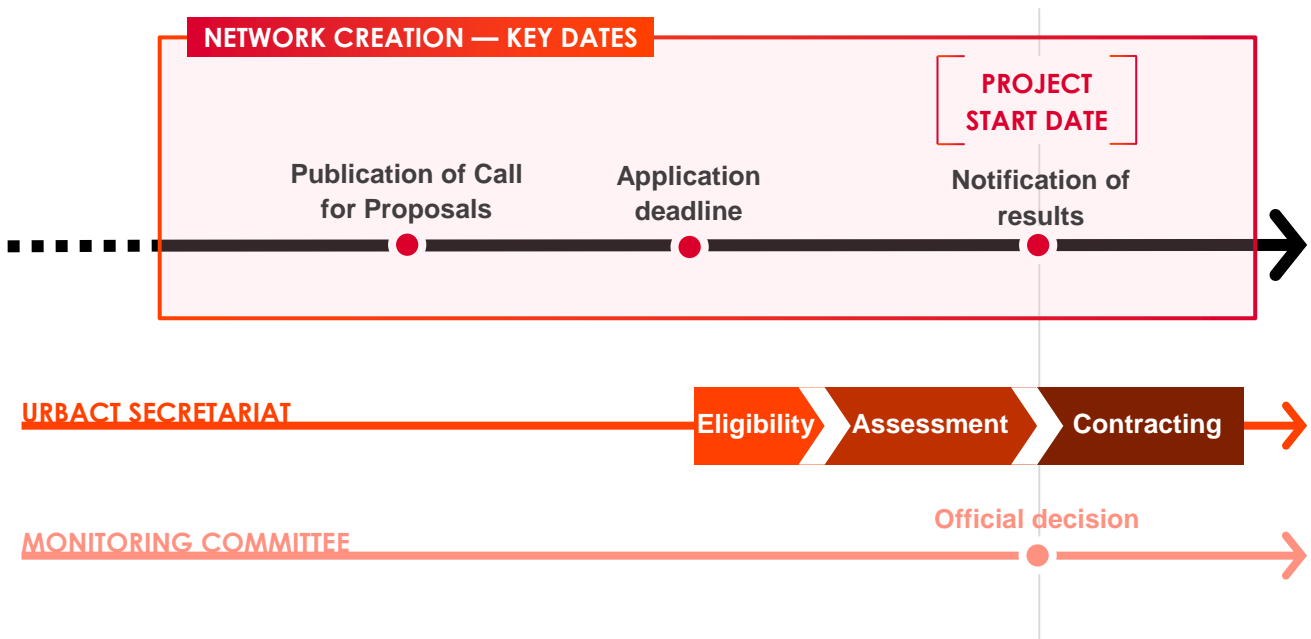
**EQUIPMENT**

▶ Expenditure for equipment purchased, rented or leased by a partner, necessary to achieve objectives of the project.



For each cost category, detailed information about the eligibility of costs, the methods for calculation and programme specific rules are available in [Book One. D. MANAGING COSTS AND REPORTING PROGRESS](#).

## B. CREATING AN URBACT NETWORK



### B.1. Calls for Proposals

URBACT Networks shall be selected by means of call for proposals. The nature of proposed tasks to be implemented by URBACT networks, and the administrative and financial framework within which the networks are to operate shall be outlined in the calls for proposals.

Calls are open to all eligible beneficiaries (see [D. PROGRAMME AREA AND BENEFICIARIES](#)) yet each Terms of Reference might be more restrictive, in addition to specificities linked to each type of Networks.



- > Only cities with the URBACT Good Practice label shall be able to apply as Lead Partners in the call for proposals for Transfer Networks;
- > Only cities that lead a completed UIA project shall be able to apply as Lead Partners in the call for proposals for Innovation Transfer Networks.

Call for Proposals shall be approved by the URBACT Monitoring Committee.

Call for Proposals are published on the URBACT website and disseminated through different communication tools (dedicated webpage in the URBACT website, newsletters, news on partner websites, National Infodays, social media, etc.)

#### **Call for Good Practices (only for Transfer Networks)**

A call for Good Practices shall be issued before the call for proposals for Transfer Networks. This call shall invite cities to come forward with their good practices in the field of sustainable integrated urban development.

Successful cities will have their good practices promoted by URBACT and will have the opportunity to apply to share their experience within the framework of Transfer Networks enabling also the subsequent enhancement of the good practice in their own city.

**A good practice as understood in URBACT is not only a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well by ensuring desired results, and could be recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of cities can adopt it.**

 A Good Practice City may not be Lead Partner in more than one project at a time under the same call.

## B.2. Application & Approval Procedure

Potential Lead Partners wishing to apply in the framework of a Call for Proposals shall fill in, in English, and submit — within the fixed deadline — an Application.

The application shall include information related to the partnership, the network's focus, the general objectives, description of the main activities and expected outputs, the workplan, the network management and leadership, the use of expertise and a budgetary proposal. More detailed information on the content to be provided with the Application shall be available in each Call for Proposals.

Application shall be created online through the Synergie CTE tool.

Along with the Application, applicants shall submit the additional required documents. The list of additional required documents shall be provided in the Call for Proposals — *these normally include Letters of Commitment from all cities involved in the partnership and the CV of the Lead Partner's project coordinator.*

### B.2.1. Eligibility

Applications submitted within the fixed deadline shall be checked by the URBACT Secretariat against the eligibility criteria listed in the Calls for Proposals. Eligibility criteria are minimum requirements, all of which must be fulfilled before a proposal can be declared eligible.


They usually refer to rules to respect in terms of procedure, respect of deadline, completeness of application and partnership.

Other eligibility criteria may apply depending on the focus and specificities of the Call for Proposals. These criteria will be included in the Terms of Reference of the Call for Proposals, to be approved by the Monitoring Committee.

The Secretariat shall transfer eligible Applications to the External Assessment Panel.

### B.2.2. Assessment

The **External Assessment Panel** (EAP) shall assess the eligible Applications. The assessment criteria for Applications shall be provided in the Call for Proposals to be approved by the Monitoring Committee.

 For more details on the External Assessment Panel, please refer to [Book two. 03. EXPERTISE AT PROGRAMME LEVEL.](#)

They can refer to the relevance of the topic, the coherence of the approach, the quality of the partnership, as well as other qualitative aspects of the overall application.

With a view to ensuring the funding of good proposals, the EAP may seek clarification from the candidate Lead Partners and proposed Lead Experts by means of interviews and provide recommendations for improvements if necessary.

The EAP shall proceed to the assessment of each eligible proposal and elaborate recommendations for approval. Normally the methodology of the EAP will be developed along the following principles:

- > Each project will be assessed by 2 different assessors (in case of divergent assessment a third assessor will review the proposal).
- > The EAP shall seek consensus among assessors and produce single network assessment sheet for each project.
- > The allocation of project proposals will be done by the URBACT Secretariat considering the thematic expertise of assessors as well as their nationalities (assessors will not assess project proposals with candidate Lead Partners from their own country).
- > Members of the EAP will meet physically or online to share the results of their individual assessment and elaborate the final assessment report and recommendations.
- > The assessors shall seek clarification from the candidate Lead Partners as necessary.

Based on this input, the URBACT Managing Authority shall submit a proposal of networks to be approved to the Monitoring Committee.

### **B.2.3. Approval**

The Monitoring Committee is the decision-making body of the URBACT Programme. It is composed of representatives from EU Member and Partner States, IPA countries, and NDICI countries (Ukraine, Moldova). Representatives from the European Commission, the CoR and CEMR normally attend the meetings of the Monitoring Committee.

Following the assessment and ranking of project proposals by the EAP, and considering the proposal of the Managing Authority, the Monitoring Committee shall decide on the approval of networks. The decision of the Monitoring Committee shall be final.

#### **Notification**

This decision will be notified to all Lead Partners soon after the meeting of the Monitoring Committee. Lead Partners of unsuccessful projects will receive a notification letter with a summary of the quality assessment results. They will therefore be informed about the reasons why their application failed.

All Lead Partners of approved projects will receive an official notification letter stating the decision of the Monitoring Committee along with a summary of the financial assistance approved.

In some cases, the decision may include certain conditions deriving from the results of the quality assessment. A precise deadline for fulfilling these conditions will be set in the notification letter. Only after these conditions are fulfilled can the Subsidy Contract be concluded.

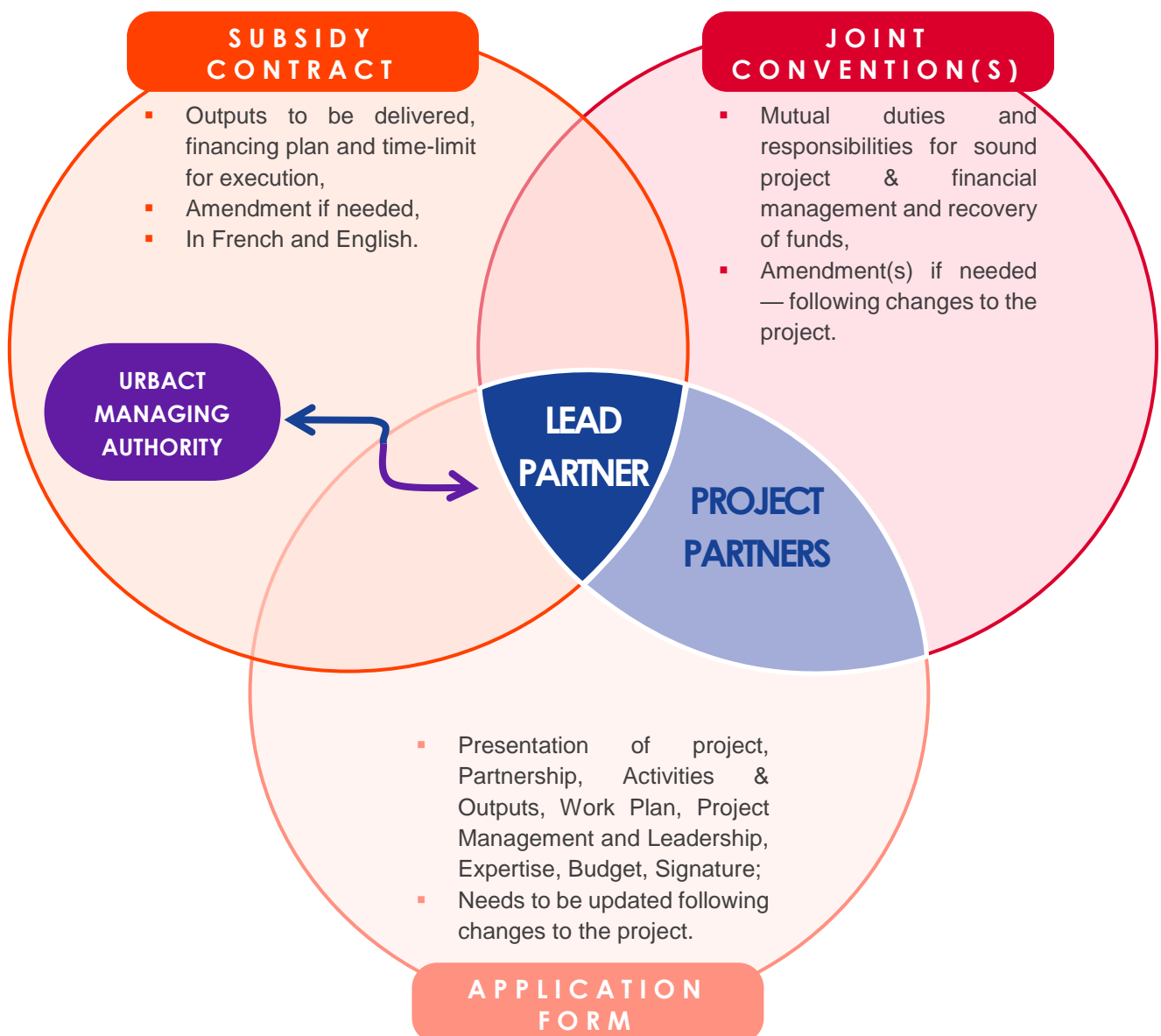
## Complaint

Project applicants can appeal the decision of the Monitoring Committee in accordance with Article 69 (7) Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. The procedure for complaint will be outlined in the Call for Proposals.

### B.2.4. Contracting

Lead Partners of approved projects shall receive and sign a Subsidy Contract, which marks the final stage of approval of the project. The project shall then be fully operational and can start work.

As described in the flowchart below, an URBACT network is governed by a series of contractual documents: **Subsidy Contract**, **Joint Convention** and **Application Form**.



## Subsidy Contract


The Subsidy Contract is the **legal framework between the URBACT Managing Authority and the Lead Partner** setting out conditions for support including requirements concerning the scope of activities to be carried out as indicated in the approved application form, terms of funding, requirements for reporting and financial controls, the financing plan and the deadlines for completion.

The Managing Authority shall provide the Lead Partner with a signed version of the Subsidy Contract. The Subsidy Contract will be **signed in English and in French**. A version of the Contract is signed electronically by the Managing Authority through a qualified electronic signature having the equivalent legal effect of a handwritten signature (in English and in French) and sent by email to the Lead Partner.

**The Lead Partner should arrange for this document to be signed.** Once signed by the appropriate person (usually an elected representative) in the LP organisation, the LP should keep the signed versions in each language and return an electronic copy to the URBACT Secretariat

The Subsidy Contract shall be **signed and returned within 1 month of the date of receipt**, after this date the contract can be cancelled.

The Subsidy Contract should be amended following a major change.

 For more information about minor and major changes, please refer to [Changes in the Project Implementation](#).

## Joint Convention

The Joint Convention (JC) is the **legal framework between Lead Partner and Project Partners** covering mutual duties, responsibilities and provisions for sound network management and delivery. It is the legal agreement between the lead partner and project partners to define their mutual cooperation.

It is one of the first main tasks of the Lead Partner to elaborate and provide a standard document to all Project Partners comprising the following basic information:

- > Role and obligations of the individual partners in the network implementation
- > Amount of financial (local) contribution of each Project Partner and related ERDF funding
- > Financial Management principles (payment forecast, budget reallocation, financial management system, accounting, reporting, control and payments, liabilities for recovery)
- > Liability in case of failures in network delivery and spending
- > Information and publicity requirements
- > Resolution of conflicts in the partnership
- > Working language of the partnership

This is a mandatory document which **must be signed by each partner**. The Joint Convention should be adapted to each specific network situation (shared costs if any, responsibilities for specific tasks for each partner, etc.).

May that be considered acceptable by the LP organisation, the Lead/Project Partners' signature sheets in electronic form can be considered as authentic, using an official eSignature or any means used by the signatory to sign, as long as the signature can be clearly attributed to the individual signatory.

Once signed by all parties, a scanned copy of the whole document including all the signed pages should be sent to all partners as well as to the URBACT Secretariat

The Joint Convention signed by all partners shall be **submitted by the Lead Partner within 2 months of project approval**. The Joint Convention shall normally be updated following any changes to the project and re-submitted within 15 working days of the approval of the changes.



Guidance to preparing Joint Convention has been developed by the URBACT Secretariat. This document serves as a guide and should be adapted for each network.

## Application Form

All the basic information should be up to date in the Application Form (AF).

Beneficiaries should check on SYNERGIE CTE that all partners contact details are up to date as well as the Lead Partner's bank details and inform the URBACT Secretariat about any update to be taken into account.

### TIPS FOR BENEFICIARIES



- > Ensure that contractual obligations are made clear to all partners in the Joint Convention – avoid complicated language when doing this.
- > Some partners may need a copy of the Subsidy Contract to allow them to start working — be prepared and send a scan to each partner for information
- > Ask partners about possible national co-financing sources — this is important to know and mention in the Joint Convention if they are eligible for national funds
- > Ensure network financial management system decided is clear to all partners – use simulations as examples
- > Contact the First Level Controller at the beginning of the project to establish ground rules and set control checks thus avoiding future complications or delays

## B.2.5. Compliance with State Aid rules

State aid is broadly defined as any aid granted by a Member State or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods, insofar as it affects trade between Member States.

Under EU Law the term “undertaking” refers to any entity engaged in an economic activity, regardless of its legal status or the way it is financed. This implies that a city or a public body may be regarded as an undertaking and may be considered, for the purposes of State aid rules, as a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) or a large enterprise.

State aid risk in the URBACT IV Programme is assessed based on five cumulative criteria:

1. The aid is granted to undertakings (means any entity engaged in economic activity). Economic activity consists of offering goods or services on a given market.
2. The aid is provided by the Member State (imputability) or through State resources (public funds).
3. The aid favours certain organisations or the production of certain goods (selectivity criterion). Selectivity means that a measure targets certain undertakings, regions or categories of firms (e.g. SMEs or specific sectors) rather than others.
4. The aid confers an advantage that distorts or threatens to distort competition. An advantage can take the form of direct payment of state resources in the form of grants and subsidies as well as indirect benefits that affect the public budget such as tax breaks, rate rebates, low interest loans, sale of public land below market value and the provision of services for free or at below-market rates.

5. The aid measure affects trade between Member States. This criterion means that the aid granted to an organisation may strengthen its position on a market where operators from different EU Member States could compete or provide similar services.

If all five criteria are met, the project must comply with State aid rules. If only one criterion is not met, State aid rules do not apply.

All projects are assessed for compliance with the State Aid rules. This assessment can be made at the stage of project application, prior contracting, during project implementation and as retroactive check.

The applicant/beneficiary will have to fill in a State aid self-assessment questionnaire through an EUSurvey, prepared by the Joint Secretariat, and submit it individually.

To support applicants and beneficiaries in this process, specific State aid guidance will be provided by the Joint Secretariat.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that the information provided is accurate and complete. Any declaration made in the survey may be subject to verification during the assessment of the application and throughout the implementation of the project.

This declaration on state aid is analysed by the Managing Authority/URBACT Joint Secretariat in parallel with the project assessment. As regards the documentation and information provided on the state aid issue, the Managing Authority/URBACT Joint Secretariat will give the opportunity, if needed, to partners to complement in order to clarify and allow a proper assessment of compliance with state aid rules.

If a risk of State aid is confirmed after the assessment(s), appropriate measures will be implemented, with approval of the Monitoring Committee, to ensure that the aid is compatible with internal market rules.

## C. MANAGING AN URBACT NETWORK

This part shall provide the rules, deadlines and procedures which must be followed by all approved URBACT IV networks. It will provide information about different roles and responsibilities concerning management of the network, programme requirements concerning resources to be dedicated to the network for successful management, the legal documents necessary for approved URBACT networks and network monitoring.

It sets out the key important points which all network Lead Partners and Project Partners MUST be aware of.

### C.1. Overview of Lead Partners & Project Partners' roles and responsibilities

	Lead Partner (LP)	Project Partners (PPs)
Legally Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensures the implementation of the entire network</li> <li><b>Signs a Subsidy Contract</b> to formalise the responsibilities between the network and the Programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sign and respect the Joint Convention</b> (covering mutual duties, responsibilities and provisions for sound project and financial management and recovery of funds)</li> <li>Are liable for their own actions and related expenditure</li> </ul>

	Lead Partner (LP)	Project Partners (PPs)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Drafts a Joint Convention</b> setting mutual rights, obligations and duties between project partners</li> <li>▪ Is liable for its own actions</li> </ul>	
<b>Financially Responsible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is liable for related <b>expenditure</b> on Synergie CTE</li> <li>▪ Ensure PPs' expenditure is valid</li> <li>▪ After each payment from the Secretariat, <b>distributes ERDF/IPA / NDICI</b> to partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are liable for related expenditure on Synergie CTE</li> <li>▪ Have their <b>own expenditure verified by their FLC</b></li> <li>▪ After each payment from the LP, <b>confirm receipt of ERDF/IPA</b></li> </ul>
<b>Strong Informed Partnership</b> &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Communicates all responsibilities, procedures and duties to partners</b> via manuals, guidelines, online and/or face-to-face meetings and checks</li> <li>▪ Is the <b>point of contact between the Secretariat and the Partners</b>: it is the LP's responsibility to pass on all relevant information to PPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are expected to <b>inform the Lead Partner</b> and possibly other Project Partners about <b>any change</b> and / or <b>problem</b> in a timely and effective way</li> <li>▪ Are aware of their responsibilities, duties and procedures via manuals, guidelines, meetings and checks</li> </ul>
<b>Managing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Allocates sufficient resources and time</b> to fulfil its role as LP</li> <li>▪ <b>Appoints or subcontracts a project coordinator</b> acting as a driving force and mobilising the partners to achieve the objectives</li> <li>▪ <b>Sets up an efficient and reliable system</b> for the network management and coordination</li> <li>▪ <b>Monitors performance of PPs</b> within the given timeframe and against budget forecasts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Allocate sufficient resources</b> to fulfil their role as partner properly in both content and management</li> <li>▪ <b>Nominate a coordinator</b> as the contact point between the other Project Partners and the Lead Partner's project coordinator</li> <li>▪ <b>Ensure their involvement</b> and their <b>active contribution</b> to their part of the network implementation within the time schedule and according to their budget</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Produces and submits regular network <b>Progress Reports</b> and <b>Payment Claims</b></li> <li>▪ LP's FLC certifies LP's expenditure and sign the Progress Reports</li> <li>▪ <b>Record keeping</b>: keeps available all its documents related to the network for at least 5 years after the final payment to the project (Article 82 2021/1060). Other possibly longer statutory retention periods, as might be stated by national law, remain unaffected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide information on <b>progress of activities and finances</b> to Lead Partner</li> <li>▪ Carry out their <b>financial administration</b> (accounting, production and storing of documents required)</li> <li>▪ Account the expenditure incurred</li> <li>▪ Project Partners' <b>FLCs</b> certify the expenditure and produce regular <b>certificates of expenditure</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Record keeping</b>: keep available all documents related to the network for at least 5 years after the final payment to the project (Article 82 2021/1060). Other possibly longer statutory retention periods, as might be stated by national law, remain unaffected</li> </ul>

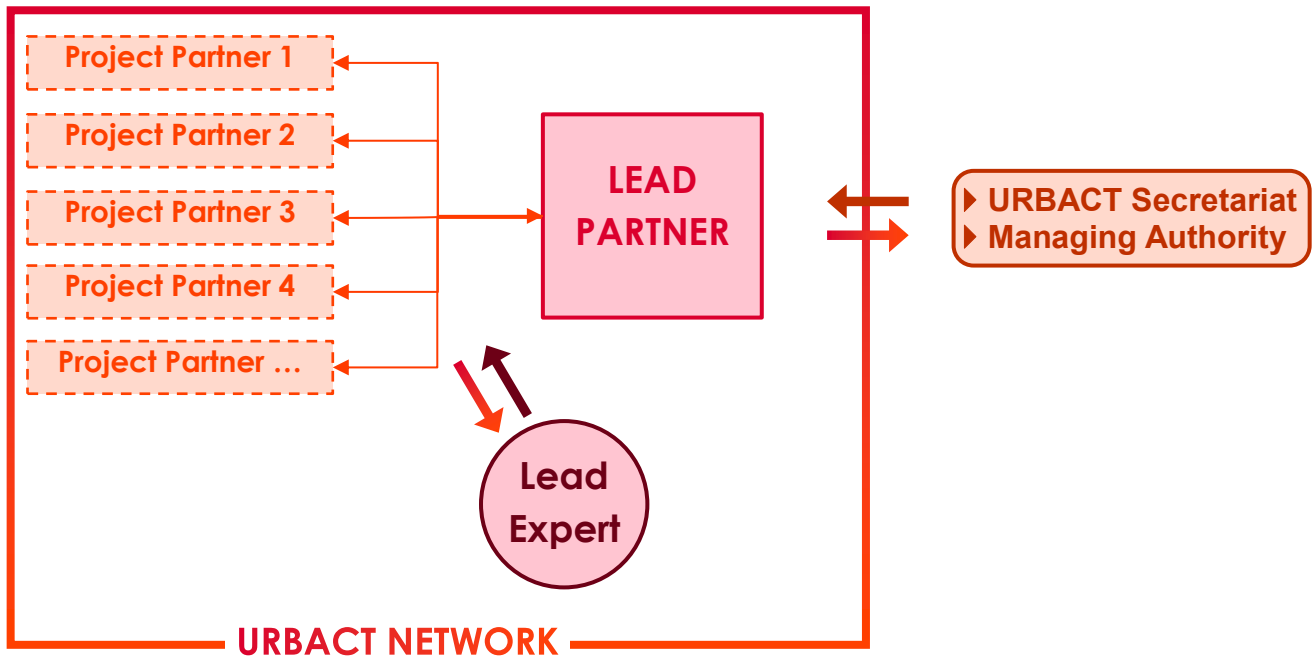
	Lead Partner (LP)	Project Partners (PPs)
<b>Communicating &amp; Disseminating Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Communicates and disseminates results</b> of the network. They should clearly state the project has been co-financed by ERDF through URBACT and the European emblem, the Programme logo and tagline and the URBACT graphic charter must be used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Public visuals and statements</b> (newsletters, posters, banners, reports, publications, etc.) have to point out that the network has been co-financed by ERDF through URBACT and the European emblem, the Programme logo and tagline and the URBACT graphic charter must be used</li> </ul>

### C.1.1. Lead Partners' Responsibilities

In accordance with Article 26 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059, the Lead Partner shall:

- > submit the Application form on behalf of the partnership;
- > sign a Subsidy Contract with the Managing Authority for the total amount of the subsidy;
- > be responsible for the division of tasks among the partners involved in the network and ensure that these tasks are fulfilled in compliance with the Application form and Subsidy Contract;
- > lay down the arrangements for its relationship with its partners in a Joint Convention;
- > ensure an efficient internal management and control system;
- > ensure that the project reports are submitted on time and correctly to the URBACT Secretariat;
- > ensure that the expenditure reported by all partners is linked to the project activities, corresponds to the activities agreed upon by all the partners, and is in accordance with the Application form and Subsidy Contract;
- > request and receive payments of programme funding;
- > transfer programme funding to the partners within the timeframe agreed in the partnership agreement in compliance with the amounts stated in the Progress Report.

The Lead Partner represents a **key element of success for URBACT projects**. With overall administrative, co-ordination, management, implementation, financial and legal responsibility for the project, the Lead Partner acts as the link between the Managing Authority and the Project Partners.



### C.1.2. Lead Partner's recommended team

For a Lead Partner the management of a transnational project is a challenging and time-consuming task. Therefore, **sufficient resource should 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

**Full-time.** The project coordinator should have a sound knowledge of the issues 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

**Usually a half time post.** Proper coordination of activities is not the only aspect that needs to be ensured by the Lead Partner. Professional financial management at network level is also essential.

Each Lead Partner should therefore appoint a skilled financial officer, who is responsible for an adequate and orderly accounting practice and the proper management of the network budget.

### A Communication Officer

**Usually a half time post.** Each network also has to comply with the EU requirements on information and communication and visibility of actions. Therefore, the Lead Partner should appoint a communication officer responsible for implementation of information and communication measures.

 Detailed information about requirements in terms of Communication is available in [Book One. F. COMMUNICATION AT PROJECT LEVEL.](#)

### A Local ULG Coordinator

In addition, as any Project Partner in the network it is also important for the Lead Partner to appoint a Local Coordinator who should work with the URBACT Local Group (ULG).

## C.1.3. Project Partners' Responsibilities

Even though the Lead Partner shall be administratively, legally and financially responsible for the project, **each Project Partner shall commit to the success of the project and contribute to its implementation and completion.** Moreover, each partner remains liable for the sound financial management of its own expenditure.

Roles and responsibilities of the Project Partners are clarified in the mandatory Joint Convention in which the legal agreements between Project Partners and the Lead Partner are established formally in order to define their mutual cooperation. The Lead Partner is responsible for ensuring that the Joint Convention is drafted and signed by all partners.

## C.1.4. Project Partner's recommended team

Realistic costs for management activities at Partner level should be taken into account to ensure an **active engagement from all Partners.** A half time position should be foreseen for project coordinator at partner level. It is strongly recommended that a further half time position be made available for finance reporting and registering of costs.

Each Project Partner should therefore appoint:

### A Project Coordinator

**Usually a half time position.** Each partner should appoint a project coordinator. The project coordinator for each project partner should have a sound knowledge of the issues addressed by the project and be able to actively participate in the network activities in English. The same person may also coordinate activities at local level (ULG meetings), if relevant. A half time position should be foreseen for project coordinator at partner level.

### **A Finance Officer**

**A half time position is strongly recommended.** Finance reporting and registering of costs can be a time-consuming task. Project Partners should also foresee sufficient staff in peak periods to ensure that deadlines are respected.

### **A Local ULG Coordinator**

In addition, it is also important that each Project Partner appoints a Local ULG Coordinator who should work with the URBACT Local Group (ULG).

## **C.2. A decentralised financial management system**

**All partners keep, spend and certify their own costs.**

Every Project Partner spends and accounts one's own expenditures in SYNERGIE CTE. The First Level Control on the expenditure shall be done at the level of each partner.

In particular, the Lead Partner shall ensure that each partner:

- > spends, accounts and certifies its own contribution in compliance with the national and EU regulations and respecting the Programme internal rules;
- > spends, accounts and certifies its own contribution according to the project's payment forecast;
- > provides the Lead Partner with the certificate and statement of expenditures signed by the appointed First Level Controllers during each reporting period;
- > Ensures that the expenditure accounted and certified by the partners is entered into the correct budget categories without exceeding the maximum available amount (keeping in mind the flexibility of 20% (see [Budget Flexibility](#) below) between budget categories and between partners' budgets).



Two other financial management system exist (centralised management and mixed management). As a Lead Partner, if you are not fully satisfied with the highly recommended decentralised financial management system, please contact the URBACT Secretariat.

## **C.3. Monitoring an URBACT Network**

The Lead Partner is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the project's progress. In order to ensure effective and efficient management of the project, the LP should set up a proper system for monitoring outputs and expenditure within the project. It is also the responsibility of the LP to follow up on the work of project partners' and have an overview of the overall progress of the project.

**Establishing systems to monitor the network's activities and finances on an ongoing basis** will help the Lead Partner for the formal reporting. It is strongly recommended that the network Application form is consulted regularly to monitor on all aspects of the network: activity (transnational and local), outputs, financial and budget.

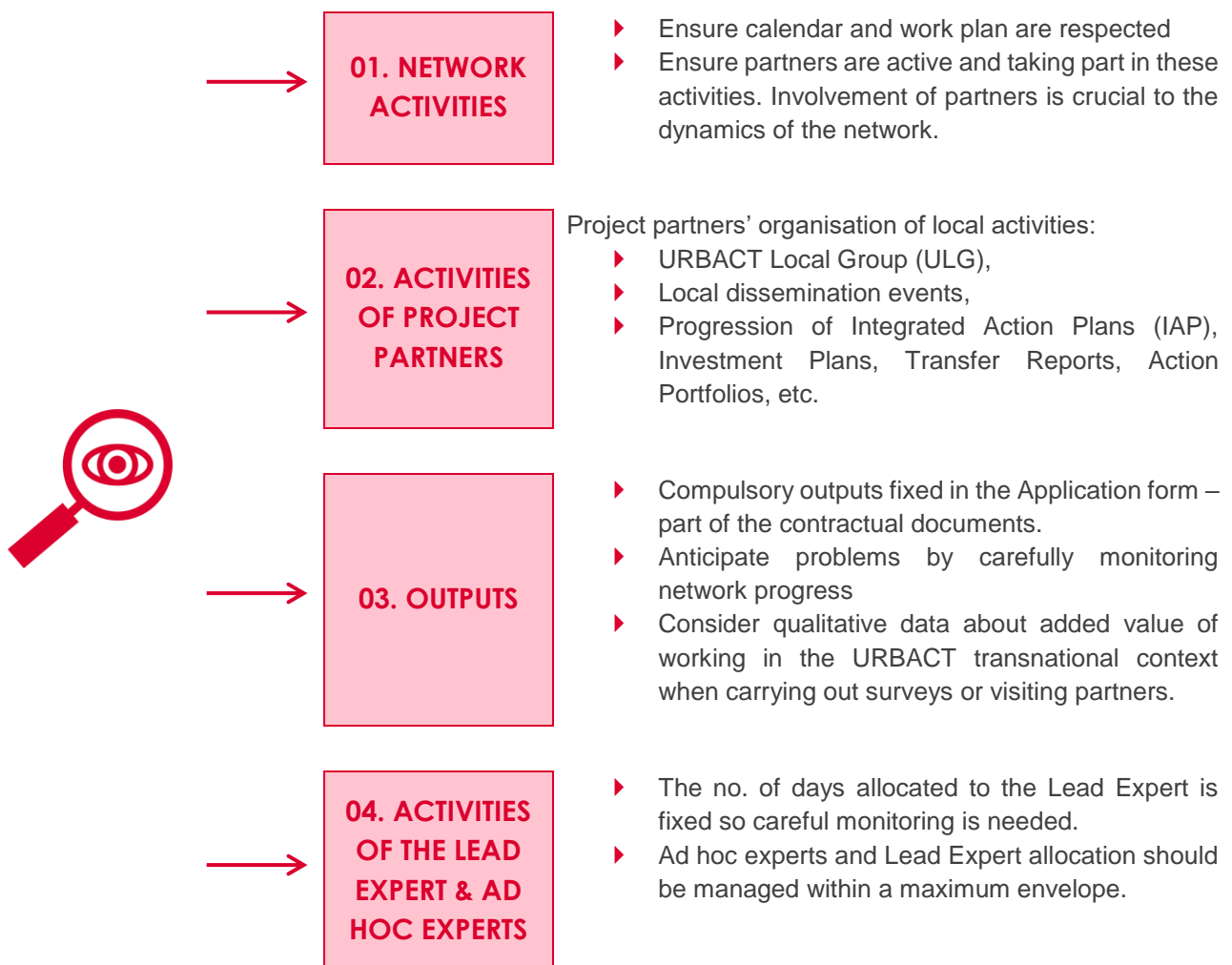
Monitoring of networks progress is required formally each year as part of the reporting activity. However, the Lead Partner **shall be monitoring different aspects of the network** (including activities, outputs, finances and budget) **on a regular basis**.

Also, **all Partners** (Lead or Project Partners) should monitor progress at local level: activities of their URBACT Local Group, progression of the local compulsory outputs for each call, etc.

### C.3.1. Monitoring Activities & Outputs

In the Application form, partners committed to deliver a work plan through activities and outputs. The Lead Partner is **responsible to ensure that this work plan is respected** and **need to monitor** that these activities, on transnational or local level are being organised and taking place according to the established calendar.

The Lead Partner should monitor the following:



If whilst monitoring the network, the Lead Partner notices that some minor updates or more important modifications are needed in terms of dates, content, number of meetings, etc. the URBACT Secretariat should be informed and any update shall be notified in the regular Progress Report. In case of major changes, a reprogramming will be necessary — see [Reprogramming procedure](#) below.



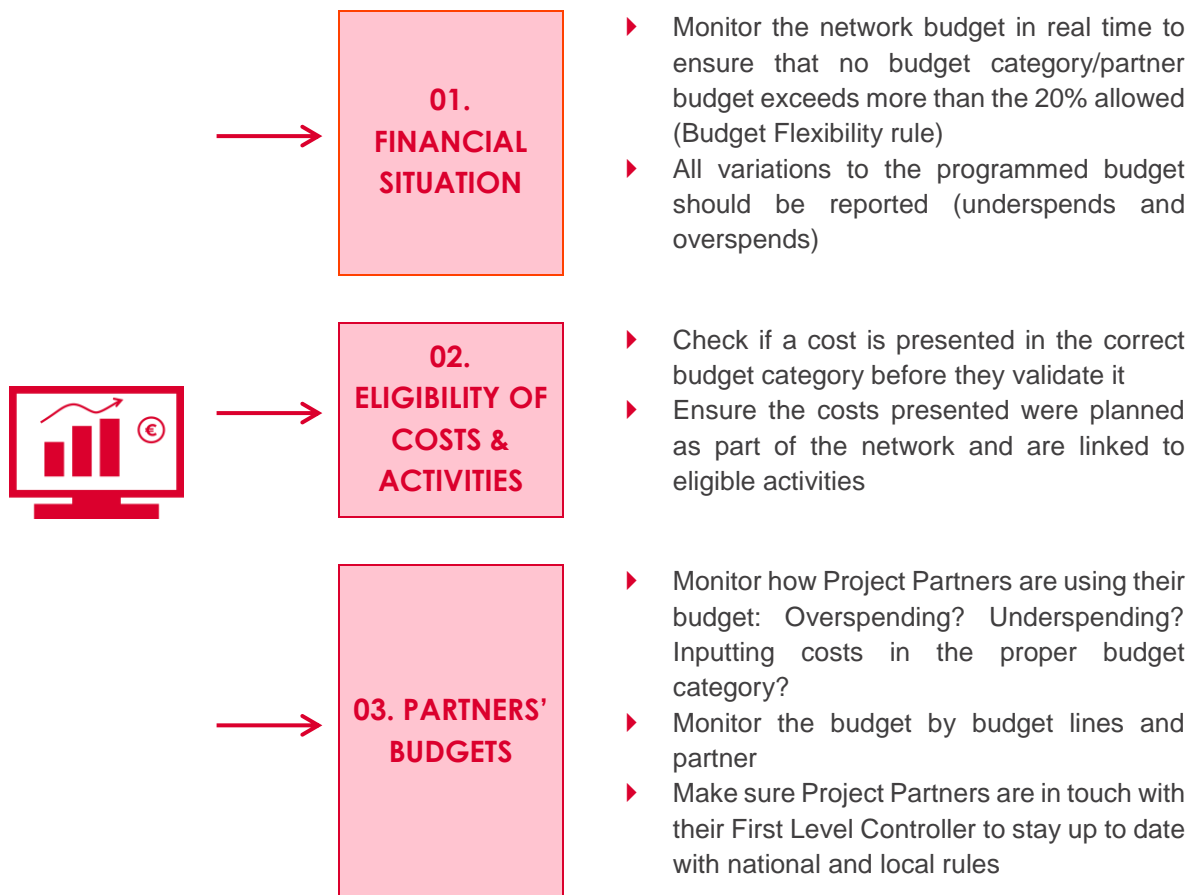
- > Do not create hundreds of outputs which are difficult and time consuming to follow up.
- > Fix outputs that can be measured and for which evidence can be easily provided
- > Be realistic with the numbers – you can always exceed your expectations!
- > Inform partners which outputs they will contribute to – transnational meetings/webinars, ULG meetings, dissemination events, etc.
- > Establish a procedure for partners to easily upload meeting information so you can keep records up to date – use a template document if it helps.
- > Follow your progress using a basic monitoring table so problems can be easily identified
- > Keep evidence – meeting agenda, attendance lists and minutes/reports are part of the evidence needed so make them systematically part of the data collection.

### C.3.2. Monitoring Finances & Budget

#### General principles

In the Application form, a network budget — which is the accumulation of the individual partner budgets — shall have been outlined. The Lead Partner is **responsible to ensure that this budget is respected** and needs to **monitor that the declared costs are linked to activities foreseen and are eligible according to the network budget**. The Lead Partner shall have at the same time information on all the partners’ individual budget progress and an overview of how this looks at network level.

The Lead Partner should monitor the following:



## Composition of the Network's budget

The budget is divided into 5 budget categories (*Staff Costs, Office & Administration Costs, Travel & Accommodation Costs, External Expertise & Services Costs and Equipment Expenditure*) and into budget lines for each partner.

Each network budget — made of the Lead Partner and Project Partners' individual budgets — is broken down as follows:

BUDGET CATEGORY	BUDGET LINES
<b>Staff Costs</b>	Lead/Project Partner Staff Costs
	<b>TOTAL STAFF COSTS</b>
<b>Office and Administration</b>	Lead/Project Partner Office and Administration
	<b>TOTAL OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATION</b>
<b>Travel and Accommodation</b>	Staff Travel and Accommodation
	<b>TOTAL TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION</b>
<b>External Expertise and Services</b>	Lead/Project Partner External Expertise Project Coordination
	Expertise Meeting Organisation
	Expertise Communication
	Expert and other non-staff Travel
	Expertise First Level Control
	<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL EXPERTISE AND SERVICES</b>
<b>Equipment</b>	Equipment
	<b>TOTAL EQUIPMENT</b>

 Detailed information about eligible costs is available in [Eligibility of expenditure per budget category](#).

## Budget Flexibility

### What it is in theory

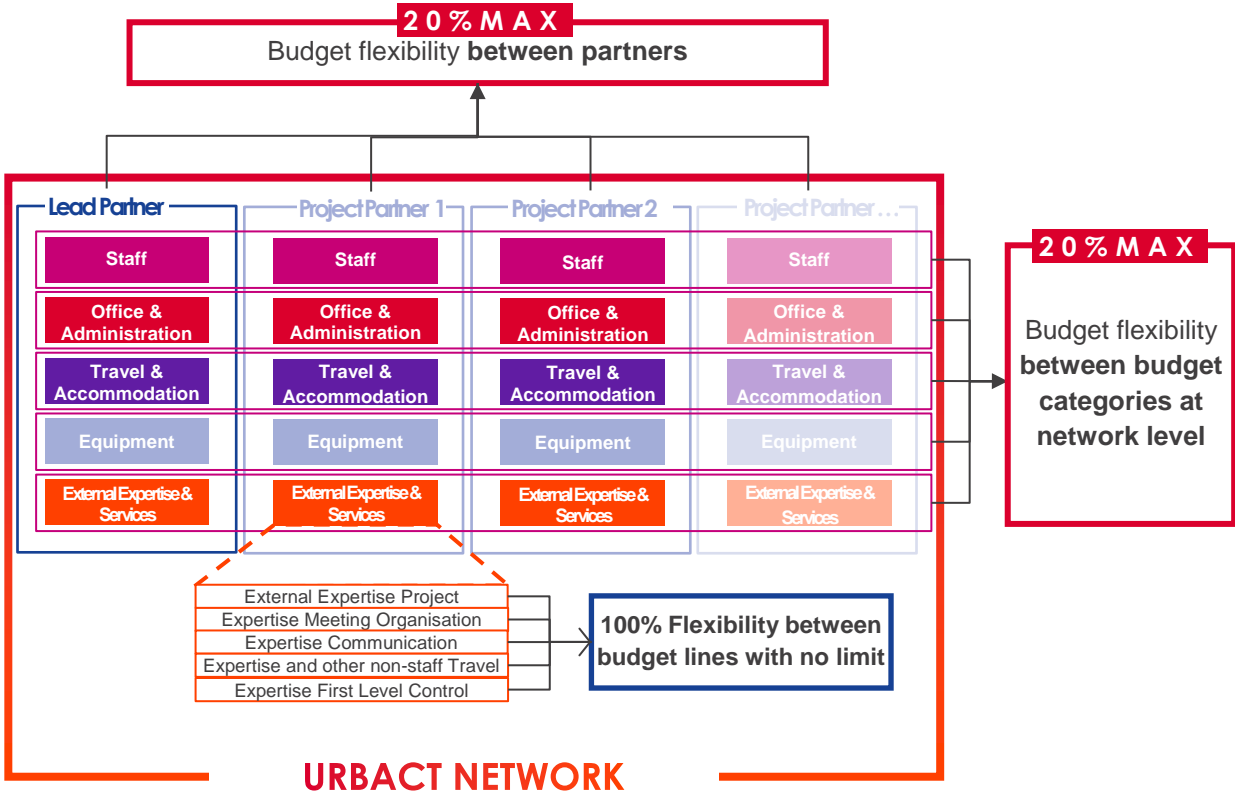
During the project life, there could be the need to be flexible with the project financial tables.

The budget flexibility rule allows the project to **spend the available budget with a flexibility of up to 20% of the amount approved for each budget category and each partner's budget**, whenever it is needed (not only once) as long as **the maximum amount of ERDF, Norwegian, Swiss, IPA, and NDICI funding awarded remains the same**.

Under the budget flexibility rule it is **impossible to make changes to the project total budget**.

### What it means in practice

Partners can move up to 20% of their approved budget allocation freely between partners' budgets and between budget categories at network level (i.e., Staff, Office & Administration, Travel & Accommodation, External Expertise & Services, Equipment) without approval from the URBACT Secretariat or formal reprogramming procedure.



This only affects the receiving partner's overall budget / receiving budget main category at network level, as it cannot be increased by more than 20% (compared to what was approved in the Application Form). However, underspends are not affected by this rule as Partners could underspend as much as they need in theory (*this is not recommended though as it might mean there is a problem here*).

### EXAMPLE



PP1 (with a budget of 50,000.00 EUR) is underspending, part of its budget will not be spent. PP2 (with a budget of 60,000.00 EUR) can spend more than its approved budget thanks to the underspend of PP1.

**HOWEVER**, PP2's spending can only be increased by 12,000.00 EUR (= 60,000.00 EUR x 20%).

**AND** at network level, if you are taking these 12,000.00 EUR from the same budget category in PP1's budget and in PP2's budget, there is no problem.

**BUT** if you move the 12,000.00 EUR to a different budget category in PP2's budget, you will have to make sure, at network level, that the increase in the receiving budget category is not exceeding the 20% allowed.

The **overall network total budget approved shall not increase.**

Budget deviations under the flexibility rule are not considered as network changes. These changes – if within the 20% Budget Flexibility rule — should be **reported to the URBACT Secretariat and detailed in the Progress Report.**

This 20% flexibility rule applies between main budget categories (e.g., expenditure can be spent freely within each partner's budget lines/sub-categories under the External Expertise and Services budget category) as long as the approved activities and outputs are delivered in accordance with the approved Application Form.

**It is the Lead Partner's responsibility to check if, at network level, deviations of their partners' budgets / budget categories are not exceeding the 20% allowed.** A simple way to check that is to use a spreadsheet with the approved network budget (by budget categories and by partners), add a column with the maximum amount allowed by the budget flexibility rule and another one with the real expenditure of your network.

**Only the Lead Partner can tell if their network budget is in line with the budget flexibility rule since they have an overview of it, should know the real budget and can compare it with the approved budget.**

If the Lead Partner thinks one of their partners' budget or one of the budget categories, at network level, will be higher by 20% than the approved budget, the reprogramming procedure shall be followed (see [Reprogramming Procedure](#) below).

### What it is not

- > **A way to increase your overall budget by 20%:** the overall budget cannot be increased with the budget flexibility rule.
- > **Budget flexibility between budget categories at partner level:** the 20% flexibility rule between budget categories does not apply to partners' budgets — it needs to be monitored at network level. Theoretically, the entire budget of one partner could be spent by another partner IF the increase of the receiving budget was not exceeding the 20% limit.


### C.3.3. Changes in the Project Implementation

#### Minor and Major changes

	Minor Changes	Major Changes
WHAT?	Do not have any impact on the Application Form or the Subsidy Contract.	Have a direct impact on the Application Form and usually on the contractual documents of your network too. Can be avoided through good planning and have to be otherwise <b>duly justified</b> .
WHEN?	Can happen anytime but the URBACT Secretariat needs to be informed: at any point and/or in any case in the next Progress Report. The URBACT Secretariat takes note and makes updates when relevant.	Need to be approved via a reprogramming process and may require an amendment to the Subsidy Contract. Enter in force only once approved by the Monitoring Committee.
EXAMPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in contact information if a member of one of the partners' team is changing,</li> <li>▪ Change in bank details,</li> <li>▪ Rescheduling of activities (calendar),</li> <li>▪ Minor budget deviation (within the 20% flexibility rule allowed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in the partnership,</li> <li>▪ Update of the work plan and/or list of expected outputs,</li> <li>▪ Changes between the budget categories in excess of the 20% flexibility rule,</li> <li>▪ Changes in the budget between partners in excess of the 20% flexibility rule.</li> </ul>

#### Change(s) in the partnership:

If a partner decides to leave the partnership, the Lead Partner shall request a **letter of decommitment** from the partner in question.

 For a letter of decommitment template, please contact the URBACT Secretariat.

The budget(s) of dropout partner(s) may remain available for the other partners provided that the 20% budget flexibility rule between partners and between budget categories is respected. Alternatively, the reprogramming procedure shall allow partners to redistribute the leftover budget(s), if duly justified.

The Lead Partner can replace the dropout partner if:

- > The change of partner(s) does not happen in the final months of the project — an appropriate period of adaptation and integration of the new partner is indeed necessary.
- > The rules set in the Terms of Reference are respected: new partner from the same EU region as the dropout partner and balance of cities throughout the partnership

If all these conditions are met, a **letter of commitment** from the new partner is needed.

## Reprogramming Procedure

All major output changes and budget deviations can be formalised using the reprogramming procedure, **once in a project's time duration, usually at mid-point.**

Partners will be able to amend their entire budget if needed to better suit their real network's activity / budget.

The Reprogramming process — for major changes — can be described as follows:

- 01** — The URBACT Secretariat **sets the procedure and deadlines for reprogramming** – by usually providing template documents.
- 02** — The Lead Partner submits a reprogramming request, using the template documents provided along with additional required documents (if applicable, letter of de-commitment, new letter of commitment, etc.).
- 03** — The URBACT Secretariat proceeds to **check the request** and ask for clarification if needed. The Secretariat then opens a reprogramming session and **makes the requested changes** directly in the Application Form in Synergie CTE.
- 04** — All reprogramming requests are reported into the Monitoring Committee dossier for the next Monitoring Committee meeting. The **Monitoring Committee takes an official decision.**
- 05** — Following this decision, Lead Partners shall receive an **official notification** and the **reprogrammed Application Form** shall be approved in Synergie CTE. The LP has then to **sign the reprogrammed Application Form** and send it to the URBACT Secretariat.
- 06** — The additional contractual documents should be amended, if applicable (amendment to Subsidy Contract and to Joint Convention).

The reprogramming will normally occur after the Mid-Term Reflection. Given the length of the procedure, it is possible to make only one reprogramming request during the life of the project.

Exceptionally, additional reprogramming sessions can be organised by the URBACT Secretariat if considered necessary before project closure.

Requests that do not meet the deadline or provide suitable information will not be considered.

Reprogramming requests are usually a formality, but they still need to all go through the entire process described below with final approval by the Monitoring Committee.

### TIPS FOR BENEFICIARIES



- > Prepare in advance by contacting all your partners with a short list of questions
- > Review all aspects of the network – dates, budget, outputs and report any changes
- > Take the opportunity of the midterm reflection to allow changes to partner budgets if needed
- > Prepare specific meetings with partners and be prepared to be firm with underperforming partners

## C.4. Closing an URBACT Network

### C.4.1. *General principles*

The main actions taking place at this stage are:

- > Finalising the agreements for the dissemination of results after the end of the project;

- > Ensuring that all partners are made aware in good time of what is expected by the end date of the project;
- > Drafting the final progress report about achievements and submitting it to the Programme;
- > Reporting all final costs for the project ensuring the approved budget is respected;
- > Completing transfer of funds.

### **C.4.2. The closure procedure**

When a project comes to an end, there are some important steps to be aware of in order to ensure a smooth close down for the project. Particularly, with regards to project closure, the Lead Partner shall submit the following documents within the fixed deadlines:

#### **Final Progress Report**

The final progress report is the same format as the interim progress reports generated in Synergie CTE. It should summarise all the completed activity and outline all the outputs produced. It should also be completed to highlight any important financial matter/problem and state the final amount of costs incurred and certified by the project.

#### **Final Payment Claim**

The final payment claim shall include all final certificates and statements of expenditure stating the amount of total eligible costs incurred for this final claim and shall request the ERDF amount to be refunded – this template shall be available in Synergie CTE.

#### **Final Certificates and Statements of Expenditure**

The final certificates and statements of expenditure shall be produced by each Lead/Project Partner's First Level Controller through Synergie CTE and shall include the total costs incurred by the Lead Partner/Project Partners. Once issued, they shall be sent to the Lead Partner for inclusion into the Final Payment Claim.

#### **The Closure Report**

A qualitative survey about each Lead/Project Partner's experience with URBACT shall normally be completed at project closure (questionnaire designed by the URBACT Secretariat). It is an opportunity to summarise the lessons learnt, the issues encountered in the network activities and management. This report will monitor Programme result indicators which need to be reported at Programme level to the European Commission and will help the Programme to improve its future activities.

#### **Network's final outputs**

The network's outputs as defined in the Application shall be submitted to the URBACT Secretariat during each reporting round and at the end for the final network results products. Lead Partners are requested to send the outputs in electronic version.

All of these documents shall be submitted to the URBACT Secretariat no later than 3 months after the project's official end date (indicated in the Application) or by the final date fixed by the programme if this differs.

#### TIPS FOR BENEFICIARIES



- > The LP shall ensure that partners provide the requested information early in the process and stay available until the very end of the network life; this will save a lot of time.
- > Partners shall submit “final” certificates and Lead Partner a “final” payment claim (and not interim like for the other reporting periods).
- > Make sure that FLC are involved in the closure process. Involve the FLC even for the clarification round.
- > Make sure well in advance that partners are aware of their obligations and available to answer questions from the URBACT Secretariat and the Certifying Authority.
- > If the team in one of the Municipality is getting dissolved, make sure to get the information about which person/service will take over as main contact in charge of the network's follow-up and closure.
- > In the progress report, justify not only the realisation of the outputs and deliverables but also the financial aspects, like the over-spending or under-spending. Information from partners shall be collected on an ongoing basis during the network life.

### C.5. Archiving, Record Keeping and Audit documents

All partners are obliged to retain for audit purposes all files, documents and data about the project on customary data storage media in a safe and orderly manner until at least 5 years after the final payment to the project. Other possibly longer statutory retention periods, as might be stated by national law, remain unaffected.

The following list gives an overview of the documents that should be available for financial control and audit purposes:

- > Approved Application form and updated versions;
- > Subsidy Contract and amendments;
- > Joint Convention and amendments;
- > Letters of Commitment;
- > Letters of De-commitment, if applicable
- > Relevant project correspondence (financial and contractual);
- > Progress Reports;
- > FLC certificates and statements of expenditure;
- > Project Payment Claims;
- > Bank account statements proving the reception and the transfer of EU funds;
- > Original invoices;
- > Bank account statements / proof of payment for each invoice;
- > Staff costs: calculation of hourly rates, information on actual annual working hours, labour contracts, payroll documents and time records of personnel working for the project (including timesheets when applicable);
- > List of subcontracts and copies of all contracts with external experts and/or service providers;
- > Calculation of office and administration costs;
- > Documents relating to public procurement, information and publicity (including the legal references);

- > Public procurement notes, terms of reference, offers/quotes, order form, contracts;
- > Proofs for delivery of services and goods (studies, brochures, newsletters, minutes of meetings, translated letters, participants' list, travel tickets and boarding cards, etc.);
- > Record of assets, physical availability of equipment items purchased in the context of the project control by on-the-spot check where appropriate.

It must be possible to clearly identify which expenditure has been allocated and reported in the context of the project and to exclude that expenditure is reported twice (in two different budget categories, reporting periods, projects/funding schemes). This clear identification is usually ensured through:

- > the opening of a specific bank account for the project payments and/or
- > the introduction of project specific cost-accounting codes to record project costs by budget category, component and payment date/reporting period in the accounting system and/or
- > recording costs in expenditure lists by budget category, component and reporting period and/or noting the allocation (project title, budget category and additional comments) on the invoices.
- > ensuring that all invoices/ contracts are clearly marked with the name of the project and the programme

### **Recommended record keeping system**

Based on the experience of previous URBACT networks, the following record keeping system based on 5 main sections is recommended — for both Lead Partners and Projects Partners as they can be audited at any moment in the lifetime of the project, by a variety of different bodies:



Paper and scanned versions of all the **signed originals** of **Application Form, Subsidy Contract, Joint Convention, Expertise forms, correspondence, public procurement contracts.**

**Useful guides** URBACT has developed

All electronic versions of **documents linked to the main activities of the network.**

**Organised around each work package** and should have information on: *transnational meetings (agenda, invitations, notes of the meetings, reports or other outputs, photos and attendance sheet), communication and dissemination activity at network level, brochures, newsletters, etc.*

**Copies of local partner meetings in electronic format including agenda, attendance sheet, meeting notes, promotional materials and presentations at local level.**

**Even if in local language.**

All relevant information on partners' budgets, follow up tables on the budget, documents related to the financial management system and ad hoc agreements with partners, information on FLC nominations and approval.

It is crucial to keep **good records of incurred expenditure.** We recommend that **each individual expense is stamped as 'paid'** and numbered in a plastic wallet with **all the supporting documents** (or notes as to where they can be found). Costs should be organised for each certificate produced to facilitate the work of the FLC and to help in avoiding double counting. **Once certified, costs should be stamped 'certified'. A proof of payment is always necessary.**

#### TIPS FOR BENEFICIARIES



- > All the LP team together shall be briefed on record keeping requirement
- > All partners shall be informed of these requirements – it is recommended to use the first meeting for setting out the ground rules – the URBACT Secretariat can support the LP in this process
- > Network codes shall be created in the LP/PP institutions' accounting system
- > A local server shall be created to file all URBACT network supporting documents
- > National rules on document retention shall be respected – they can be stricter than Programme rules
- > Documents can be scanned to save space – digital versions are acceptable for audit

## D. MANAGING COSTS AND REPORTING PROGRESS

This part shall provide the rules and procedures which must be followed by all approved URBACT IV networks concerning financial and reporting matters. It provides information about the eligibility of costs as well as programme requirements concerning the first level of controls and the reporting procedure.

It sets out the **key important points which all network Lead Partners and Project Partners** (including their First Level Controllers) **MUST be aware of**.

### D.1. Overview of the budget and budget categories

The budget must respect the format as established by the financial tables included in the official Application form, be clear and understandable, and be balanced (in terms of allocated funds towards budget categories and partners).



For more details on the recommended teams for the Lead Partners and Project Partners for an efficient and realistic management of activities, please refer to Book one. C. Lead Partner's recommended Team and Project Partner's recommended Team.

The Lead Partner is responsible for outlining the eligible programmed budget per partner in the Joint Convention. This should be in line with that approved in the final application form.

As seen previously, the budget shall be presented using the following **5 budget categories**:

<b>STAFF COSTS</b>	▶ Expenditure on staff members employed by the partner organisation, who are formally engaged to work on the project and listed in the Synergie CTE system.
<b>OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATION COSTS</b>	▶ Operating and administrative expenses of the partner organisation that support delivery of project activities – fixed at 15% of declared staff costs.
<b>TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION COSTS</b>	▶ Expenditure on travel and accommodation costs of staff of partner organisations that relate to delivery of the project. This category includes travel costs, accommodation costs, costs of meals, visa costs, and/or daily allowances/per diems.
<b>EXTERNAL EXPERTISE</b>	▶ Expenditure for external expertise and services provided by a public or private body or a natural person outside of the partner organisation. This category covers costs paid on the basis of contracts or written agreements and against invoices or requests for reimbursement to external experts and service providers that are requested to carry out certain tasks or activities, linked to the delivery of the project. All additional costs related from external

experts (e.g., travel and accommodation expense for external experts). This category also includes all costs linked to the organisation of meetings.

## EQUIPMENT

Expenditure for equipment purchased, rented or leased by a partner, necessary to achieve objectives of the project.

Each call for networks can have specific requirements as regards the activities to be financed under different budget lines.

A budget reallocation of up to 20% from a budget category to another or from one partner to another shall be possible. Such changes should be clearly documented and explained in the Progress Report even if they have no impact on the Subsidy Contract or the Application Form. A reallocation over 20% of the initial amount shall be possible only through a reprogramming procedure to be approved by the Monitoring Committee.



For more details on the budget flexibility rule and reprogramming, please refer to Book one. C. [Budget Flexibility and Changes in the Project Implementation.](#)

## D.2. Eligibility of expenditure per budget category

In the following sections a description of each budget category is provided. For each category, an explanation of the type of costs concerned by the given category together with some clarifications about the way to forecast, calculate and account the expenditure are also outlined.

The URBACT Secretariat would recommend following as closely as possible these indications in order to ensure a coherent and balanced budget in the project application.

### D.2.1. Staff costs

#### Definition

Staff costs cover costs of **staff members employed** by the partner organisations who are **directly working on the project**. Staff costs include salary payments and other costs directly linked to salary payments, and paid by the employer (such as employment taxes and social security, including pensions) in line with the employment/work contract or other documents.



**Costs for project management** (staff and external expertise combined) should not normally exceed **40% of the total project budget**.

All the staff employed by partners shall be clearly identified in the application form and/or as a contact within the partner team in a list held by the URBACT Secretariat.

#### Eligible costs summary

### STAFF COSTS

- Salary payments
- Employment taxes
- Sickness benefits\*

## STAFF COSTS

→	Maternity and equivalent paternity benefits*
→	Invalidity benefits
→	Old-age benefits*
→	Survivors' benefits
→	Benefits in respect of accident at work and occupational diseases
→	Death grants
→	Unemployment benefits
→	Pre-retirement benefits*
→	Family benefits*
→	Pensions
→	Relocation benefits
→	Bonus payments
→	Lunch vouchers
→	Holidays
→	Overtime (provided it is in conformity with the national legislation and the employment policy of the partner organisation, and it is actually paid to the staff member)

\* Costs falling into the scope of social security branches covered by Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

### General principles

- > Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- > Principles of **sound financial management** and **cost-efficiency** should be applied.
- > Staff costs must relate to activities which the partner organisation undertakes due to project implementation.
- > **Benefits** linked to salary payments are eligible if they are in line with the employment policy of the partner organisation; e.g., lunch vouchers, bonus payments, relocation benefits.  
**Holidays, sick leave** and **annual** and **maternity leave** as resulting from the employer's normal obligations are eligible. They form part of the gross employment cost.  
If the personnel employed by the Partner/Lead Partner institution works less than 100% on the project, a pro rata calculation must be made.
- > **Overtime** is eligible, provided it is in line with the national legislation and the employment policy of the partner organisation, and it is actually paid to the staff member.
- > Overheads and any other office and administrative costs, daily allowances and any other travel and accommodation costs cannot be included under this cost category.
- > Staff costs are recommended to be declared and refunded based on the method outlined below.

### Claiming Staff Costs

- > Staff costs cover real costs paid out based on a payslip or a document of equivalent probative value. Data from the organisation's accounting system may be accepted, in line with the controllers' professional judgement regarding reliability of the system.
- > The following costs are eligible components of staff costs:
  - salary payments fixed in the employment/work contract, an appointment decision or by law.
  - any other costs directly linked to the salary payments, incurred and paid by the employer, such as employment taxes and social security including pensions as long as they are fixed in the employment document,

they are in accordance with the legislation and standard practices in the country and/or organisation and they are not recoverable by the employer.

- > The salary payments must relate to responsibilities specified in a job description of the individual staff member concerned.
- > Staff costs must be calculated individually for each staff member.

## Options available

Based on Article 39 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059, the following section details the different options the partner organisation can experiment when claiming staff costs for URBACT:

- > 1. Person employed by the partner organisation, and working full-time on the project
- > 2. Person employed by the partner organisation, working partly on the project at a fixed percentage
- > 3. Person employed by the partner organisation on an hourly basis.

## Staff working full-time on the project

For **staff employed full time** on a project no registration of the working time is required. Separate project timesheets are not needed for staff working full-time on the project.

The total monthly gross employment cost (incl. employer's social contributions) can be claimed. An employee's 100% involvement in the project should be documented either in the employment contract and/ or in another official document issued by the employer.

## Staff working partly on the project at a fixed percentage

Staff costs related to individuals who work on part-time assignment on the operation may be calculated as a fixed percentage of the gross employment costs, in line with a fixed percentage of time worked on the operation per month, with **no obligation to establish a separate working time registration system**.

The staff costs of employees working part-time on the project must be calculated on a real costs basis using a fixed percentage of the gross employment cost (incl. employer's contributions) in accordance with article 55 (5) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060.

However, the employer shall issue a document for employees setting out that fixed percentage. In that case, a **mission letter or a document setting** out the fixed percentage worked on the project (employment contract or mission letter or equivalent) is required. It usually:

- is issued for the specific employee at the beginning of the period to which it applies
- is dated and signed by the employee and a line manager/ supervisor
- contains the percentage of time dedicated to the project per month and a description of the project-related role, responsibilities, and monthly tasks assigned to the employee in question and which provides sufficient evidence for the time allocation
- is reviewed (e.g., during the annual staff appraisal) and the percentage and/or description of tasks adjusted, if really needed (e.g., if the role, tasks and/or responsibilities of the employee change)

The percentage and/or description of tasks shall be reviewed on a regular basis (e.g. annually on the occasion of the staff appraisal) and adjusted if needed (e.g. due to changes in tasks and responsibilities). It is important to note that timesheets are not needed if the staff costs calculation is based on fixed percentage method.

## Staff working on the project on an hourly basis

For **all staff not employed full time** on a project working on an hourly basis, time must be recorded throughout the duration of the action (e.g., timesheets providing information on the number of hours spent per month on the project and covering all other activity to ensure that there is no double funding). The records should be certified at least once a month by the line manager of the staff claiming costs.

In this regard, the URBACT IV Programme offers to interested Partners timesheet templates which can be used to record the time worked by the staff working on the implementation of the project. It is important to note that timesheets are not needed for full time employees working on the project on an hourly basis.

The timesheet shall:

- > be filled in separately for each employee involved in the project;
- > contain information on a monthly basis about the total hours worked by the employee AND the hours worked specifically for the project;
- > state briefly the activities performed within the project (a template can be provided on request by the Joint Secretariat.);
- > in the case of part-time employment for the project: the timesheet must indicate activities performed outside the project (e.g., “*work for another EU financed project*”, “*statutory tasks*” etc.);
- > be signed by the employee and their supervisor.

For staff employed pursuant to point (d) of paragraph 1 of Article 39 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059, the hourly rate shall be multiplied by the number of hours actually worked on the project.

### Supporting documents required

The following documents must be available for control purposes:

- > employment document or any other equivalent legal agreement that permits the identification of the employment relationship with the partner’s organisation;
- > tasks description (task assignment) providing information on responsibilities related to the project (if not included in the document in the previous point or employment document (for part-time assignment using fixed percentage);
- > payslips or other documents of equivalent probative value;
- > proof of payment of salaries and the employer’s contribution;
- > time registration system. The time registration system must cover 100% of the actual working time of the individual.
- > timesheets, providing information on the number of hours spent per month on the project (not required when a person works on the project full-time or at a fixed percentage).

#### D.2.2. Office and Administration costs

##### Definition

Office and administrative costs cover **general office and administration expenditures** related to the project. This cover, for example, the maintenance of the office, stationery, postage, etc.

## Eligible costs summary

An all-inclusive list of cost elements covered under the office and administration category of costs is provided in Article 40 of the Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059. A summary table outlining costs which can be considered relevant for URBACT within the 15% flat rate is outlined below:

OFFICE & ADMINISTRATION COSTS
→ Office rent
→ Insurance and taxes related to the buildings where the staff is located and to the equipment of the office (such as fire or theft insurance)
→ Utilities (such as electricity, heating, water)
→ Office supplies
→ Accounting
→ Archives
→ Maintenance, cleaning and repairs
→ Security
→ IT systems
→ Communication (such as telephone, fax, internet, postal services, business cards)
→ Bank charges for opening and administering the account or accounts where the implementation of an operation requires a separate account to be opened
→ Charges for transnational financial transactions

## General principles

- > Office equipment, IT hardware and software, and furniture and fittings cannot be included under this cost category — the cost must be reported as equipment expenditure. This does not include IT system support of an administrative nature; the cost falls under the office and administration budget line.
- > External expertise and services purchased for the purpose of the project control and audit cannot be included under this budget line; they must be reported as external expertise and services costs.
- > For the URBACT Programme office and administration costs shall be reimbursed by the programme as a flat rate of 15% of staff costs for all networking projects.

Note: As regards the 30 Action Planning Networks approved in June 2023, the flat rate of 15% can be applied with the condition of updating the project budget table and amending the subsidy contract.

## Claiming Office and Administration costs

Office and administration costs shall be calculated as a flat rate of 15% of staff costs.

This flat rate calculation is made automatically in the Synergie CTE system based on the staff costs presented. No expenditure falling into this category shall be reported in the Synergie CTE system.

*Office and administration costs = 15% eligible staff costs*

The flat rate covers all office and administration costs, i.e., there is no distinction between direct and indirect costs. By applying the 15% flat rate option, partners do not need to document that the expenditure has been incurred and paid, or that the flat rate corresponds to the reality.

### D.2.3. Travel and Accommodation costs

#### Definition

Travel and accommodation costs cover **travel costs, accommodation costs, costs of meals, visa costs and daily allowances of staff of the partner organisation** that relate to the project's delivery.

The travel and accommodation costs are calculated:

- 1) as a flat rate of 15% of the partner's staff costs

**Note:** Note: As regards the 30 Action Planning Networks approved in June 2023, the flat rate of 15% can be applied with the condition of updating the project budget table and amending the subsidy contract.

2) or on a real cost basis, only when the flat rate is not an appropriate method for the partner for justified reasons (e.g., the budget obtained through the flat rate is not enough to cover all expected mandatory travels, as foreseen in the application and in the project activities, the project partner comes from an outermost or remote region or from one of the 7 EU candidate countries).

Each project partner will have to indicate their choice between options 1 and 2 in the application form. For the sake of simplification, project partners are asked to choose option 1 (flat rate). If a project partner chooses option 2 (real costs), they must justify why in the application form.

#### Eligible costs summary

TRAVEL & ACCOMMODATION COSTS	
→	tickets (travel tickets, flight tickets, etc.)
→	travel / car insurance
→	fuel
→	car mileage
→	toll
→	parking fees
→	cost of meals (if not covered differently, by daily allowances/per diem)
→	accommodation costs
→	visa costs
→	daily allowances/per diem (maximum rates may vary based on EU, national or local legislation)

*The above list is exhaustive and additional types of costs cannot be added to this list.*

#### General principles

- > Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- > **Travel and accommodation costs of staff** of the project partnership should be reported under this cost category.
- > Travel and accommodation costs must be **clearly linked to the project** and be **essential** for the effective delivery of the project activities. Travel and accommodation costs must be justified by activities carried out within the project; e.g., participation in project meetings, site visits, meetings with programme bodies, seminars, conferences, etc.

- > **All non-essential travel** should be avoided by for example using **digital communication** and **collaboration tools** and introducing **virtual meetings** and **web-conferences** where possible.
- > Direct payments by a staff member of the partner organisation must be supported by proof of reimbursement from the employers.
- > As for all other costs, the principles of **sound financial management** and **cost-efficiency** of the entire business trip should also be applied to the choice of transport and accommodation: the most economic considering financial and environmental costs should be used. However, this may not be the cheapest option, and in such cases, **the higher cost should be justified to demonstrate a lower environmental cost**. Partners should check rules applicable locally and nationally regarding use of other means of transportation such as taxi (as they need to be justified).



It is recommended to use least environmentally damaging means of transport (e.g., train rather than flight, green public transport vehicles over taxi/car etc.). In such cases, higher costs may be declared provided that the circumstances justifying this amount are documented in accordance with the above principles and in conformity with the national and/or sub-national legislation and the internal policy of the partner organisation.

- > Daily allowances can be eligible in accordance with national rules on daily allowances.
- > **Travel and accommodation costs for members of the URBACT Local Groups**, in case they are not employed by the partner organisation, cannot be included under this budget line; they must be reported as external expertise and services costs.
- > Travel and accommodation costs of external experts, natural persons (e.g., speakers, chairpersons, teachers, etc.) and service providers cannot be included under this budget line; they must be reported as external expertise and services costs.

### Claiming Travel and Accommodation Costs

- > Costs of travel and accommodation related to activities outside the Union may be eligible, according to article 37(1) of Regulation No 2021/1059 provided that it contributes to the objectives of the URBACT Programme.
- > Maximum daily rates for hotel and subsistence should be respected, in accordance with the national legislation and/ or internal policy of the partner organisation.
- > Travel and accommodation costs should be properly documented in line with the national legislation or internal policy of the partner organisation. In very exceptional cases national rules concerning missing/lost documents may be accepted.

### Supporting documents required

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

- > agenda or similar of the event;
- > participants list / signed attendance list (or similar evidence of participation);
- > proof that the travel actually took place (boarding passes or participant lists, etc.);
- > paid invoices (e.g., hotel invoice, travel ticket);
- > travel claim, covering daily allowance amounts;
- > proof or payment.

## D.2.4. External Expertise and Services costs

### Definition

External expertise and services costs cover expenditures paid by the partner organisation **for the support in the project implementation** provided by a public or private body, or a natural person outside of the partner organisation. These costs should be based on contracts or written agreements concluded with external experts and service providers, and paid based on invoices or equivalent requests for reimbursement.

### Eligible costs summary

According to Article 42 of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 Interreg Regulation, external expertise and services costs are limited to:

EXTERNAL EXPERTISE & SERVICES COSTS	
→	studies or surveys (such as evaluations, strategies, concept notes, design plans, handbooks)
→	training
→	translations
→	external researchers, external speakers
→	development, modifications and updates to IT systems and websites
→	promotion, communication, publicity, promotional items and activities
→	design, edit, print, distribution of project brochures, leaflets, publications, bags, etc.
→	publishing of promotion articles, inserts in newspapers, press releases, etc.
→	services related to the organisation and implementation of events or meetings (including rent, catering or interpretation)
→	participation in events (such as registration fees)
→	legal consultancy and notarial services,
→	technical expertise
→	intellectual property rights
→	control and audit of the project
→	external first level controllers
→	travel and accommodation for external ULG members, external experts, speakers, chairpersons of meetings and service providers
→	<b>financial management provided by external service providers*</b>
→	<b>project coordination by external service providers*</b>
→	<b>financial expertise*</b>
→	<b>accountancy services*</b>

*\* The costs in red should be taken into account — along with staff costs — for the calculation of the 40% allowed for management costs within the network budget.*

### General principles

- > Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- > As for all other costs, the principles of **sound financial management** and **cost-efficiency** of the entire business trip should also be applied to the choice of transport and accommodation: the most economic considering financial and environmental costs should

be used. However, this may not be the cheapest option, and in such cases, **the higher cost should be justified to demonstrate a lower environmental cost**. Partners should check rules applicable locally and nationally regarding use of other means of transportation such as taxi (as they need to be justified).



It is recommended to use least environmentally damaging means of transport (e.g., train rather than flight, green public transport vehicles over taxi/car etc.). In such cases, higher costs may be declared provided that the circumstances justifying this amount are documented in accordance with the above principles and in conformity with the national and/or sub-national legislation and the internal policy of the partner organisation.

- > The work by external experts and service providers must be essential to the project.
- > All costs are subject to **EU and MS public procurement rules**. Each partner organisation is responsible for **ensuring that EU, national, regional, programme thresholds and institutional rules are considered to determine the applicable public procurement procedure**, and that all contracts comply with the basic principles of **transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment**.



All contracts shall comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment as defined in the EC Treaty and the Commission Interpretative Communication on the Community law applicable to contract awards below the EU thresholds. Contracts shall not have a significant negative impact on the environment and be fully compatible with the 'Do No Significant Harm' principle.

- > No sub-contracting between project partners is allowed.
- > No contracting of employees of project partner organisations that are involved in the project as external experts, e.g., as freelancers, is allowed.
- > Costs incurred in-house can be reported under the External expertise and services cost category, provided there is an actual cash flow between the partner organisation and the in-house company. For affiliated companies (different legal entities from the partner organisation) the division should be even more clear<sup>9</sup>.

### Claiming Expertise and Services Costs

- > All additional costs related to external experts (e.g., travel and accommodation expenses for external experts) should be recorded under this budget line.
- > External expertise and services purchased for the purpose of the project control, audit, and communication should be included under this budget line.

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<sup>9</sup> To find out more, check out [the Commission Notice Guidance 2021/C121/01 on conflict of interest](#).

- > There are no fixed rates or ceilings established by the programme for budgeting and reporting external expertise costs. Normal market rates resulting from public procurement procedures apply.

### Supporting documents required

The following main documents must be available for control purposes:

- > evidence of the procurement process (announcement, selection, award) in line with the legal status/organisational/regional/national procurement rules/programme rules or the EU procurement rules depending on the amount of the contract and programme-specific rules;
- > a document / contract / written agreement laying down the services to be provided with a clear reference to the project — for experts paid on the basis of a daily fee, the daily rate together with the number of days contracted and the total amount of the contract must be provided.;
- > any changes to the contract must comply with the public procurement rules and must be documented;
- > an invoice or a request for reimbursement providing all relevant information in line with the applicable accounting rules;
- > outputs of the work of external experts or service deliverables;
- > proof of payment.

### D.2.5. Equipment costs

#### Definition

Equipment costs cover the eligible expenditure for expenditures paid by the partner organisation for **equipment purchased, rented or leased, necessary to achieve the objectives of the project**. This also includes costs of **equipment already in possession** by the partner organisation and **used to carry out project activities**. In the case of investment activities, 'equipment' covers costs of fixed investments in equipment, and costs of equipment that forms part of an investment in infrastructure.

In the context of the URBACT Programme, this category usually refers to **IT equipment** such as a computer, laptop or a printer necessary for project coordination and financial management purposes, or to **equipment linked to the implementation of Testing Actions (APN, TN, ITN) or Actions (AN)**.

Costs for equipment shall be moderate and clearly justified in the Application form. As the purchase of equipment cannot be a core element in an URBACT project, it should remain reasonable. Usually, the purchase of equipment for the project implementation cannot be made in the final months of the project.

#### Eligible costs summary

EQUIPMENT COSTS	
→	Office equipment
→	Computers
→	Monitors
→	Printers
→	Scanners
→	Digital projectors

## EQUIPMENT COSTS

- Digital/video cameras
- IT software
- Office furniture
- Fittings
- Exhibition equipment
- Equipment linked to the implementation of Testing Actions (APN, TN, ITN) and Actions (AN)

### General principles

- > Costs must be borne by the partner organisation.
- > Principles of sound financial management and cost-efficiency should be applied.
- > All costs are subject to EU and MS public procurement rules. EU, national, regional, programme thresholds and institutional rules have to be considered to determine the applicable public procurement procedure, and ensure that all contracts comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment.



All contracts shall comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment as defined in the EC Treaty and the [Commission Interpretative Communication on the Community law applicable to contract awards below the EU thresholds](#).

### Claiming Equipment Costs

- > Purchase cost of equipment purchased, rented or leased is eligible if it is used solely for the purpose of the project or the target group in line with objectives of the project and incurred and paid within the eligible period.
- > For equipment that has been purchased before the project approval but used solely for the project, or equipment purchased during the project lifetime or partially for the project, a pro-rata allocation of costs to the project (duration, degree of use) is eligible. This share has to be calculated according to a justified and equitable method in line with the legislation or general accounting policy of the partner organisation.
- > Depreciation applies if the economic lifetime of equipment exceeds the duration of the project (Article 67(2) 2021/1060). The cost must be calculated in accordance with the legislation and general accounting policy of the partner organisation.
- > Full purchase cost of equipment that is not depreciable (e.g., low-value asset) is eligible.
- > Purchase cost of second-hand equipment is eligible, provided the equipment complies with applicable norms and standards; its price does not exceed the generally accepted price on the market; it has the technical characteristics necessary for the operation.
- > In the case of fixed investments in equipment and when equipment forms part of an investment in infrastructure, the full cost of equipment as approved by the programme is eligible; i.e., no depreciation is eligible.
- > Provision of equipment as the in-kind contribution is eligible (Article 67(1) 2021/1060) if the value of the contribution does not exceed the generally accepted price on the market and it can be independently assessed and verified. However, some countries may establish in the national control guidelines that no in-kind contribution is eligible under this budget category.

## Supporting documents required

The following main documents must be available for control purposes

- > evidence of the procurement process (announcement, selection, award) in line with the legal status/organisational/regional/national procurement rules/programme rules or the EU procurement rules, depending on the amount of the contract and programme-specific rules;
- > any changes to the contract must comply with the applicable public procurement rules and must be documented;
- > an invoice or a request for reimbursement providing all relevant information, in line with the applicable accounting rules;
- > actual equipment and evidence of equipment purchased, rented or leased;
- > calculation scheme of depreciation, if applicable;
- > proof of payment.

### D.3. Draft budgets

The programme uses the draft budgets, as a simplified cost option with the intent to streamline administrative processes while maintaining accountability.

In line with Article 53 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, a draft budget is established on a case-by-case basis and agreed ex ante by the body selecting the operation, applicable when the total cost of the operation does not exceed EUR 200,000.

The draft budget methodology serves as a simplified cost-calculation tool tailored for URBACT pilot project and networks. The methodology can be adapted for each call, depending on the typology of project activities and estimated budget allocated to beneficiaries. The specific conditions will be mentioned in the related Terms of reference of each call and methodological guidelines provided to the beneficiaries by the Joint Secretariat.

The draft budget preparation process is designed to support efficient project planning while ensuring proper accountability.

Draft budgets are proposed by applicants, checked by the Joint Secretariat and validated by the Managing Authority. Draft budget proposals are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Value for Money: Demonstrates cost-effectiveness and efficiency in achieving project objectives.
- Alignment of the budget with staff contributions: the budget must reflect the respective roles and involvement of staff.
- Realistic Budgeting: The proposed budget should be practical and achievable given the planned activities.
- Relevance of Activities: Activities must directly support the project's goals and intended outputs.

### D.4. Other eligibility considerations

When Partners prepare their budget, it is important to take into account the eligibility rules for funded expenditure defined in:

- > Common Provisions Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 – Common Provisions
- > ETC Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059 — ETC
- > ERDF Regulation (EU) No 2021/1058 — European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund

- > Regulation (EU) No 2021/1529 — Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III)
- > The rules laid out in the URBACT IV Programme Manual and in other Programme documents
- > The Terms of Reference of each Call for Proposals
- > The URBACT IV Cooperation Programme
- > The relevant national control guidelines and internal rules of the Lead / Project Partner, starting from first EUR.

As a matter of principle, the strictest rules must always be applied.

#### **D.4.1. Eligibility period**

The start and end dates for the eligibility of expenditure is indicated in the Subsidy Contract signed between the Lead Partner and the Managing Authority.

##### **Project start date**

Project costs are eligible from the date of approval by the Monitoring Committee or the date fixed by the URBACT Secretariat as official start date recorded in the Application Form and Subsidy Contract.

##### **Project end date**

The project's eligibility period shall normally last until the end of the 3 months following the project end date indicated in the approved Application Form. During these 3 months the project shall undertake the administrative and financial closure and submit all the required final documents.

Project activities can be divided into two groups:

- > **activities related to the project implementation**

Such activities have to be completed between the official start date and end date of the project. It means that activities have to be started and finished before the project end date and costs related to these activities have to be contracted by the project closing date. The costs have to be paid and certified by the end of the 3-month closure period.

However, exceptionally and only after consultation with the URBACT Secretariat activities started before the project end date can be finished within the 3-month closing period (partners will have to justify why the activity could not be finished by the project end date).

Such activities have to be:

- contracted and started before the project end date and
- finished by the end of the 3-months closing period
- cost related to them has to be incurred (i.e., invoice issued), paid and certified by the end of the 3-month closing period.

**No new activity related to the project implementation can be started after the project end date, unless decided otherwise by decision of the Monitoring Committee and/or foreseen in and addendum to the subsidy contract.**

- > **activities related to project (financial and administrative) closure or communication of results.**

Attendance at activities organised at programme level (annual conference, thematic seminars etc.) within the closure period can be considered eligible with prior notification from the URBACT Secretariat. Other dissemination activities can also be carried out in the closure period.

Activities related to the project (financial and administrative) closure or communication of results can also be implemented in the 3-month period following the project closing date. Examples of these costs are: staff or expertise costs involved in the project closure (e.g., writing final reports), first level control costs, where necessary.

#### D.4.2. Public procurement

Whenever a project purchases services, goods, equipment, etc. externally, **public procurement rules must be adhered to**, including **European public procurement rules** as well as the **relevant national and internal rules** of the Partner/Lead Partner responsible for subcontracting. As the national rules result from a transposition of the EU directives on public procurement into national law, the rules may vary between the countries. As a matter of principle, the strictest rules must always be applied.

Each contract should be awarded based on objective criteria which ensure compliance with the fundamental principles of public procurement (transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment and effective competition). The procurement requirements below and above the thresholds mainly differ with regards to the set of formal procedures that a sub-contracting body has to go through (e.g., requirements for publication of the tender documents, minimum duration of the publication). Essentially, the main difference for public contracts of being below or above the threshold values will be the degree of publicity and formality of the tendering procedure. In certain cases, it may be necessary to publish the tender in national/ regional media or on an EU wide website, etc. As a general recommendation, a request for three offers ('bid-at-three') is considered good practice.

The applicable tendering procedure will vary depending on the contract value. **Due to the complexity of the public procurement rules, project partners are invited to work closely with their legal department to ensure compliance.**

In line with green and social public procurement principles, projects are encouraged to include relevant sustainability criteria in their tender documents, whenever relevant, according to the type of services being procured.

The **adherence to public procurement procedures should be well documented**. Documents such as public procurement note, terms of reference, offers/quotes, order form, contract have to be available for financial control and audit purposes. In the event of non-compliance with applicable public procurement rules, financial corrections of up to 100% of the costs may be applied by controllers or auditors.

In cases where procurement is below the EU threshold, each partner organisation is responsible for ensuring that all contracts comply with the basic principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment as defined in the EC Treaty and the Commission Interpretative Communication on the Community law applicable to contract awards not or not fully subject to the provisions of the Public Procurement Directives.



The following best practices should therefore be followed before, during and after concluding public procurement contracts:

- > **Advertising:** obligation to ensure adequate advertising (on the Internet, National Official Journals, local means of publication, Official Journal of the European Union, etc.), advertisement containing the essential details of the contract to be awarded and of the award methods.

> **Contract award:** impartiality of the procedures, principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment.

The URBACT Programme suggests to look for three quotes before accepting a public procurement offer.

### **D.4.3. Value Added Tax (VAT)**

In accordance with Regulation (EU) No 2021/1060 Article 64 (1) (c) i, VAT is eligible for projects the total cost of which is below EUR 5,000,000 (including VAT).

### **D.4.4. Financial Charges**

Charges for transnational financial transactions are eligible but interest on debt is not. Where the implementation of an operation requires a separate account to be opened, the bank charges for opening and administering the account shall also be eligible. The above costs are comprised in the budget category Office and Administration within the 15% flat rate. They are therefore eligible but not to be reported and claimed separately.

Fines, financial penalties and foreign exchange losses are not eligible according to Article 64 Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

### **D.4.5. In-kind contribution**

In kind contributions are regulated by Article 67(1) Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. Such contributions are rarely present with URBACT projects.

### **D.4.6. Revenue**

As a general principle and in the spirit of cooperation and exchange the URBACT programme expects project results (e.g., studies, policy recommendations, good practice guides) to be made freely available to the public. Following this principle and due to the nature of the activities carried out, URBACT projects are not expected to generate revenues.

If a project generates revenue for example through services, conference participation fees, sales of brochures or books, it must be deducted from eligible costs in full or pro-rata depending on whether it was generated entirely or only partly by the co-financed operation. The ERDF funding is calculated on the basis of the total cost after deduction of the revenue.

When relevant, revenue shall be reported in the Synergie CTE system for each project partner, providing details of the amounts and the explanation of the source.

### **D.4.7. Expenditure already supported by other EU, national or regional subsidies**

All costs are eligible if no other EU funds have contributed towards the financing of the same expenditure item; i.e., **no double-funding is permissible** (Article 63(9) 2021/1060).

If an item of expenditure is already fully supported by another EU, national or regional subsidy, it is not considered eligible.

#### **D.4.8. Carbon Offsetting actions and other environmental considerations**

URBACT will undertake actions throughout the Programme lifecycle to avoid, or reduce, the environmentally harmful effects of interventions and ensure beneficial social, environmental and climate results through:

- > directing investments towards the most resource-efficient and sustainable options;
- > avoiding investments that may have a significant negative environmental or climate impact, and supporting actions to mitigate any remaining impacts;
- > including environmental clauses when tendering for services;
- > avoiding non-essential travel and using digital tools for meetings.

The URBACT Programme will also allow networks to carry out carbon offsetting actions. A **maximum budget of 10,000€ per approved network can be dedicated to carbon offsetting measures**. This figure has been calculated using average figures for an URBACT network and it is fixed at programme level. Networks do not need to calculate themselves their carbon footprint.

The allocation of 10,000€ maximum can be managed at network level by the Lead Partner or at local level by individual partners. The use of this budget should be agreed with all partners.

Such measures may include (non-exhaustive list of examples):

- > awareness raising events in the local community
- > educational activities with target groups (young, old, minority groups)
- > tree planting initiatives
- > carbon literacy training
- > community projects focusing on reducing carbon emissions, etc.

#### **D.4.9. Financing activities outside the Programme area**

The URBACT Programme area covers all EU Member States, the Partner States Norway and Switzerland, IPA countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia), and NDICI countries (Ukraine and Moldova). In principle, **all network activities should take place within this programme area**. If the project involves a partner from a country outside the programme area, project activities may also take place in this third country partner's territory.

If a project plans to finance activities or events outside the programme area (unrelated to the participation of the third-country partner), this is possible in justified cases. **If activities (including travel) or events are planned outside the programme area**, the following conditions need to be fulfilled:

- > the activity and/or event are **for the benefit of all partners, contributing to the objective(s) of the network**
- > the implementation and/or the relevance of the activity or the event have been **approved by the Programme**.

From experience, the most common activities outside the programme area will involve participation in conferences or events outside the EU, IPA<sup>10</sup> countries covered by the URBACT Programme according to the last version of the Cooperation Programme document approved by the EC, Norway, or Switzerland. If project partners wish to participate in such events, an **approval by the URBACT Secretariat is necessary**. Such activities should preferably already be planned and justified in the Application form.

IPA and NDICI countries participating in URBACT are considered as within the URBACT Programme area, and in consequence no approval for travelling to these territories is needed.

#### **D.4.10. Ineligible costs**

The list includes examples of costs that are not eligible in European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. This is not an exhaustive list.

Ineligible expenditure according to Article 38, [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/1059](#):

- > Fines, financial penalties and expenditure on legal disputes and litigation.
- > Costs of gifts.
- > Costs related to fluctuation of foreign exchange currency.

Ineligible expenditure according to Article 64, [Regulation \(EU\) No 2021/1060](#):

- > Interest on debt.

Other ineligible expenditure:

- > Charges for national financial transactions.
- > Consultant fees between partners for services and work carried out within the project.
- > Contracting of employees of the partner organisations as external experts, e.g., as freelancers.
- > Advance payments not foreseen in the contract and/or not supported with an invoice or another document of probative value. Advance payments may only be accepted if they are supported by an invoice or another document of probative value and if they are in line with the standard practices applied in the partner organisation. The corresponding activity must have taken place (and have been verified by the controller) by the end date of the project at the latest.

### **D.5. Accounting expenditure**

#### **D.5.1. Accounting in Synergie CTE**

All expenditure must be accounted in the Synergie CTE electronic monitoring system.

Each Project Partner, Lead Partner and First Level Controller shall be provided with a personal login and password to have access to the system.

Every Project and Lead Partners can declare in Synergie CTE **ONLY** their incurred expenditure. The Lead Partner cannot account in Synergie CTE the expenditure paid by other partners.

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<sup>10</sup> Except where otherwise noted, Programme rules apply to ERDF and IPA/ NDICI partners and must be obeyed.

## General principles

All expenditure entered into Synergie CTE must have been paid for project activities and be supported by all the required documents. In particular, expenditure can only be accounted in Synergie CTE if the following principles are fulfilled:

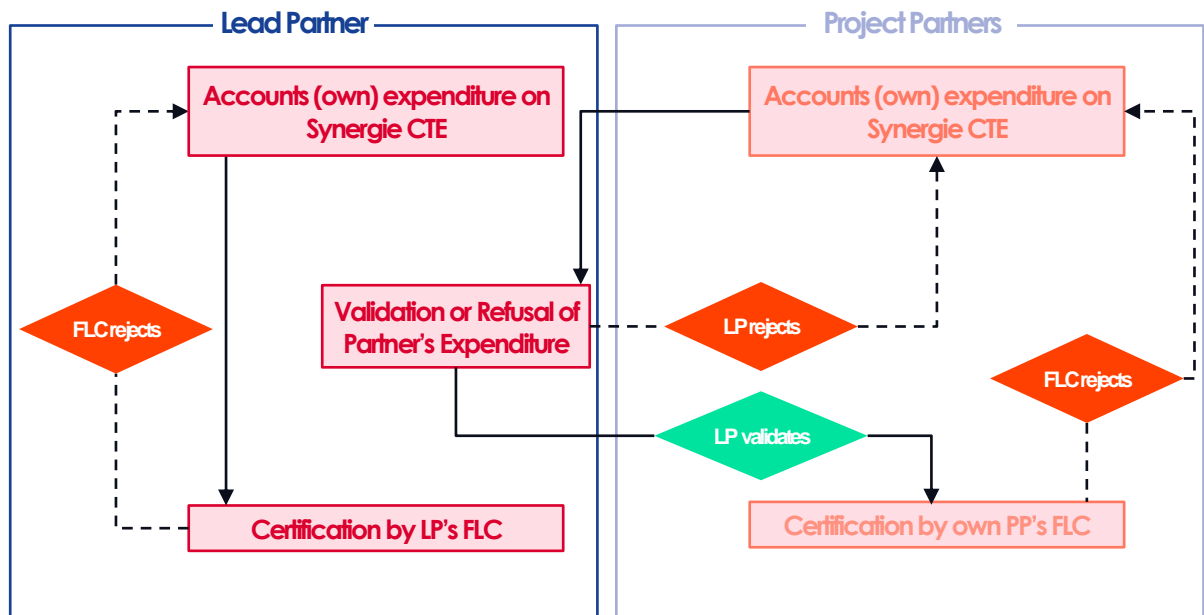
- > The calculation is based on actual costs or flat rates were applicable;
- > The costs are definitely borne by the Partner/Lead Partner's body and would not have arisen without the project;
- > The expenditure has actually been paid out. Expenditure is considered to be paid when amount is debited from the Lead/Project Partner's institution's bank account. The payment is usually proven by the bank statements. Special attention should be made to internal recharges which need to respect particular rules. The date when the invoice was issued, recorded or booked in the accounting system does not count as payment date;
- > The expenditure is directly linked to the project.
- > It must be possible to clearly identify which expenditure has been allocated to and reported by the project and to ensure that expenditure is not reported twice (in two different cost categories, reporting periods, projects/funding schemes). This clear identification is ensured through a separate accounting system or an adequate accounting code for all expenditure relating to the project.

## Accounting process

**The accounting process in Synergie CTE can be done at any time regardless of the reporting period deadlines.**

Nevertheless, the certificate and statement of expenditure of each reporting period shall consider only the expenditure actually paid by the end of the reporting period concerned, except for the final reporting in which the expenditure can be paid after the project end date during the 3-month closing period.


- 01** — When new expenditure has been entered in Synergie CTE, the Partner shall validate the operation.
- 02** — After the validation, the Partner shall inform the Lead Partner about it and ask for a validation from them.
- 03** — The Lead Partner shall check the new expenditure to ensure it is foreseen in the project application before giving its validation. This validation should be done within a reasonable timeframe and in no circumstances take more than 5 working days. The role of the Lead Partner is crucial here in order to ensure a smooth flow for the certification of expenditure, in particular for countries not using the Euro (see below). In case the deadline for Lead Partner validation is not respected, the URBACT Secretariat can intervene. The Lead Partner has the right to request additional information or to ask for some corrections.
- 04** — After the validation by the Lead Partner, the expenditure is available for certification by the Partner's first level controller.



### D.5.2. The use of the Euro

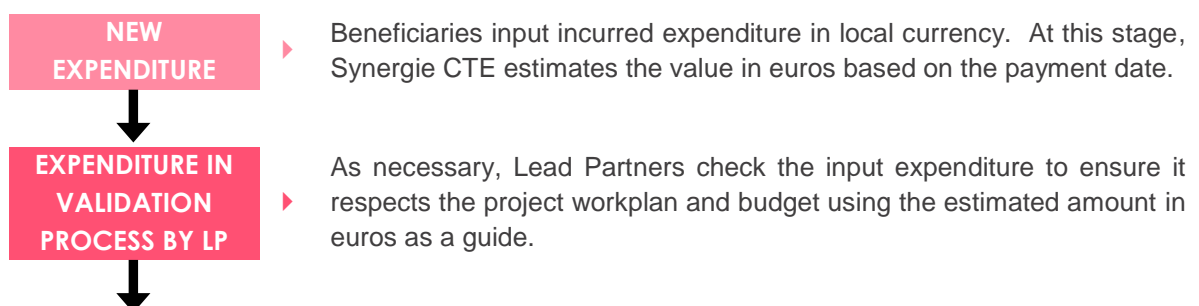
**All financial reporting and project follow-up will be in euros.** Expenditure must be reported to the URBACT Secretariat in euros and the programme will pay all ERDF in euros.

In accordance with Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059 Article 38 (5), expenditure paid in another currency will have to be converted into euros by the partners from countries which have not adopted the Euro as their currency. In these cases, the online monitoring system will automatically apply the exchange rate of the European Commission which is applicable in the month the partner report is submitted for verification to the controller in Synergie CTE.

 The monthly exchange rates of the Commission are published on: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelines-tenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-infoeuro\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/procedures-guidelines-tenders/information-contractors-and-beneficiaries/exchange-rate-infoeuro_en)

**The conversion shall be verified by the First Level Controller** in the Member/Partner State where the beneficiary is located.

#### Process in Synergie CTE





The expenditure is now available for the FLC to certify based on the electronic submission. The amount in euros seen in this status remains the estimated amount. It is not possible to upload supporting documents in Synergie CTE so the controller should arrange with the partner how these documents will be checked (paper submission, on the spot check, electronic data transfer etc).

▶ When the supporting documents are received by controller the costs can be moved to the next category called “**Expenditure Ready for Certification**”.

**This stage does not constitute certification of costs: it is a technical step to determine the date to be used to apply the official exchange rate. By transferring these costs into this category, the official exchange rate to be used for the costs is applied according to the date on which the FLC makes this transfer. Therefore, this stage is critical in fixing the official exchange rate to be applied.**

▶ The FLC can now proceed to certify the costs. At this stage costs can be certified in full or in part according to the eligibility rules and the supporting documents provided.

It is the responsibility of **each FLC to agree the definition of the date of submission**. The date of submission can be considered as the date of the electronic submission or the date when the paper version of the supporting documents (invoices, proofs of payment) is received. The definition of the date to apply is likely to vary from one partner to another partner. The First Level Controller will be responsible for switching the category during the month of the submission, according to this definition. In case of holidays or other engagements, the URBACT Secretariat can intervene.

In case of correction, the FLC must also decide which date of submission shall apply, as defined above.

This procedure requires that **Lead Partners react quickly** when validating costs so Project Partners are reminded of the importance of informing the Lead Partner when their costs are ready for validation.

There is also need for **clear communication channels between PP and FLC** particularly when these are at national level. It is recommended that PP contact their FLC to fix a date which is mutually acceptable for the documents to be sent. This will help to avoid problems in transferring the costs from “available for FLC” to “Ready for certification” which will apply the official exchange rate.

## D.6. Certifying expenditure

Before submission to the URBACT Secretariat, **each Certificate and statement of expenditure** must be **verified** and **signed** by the **independent First Level Controller**. For this purpose, Project Partners and Lead Partners have to follow national specific control requirements set up by each participating country.

### D.6.1. *Designation of a First Level Controller*

It is the responsibility of each EU Member State, IPA country, NDICI country (Ukraine and Moldova), Norway and Switzerland to designate the controllers responsible for verifying that the expenditure declared by each partner participating in a project complies with the applicable law and the programme rules and that the funded products and services were delivered and paid.

The main principle is that the controllers must be **independent** and **qualified to carry out the control of project expenditure**. In order to be considered independent, the controllers must fulfil certain criteria. An internal controller, if authorised by the EU Member State, IPA country, NDICI country (Ukraine and Moldova), Norway or Switzerland, must belong to a unit which is organisationally separated from the units dealing with project activities and finances. An external controller can only be considered independent if there are no other contractual relationships with the project or partner organisation that could lead to a conflict of interest.

### D.6.2. First Level Control Systems

In principle there are four general models:

- > centralised control at national level through a public administrative body;
- > centralised control at national level through a private audit firm;
- > decentralised control through first level controllers selected by the Project Partner/Lead Partner from a central shortlist and approved at national level;
- > decentralised control through internal or external first level controllers proposed by the Project Partner/Lead Partner and approved at national level.

#### In a decentralised control system

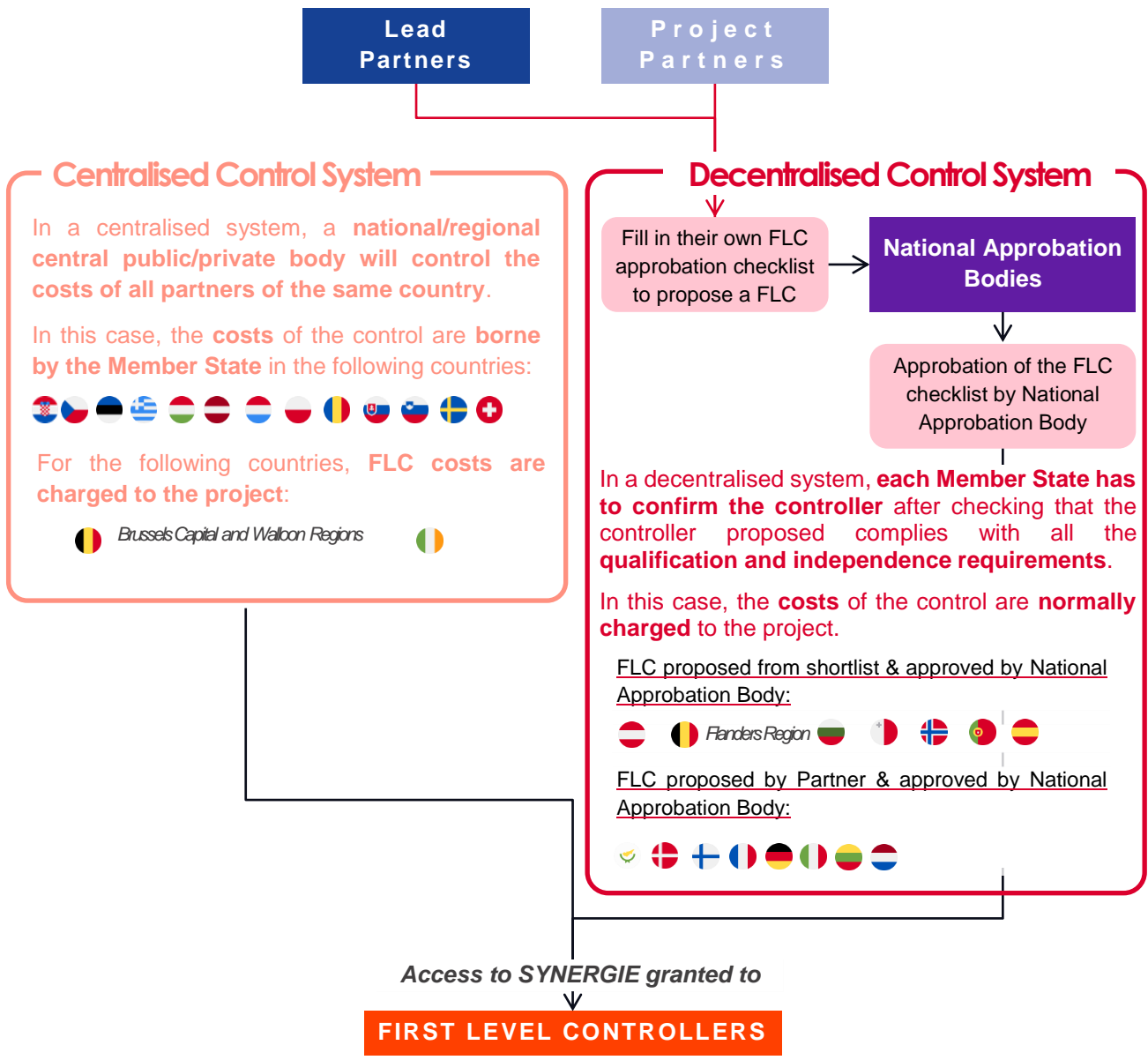
Once projects are approved by the Monitoring Committee, **the Lead Partner and Project Partners shall indicate the First Level Controllers** they propose in the appropriate section in **Synergie CTE** — using the checklist established in Synergie CTE (some countries may require additional documentation).

The proposed first level controllers must then **be approved by the National approbation bodies** concerned following the procedures outlined in the description of the control system set up according to Article 46 (3) (4) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059.

#### In a centralised control system

The States concerned shall indicate the responsible body at national level for the implementation of the First Level Control, according to Article 46 (3) (4) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059.

Lead Partners and Projects Partners of such countries will not have to do anything in this matter, **First Level Controllers will be added by the URBACT Secretariat** in Synergie CTE.



In IPA and NDICI countries the first level control is organized at National Level with Centralized Control systems performed by a public administrative body.

**!** **Control costs may be considered as eligible costs** (internal independent control should be included under the budget category 'staff'; external independent control in the budget category 'external expertise and services'). It is therefore advised to **foresee a budget for these controls** depending on the control arrangement applicable in the relevant Member State for each of the Project Partners.

**D.6.3. Role of the First Level Controllers**

**Main tasks**

The First Level Controller' tasks are to verify that:

- > the costs are eligible;
- > the conditions of the Cooperation Programme, the approved Application, the Subsidy Contract and Joint Convention have been observed and followed;
- > the invoices and payments are correctly recorded and sufficiently justified by supporting documents;
- > the related activities have actually taken place;
- > the national and EU rules have been respected, especially with regards to information and publicity, public procurement, and horizontal principles of gender equality, non-discrimination and sustainable development.

### Administrative checks and on-the-spot checks

Due to the specific nature of the activities under URBACT (meetings, study visits, brochures, guidebooks), where investment even on a small scale is not eligible, **evidence of the delivery of services, goods and works can often be obtained through administrative checks** (through checking meeting agenda, travel documents such as boarding passes, participants' lists, the existence of brochures) and on-the-spot checks would not provide any additional insight.

**If administrative checks do not allow obtaining sufficient evidence, on-the-spot checks** are required. Such checks will have to be carried out taking into consideration guidance from the European Commission on this matter. First Level Controllers who will be assigned or approved by the Member States will conduct these on-the-spot checks at partner level following a methodology that they will develop.

They shall be **recorded at Programme level** (URBACT Secretariat) via the checklist in annex to the certificates and statements of expenditure where the First Level Controllers need to report them. They will also need to be communicated to the URBACT Secretariat with the Reporting Package.

Administrative and on-the-spot verifications **may be performed remotely**, may that be considered acceptable by the FLC and/or by the national control authorities, for every claimed expenditure, copies of invoices or other probative value documents are allowed, provided these are properly filed and that adequate audit trail requirements are respected or equivalent appropriate alternatives of audit trail can be provided.



In case the verification of hard copies is required and it is not possible to be performed as usual, **the verifications can be carried out on electronic copies** (e.g., scans of originals) sent via email or shared virtually.

To justify delivery of activities and outputs, these can include photo documentation (e.g., for the verification of equipment, compliance with publicity/communication rules, existence of deliverables/publications etc.) or screenshots (e.g., for the verification of the accounting system, cost centre code, etc.).

#### D.6.4. Certification process

The first level control on the expenditure shall be done at the **level of each Partner**.

The First Level Controller of each Partner can certify only the expenditure that has been checked to be in line with the project application and validated by the Lead Partner. **The certification of the expenditure shall be carried out using Synergie CTE** respecting the fixed deadline for each reporting period.

The expenditure must be certified only by the First Level Controller officially designated and approved by the competent national authority (according to Article 46 (3) (4) of Regulation (EU) No 2021/1059).

The Partners/Lead Partner's First Level Controller has to **check the eligibility of the expenditure** — by filling in a **checklist in annex to the certificate** and statement of expenditure, using the official model available in Synergie CTE — taking into consideration:

- > the accounting system,
- > the compliance with the project budget,
- > the eligibility rules,
- > the internal control system,
- > the respect of national and EU rules especially with regards to information and publicity, public procurement, equal opportunities and protection of environment.

The **certificates and statements of expenditure** and related checklist produced by the Partner's First Level Controllers through Synergie CTE **should be sent** by email also to the Lead Partner.

The **Lead Partner's First Level Controller** shall also produce a certificate and statement of expenditure (including only the expenditure incurred by the Lead Partner).

## D.7. Project Reporting

### D.7.1. Reporting Requirements

According to the Subsidy Contract concluded between the Lead Partner and the Managing Authority, one of the **Lead Partner's obligations is to regularly report on the progress of the project**. The reporting to the URBACT Secretariat is carried out through Progress Reports to be submitted **on an annual basis**.

Approved projects will be required to report officially on their project activity based on a schedule determined for each call for proposals.

Exceptionally, the deadline can be extended by the URBACT Secretariat, especially at the beginning or at the end of the project should this be considered appropriate to simplify the reporting periods and avoid excessive reporting. Lead Partner and First Level Controllers will be informed of such changes in a timely manner.

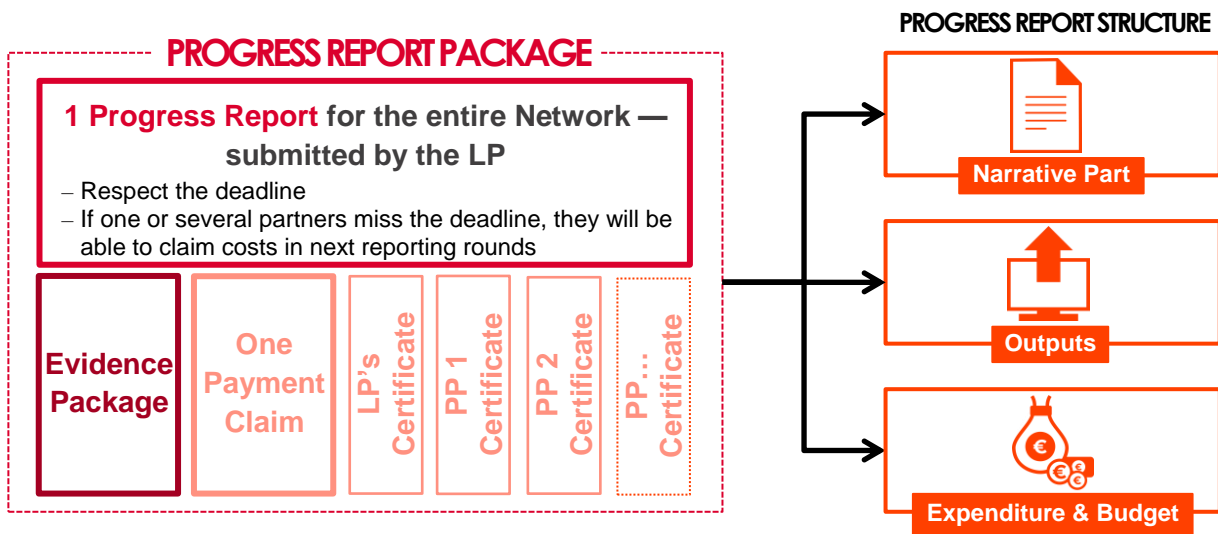
Reporting should be well organised and should not be managed at the last minute.

In order to have the ERDF refunded in a due time, the Lead Partner shall produce and submit the below-mentioned documents and reports **within the fixed deadlines** and **using the format established by the Secretariat**. If a document is submitted in a different format (word, excel, etc) than the one established by the Programme, the Lead Partner is obliged to re-submit the Progress Report in the correct format.

Any infraction in terms of timing and format used for the submission of the Progress Reports and/or an incomplete Reporting package shall represent a source of delay in the refunding procedures.

### D.7.2. Reporting Package

For each period, the documents to be submitted are usually (in chronological order of completion): **one FLC certificate per partner, one Payment Claim, one Evidence package and one Progress Report per network**.



Reporting documents must be produced through Synergie CTE — other formats shall not be accepted. The compulsory documents to be submitted for each reporting round include:

### One Certificate per partner

In order to be certified, the costs entered on Synergie CTE by the Project Partners must be first validated by the Lead Partner. Then they will be certified by their FLC who can then produce a certificate.

All partners' certificates should then be sent along with the Payment Claim and Progress Report.

Even though it can happen that not all the partners produce their certificate on time or they prefer to produce one certificate for the entire network life, **all Partners are instructed to declare their costs regularly** otherwise the Lead Partner cannot correctly monitor their budget.

### TIPS FOR BENEFICIARIES



**Setting an internal deadline to gather all certificates is crucial.** Depending on the control system of your partners, more time will be needed to get the expenditure approved. There is only one Reporting deadline per year so if one of your partners misses it, they will have to wait for the next deadline, the following year.

**Pay special attention to centralised control systems as well as to countries which have FLC specificities** (e.g., countries with a two-step process where the FLC has to certify the expenditures and validate the certificate and the national body has also to validate this before it can be included in the claim).

## One Payment Claim per Network

It is up to the **Lead Partner to produce the Payment Claim** which aggregates all the submitted certificates. The production of the Payment Claim is only possible after the production of certificates by the Lead Partner and Projects Partners.

The Payment Claim should be completed and signed by the Lead Partner. A scan/electronic version with electronic signature should be sent to the URBACT Secretariat.

## One Progress Report per Network

**The Lead Partner has to coordinate the reporting of their network.** The ERDF refund that occurs is directly linked to this reporting. As a result, the Lead Partner shall also submit a Progress Report with each Payment Claim. **Project Partners do not have to submit individual Progress Reports:** the Progress Report submitted by the Lead Partner in Synergie CTE is for the entire network.

The LP is also responsible for coordinating the submission of the Progress Report (PR). The LP alone is not able to fill in exhaustively the Report. They should collect the information from their partners during meetings or elaborate a template and circulate it to partners in advance.

The Progress Report is composed of:

- > **Activity part:** related to activities implemented in the concerned period, involvement of the partners, problems encountered, solutions envisaged, results and delays. This part shall be coherent with the activities, the objectives, results and timeline schedule described in the application form. If not, related motivations for eventual deviation and envisaged activities to catch up with the delays shall be provided.
- > **Financial part:** related to the expenditure occurred during the concerned period, per budget lines, work packages and project partner. The financial part also includes the cumulative amounts of the expenditure declared with previous PR and the remaining budget.

The Progress Report is co-signed by the Lead Partner and the Lead Partner's FLC, scanned and sent to the URBACT Secretariat. **No hard copies of the Progress Report, Payment Claim and FLC Certificates need to be sent by post.**

### TIPS FOR BENEFICIARIES



- > It is strongly recommended to **collect progress at partner's level on a regular basis** instead of asking them to send information only for the reporting period concerned. Indeed, partners might forget things after such a long time and it might cause some problems in the follow-up of network's activities. This recommendation also applies for the LP.
- > Once the Lead Partner has all the documents signed and scanned, the LP shall prepare a package to be **sent electronically** to the URBACT Secretariat.

## One Evidence Package per Network

Along with the mandatory reporting documents mentioned above, Lead Partners are asked to send **relevant documents related to the activities described**, for example: agenda and attendance sheets from meetings, list of attendance, minutes/reports, blogs or other outputs from the period concerned.

The Evidence Package should be **organised by Work Package and by Partners**, using a **clear and structured system**, and all evidence of the concerned period should be uploaded.

Lead Partners are asked to gather the evidence and upload it to the **cloud-based system** of their choice to facilitate sharing within their network and with the URBACT Secretariat.

### **D.7.3. Reporting Procedure**

Once submitted, the URBACT Secretariat will proceed with the **review of reporting documents** and prepare the **request for payment**.

The URBACT Secretariat will at the same time review the description of realised activities and check the claimed costs to ensure they are in line with the Programme rules. Partners will be asked to provide evidence of the declared outputs as well as electronic copies of network products.

During this procedure, **all Partners might be asked to provide further details or clarification on some points. Lead and Project Partners shall therefore remain available** during this time, so that pending issues don't stay unanswered for too long. Answers must be provided by each Partners' FLC as they will be best placed to confirm the financial and eligibility questions we have.

Once everything is cleared, the URBACT Secretariat will proceed to payment.

## **D.8. ERDF/IPA/NDICI/Norwegian/Swiss Refunding**

The Lead Partner shall open a separate bank account or set up an accounting code to which the Programme will transfer the co-financing and from which the Project Partners will be reimbursed. This will ensure that project funds are explicitly separated from the Lead Partner's general budget and can be clearly identified, as well as properly monitored and managed.

All Project Partners should also set up a separate bank account or accounting code to ensure that all incurred expenditure is easily traceable and to receive refunds from the Lead Partner.

### **D.8.1. Network ERDF intervention rates**

The average ERDF co-financing rate of a project is calculated on the basis of the different co-financing rates for the single partners, depending on the type of eligible region they are belonging to (More Developed, Transition or Less Developed regions). The applicable ERDF co-financing rates may vary over time under URBACT IV; refer to the Terms of Reference for each call for proposals.



**The ERDF co-financing rate is automatically taken into account by Synergie CTE. Therefore, there is no need to proportionally reduce costs when entered into the system.**

### **D.8.2. ERDF Refunding to Lead Partner**

Each reporting period will be treated by the URBACT Secretariat and will be paid based on the real costs incurred and certified by each partner using their approved intervention rate. Based on this information the URBACT Secretariat will calculate the amount of ERDF due to the project.

Once the transfer has been made, the Lead Partner is required to input this information into the Synergie CTE system.

### ***D.8.3. Transfer of ERDF to Project Partners***

The Lead Partner will be responsible for transferring the correct amount of ERDF to the project partners where appropriate. Project partners are required to acknowledge receipt of payments by inputting the date in Synergie CTE.

To do so, the payments to Project Partners should be entered into Synergie CTE by the Lead Partner.

In case the Lead Partner is a city from a Partner State (Norway, Switzerland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine) a specific provision will be included in the subsidy contracts as regards responsibility for the EU funds allocated to the network and financial flows between the URBACT Managing Authority and programme beneficiaries (Lead Partner and Partners).

 Guidance on how to use Synergie CTE has been developed and is available to beneficiaries and relevant users.

If refunds do not correspond to the exact amount due to the Partner, it is necessary to make a comment in the box provided to explain this. If no transfer is to be made to the partner due to internal agreements, then one payment should be entered into SYNERGIE CTE for an amount of 0.00 and a comment should be added to note this fact.

Once the payment is received by the Partner, they are responsible for entering the date of receipt in the Synergie CTE system. All information on payment transfers should be up-to-date before further payments can be made.

### ***D.8.4. Refunds to Norwegian and Swiss Partners***

Norwegian and Swiss cities are eligible within the URBACT IV Programme. They can participate as partners in URBACT networks.

- > Partners from Norway can be co-financed at up to 50% by Norwegian national funds (contact the national authority);
- > Partners from Switzerland shall be co-financed at up to 50% by Swiss national funds;

Further information can be requested through the Norwegian or Swiss representative in the URBACT Monitoring Committee.

This system does not imply that Norwegian and Swiss beneficiaries are treated differently than those coming from Member State, except for what concerns the procedures of financial flow and control.

### ***D.8.5. Refunds to IPA and NDICI (Ukraine and Moldova) Countries Partners***

Partners from IPA countries and NDICI countries (Ukraine and Moldova), shall be co-financed at up to 95% by IPA funds, or NDICI fund, respectively.

The Lead Partner will be responsible for transferring the correct amount of IPA/NDICI to the project partners where appropriate. Project partners are required to acknowledge receipt of payments by inputting the date in Synergie CTE.

To do so, the payments to Project Partners should be entered into Synergie CTE by the Lead Partner.

## D.9. Audits on projects

**Sample audits on projects** will be carried out to **verify that projects have declared expenditure correctly in their Progress Reports**. These audits will be performed under the responsibility of the programme's audit authority, assisted by a group of auditors with at least one representative from each EU Member State.

The purpose of these audits is to **detect mistakes in the accounting records at the level of individual projects** and, on that basis, to obtain an overall picture of **whether the management and control procedures and documents set up at Programme level are being applied** and that they assure the prevention and correction of potential weaknesses and errors.

Should a project be selected for a sample audit (or any other audit or check), the **Lead Partner and other Partners must cooperate** with the auditing bodies and present any documentary evidence or information deemed necessary to assist with the evaluation of the accounting documents. They must also give access to their business premises if requested to do so by the auditors.

In addition to the sample audits explained above, **other bodies**, such as the European Commission's audit services, the European Court of Auditors, national bodies or the URBACT Managing Authority/joint secretariat **may carry out audits / sample checks** to verify the quality of the Programme and project implementation and in particular their financial management and compliance with EU and national rules.

Projects may be audited or checked even after the project has ended. It is therefore important to ensure good documentation and the secure conservation of all project documents at least until the end of the EU and national archiving periods.



For more details, please refer to **Book two. AUDIT AND IRREGULARITIES.**

## E. EXPERTISE AT NETWORK LEVEL

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### E.1. General framework

The URBACT Programme provides **each approved network** with an **additional specific budget for the appointment of experts**. The pool of all validated URBACT experts is available on the URBACT website, with a search engine facilitating the search of different expert profiles. Only experts included in the URBACT IV pool of validated experts may be appointed by approved networks as Lead Experts and Ad hoc Experts.

The URBACT IV call for the pool of experts is open over the entire duration of the programme. Therefore, the pool of experts is being populated on an ongoing basis with new validated expert profiles. In cases where network Lead partners and partners do not find the relevant expertise in the pool of validated URBACT experts, they may invite experts to apply for validation following the procedure defined in the open Call for Experts. Further information about the expertise framework in URBACT programme is provided in Book II – Section C of this document.

Approved networks have to request the appointment of specific experts from the pool of validated experts to perform the role of Lead Experts or Ad hoc Experts on the specific templates provided by the URBACT Secretariat. Appointment of a network Lead Expert takes place at the beginning of projects cycles – immediately after the networks are approved by URBACT’s Monitoring Committee. The appointment of network Ad-hoc Experts can take place at any time over the duration of the network. At least two Ad-hoc Experts shall be appointed by each network over the network duration. Once the request is validated by the URBACT Secretariat, then a contract is established between the expert and the URBACT Managing Authority. The expert competences, suitability, gender and geographical balance are considered for the expert validation.

These experts **support partners** in **implementing their local and transnational activities** on both policy themes and methods for exchange and learning. These experts are expected to work in accordance with the URBACT networking framework and use the tools provided by the URBACT Programme. Dedicated training sessions shall be delivered to appointed URBACT experts as needed.

### E.2. Services to be provided by URBACT experts to networks

The expertise resource is available to the whole partnership. More specifically, the expertise budget should provide partners with a package of services including:

#### **1. Expertise for the design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities**

**Definition and delivery**, in strong cooperation with the network partners, of the **methodology for exchange activities at transnational level** to ensure high level of sharing, mutual learning and transfer of knowledge. This includes notably the design of network meetings, effective facilitation by using various learning tools and approaches, as well as, drawing lessons captured in concise and coherent formats.

#### **2. Thematic expertise**

- > Definition and delivery of thematic inputs that will feed the exchange and contribute to the learning process of partners involved

- > Production of thematic documentation and outputs in English that will capture and disseminate lessons learnt, good practices, etc., to network partners, the Programme secretariat and to an external audience

### 3. Methods and tools for integrated and participatory approaches

- > Support to partners at local level in involving key stakeholders and in co-producing the main expected local outputs
- > Support to partners in making use of tools and methods for participatory design and implementation of integrated urban policies/action plans

## E.3. Types of network Experts

In order to improve the efficiency of the expertise support provided to URBACT networks, expertise made available to approved networks is presented in two distinct URBACT network expert roles:

- > A **Lead Expert** supports the partnership over the entire duration of the network with the **design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities, the knowledge of EU thematic policy frameworks**, as well as **the methods and tools for the design and delivery of integrated and participatory approaches**. The Lead Expert assists the partnership with defining the main focus of activities, designing the work plan, elaborating the main expected results and producing network outputs. This list of tasks is not exhaustive; each Lead Expert will have a dedicated work plan based on the specific expertise framework defined for each call for networks.
- > **Ad-hoc Experts** provide support **on specific needs** identified by the network with **shorter and/or more specific expertise missions**. These include the design and facilitation of meetings, specific thematic expertise, methods and tools for integrated and participatory approaches, customised support at local level and the production of network outputs. This list of tasks is not exhaustive; each Ad-hoc Expert has a specific mission defined with the work plan.

URBACT network experts are also expected to work in close collaboration with the URBACT Secretariat and **contribute to capitalisation and dissemination of network results**. They shall use the tools and guidance provided by the programme for effective delivery of activities and outputs.

In this perspective, the appointed network experts (and notably Lead Experts) shall take part in **dedicated information and training sessions organised by the URBACT Secretariat**. These are part of their main tasks and work plans.

## E.4. Budgetary and contractual elements for network Experts

The **daily expertise fee** for URBACT network experts is set at a fixed price of **Euros 750 per day (VAT EXCLUDED; all other taxes and charges included)** for the whole duration of the URBACT IV Programme. The travel and accommodation costs linked to network activities shall be covered by the network budget.

General expertise framework in different types of networks, the available budget for experts (number of expertise days), as well as the appointment conditions are set out in the Terms of references of open calls for networks.

For Lead Experts as well as for Ad-hoc experts missioned for longer mission (**above 16 days**), a **contract between the expert and the URBACT Secretariat** will be established. With regard to Ad-hoc Experts proposed for shorter missions, the request from the Secretariat will be issued through a purchase order.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST RULES FOR NETWORK EXPERTS**



- > Only experts who have not been directly involved in developing network applications can be proposed as Lead Expert for these networks. A strict conflict of interest procedure will be followed on this matter.
- > The position of URBACT Network Expert (either Lead or Ad-hoc Expert) is not compatible with the following positions in URBACT: Methods & Tools Programme Expert, External Assessment Panel member, National URBACT Point contact person, URBACT Programme evaluator;

## F. COMMUNICATION AT NETWORK LEVEL

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*Information* and *communication* are often used as synonyms, but these terms actually stand for very different things: information *is giving out*, whereas **communication is getting through**. For the readers of this chapter of the Programme Manual – might they be just starting their journey as an URBACT beneficiary, or be halfway through a network, or even be newcomer cities that are considering applying for an open call for networks – please bear in mind of one thing: **this chapter tackles specifically external communication, intended to external audiences**. Exchanges among project partners for management and coordination purposes (internal communication) do not fit here.

**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.** Beneficiaries should not be misled by the assumption that communication only comes in the final months of activities, with the dissemination of final products. If the results, key findings, policy recommendations and other outputs are to reach and influence the right people, a solid basis needs to be progressively built from the very start.

This includes investing time and effort in suitable channels and getting the right messages across. The people who eventually buy-in to the network's cause — as URBACT Local Group member or not — can also help amplifying the network's messages. Communication is all about change and it can create a ripple effect. Smart communication at network level can be picked up and diffused by URBACT's official channels (EU level), National URBACT Points (national level) and beneficiary cities (local level).

Beyond all the benefits networks can find by showcasing the process behind their own transnational exchange and local experiences, when it comes to EU-funded initiatives – in URBACT's case, the European Regional Development Fund – communication and dissemination activities are fundamental due to the following reasons:

- > the increased interest from EU institutions – particularly the European Commission – to demonstrate to a wider public, in a transparent and accessible way, how funds are being spent.
- > the need for public administrations to demonstrate – even further – the added value of allocating resources to cooperation, especially in a general context of reduced expenses.
- > the importance of shedding light on less tangible – but not less effective – impact and results.

Considering the diversity of contents that can be produced in the course of a network, as well as the different groups of target audiences – both at network and local levels – the complex process of communicating requires a lot of strategy and careful planning.

This chapter briefly presents EU and URBACT requirements that a network has to meet, as well as some recommendations and advice for a successful communication journey within URBACT.

**The chapter is structured as follows:**

- > **Mandatory activities**
- > **Complementary activities**

### F.1. Mandatory EU and URBACT activities

#### F.1.1. *Communication officer*

**The person in charge of the coordination and implementation of communication activities.**

## Assigning a communication officer

Whether from a Lead Partner or a Project Partner city, a key to success is to always have a referent person (communication officer) for the communication activities at network level. In most cases, **this role is fulfilled by someone from the Lead Partner team**, but it can actually be an **external provider** or even someone else **from another partner city** who is notably at ease with the position and related tasks — should this be the case, the corresponding budget for communications should be allocated accordingly.

**This officer is expected to be in close contact with the URBACT Joint Secretariat.** Once they are assigned with communication tasks, their contact details must be shared with URBACT, both in the Application Form and by e-mail at a later stage, once the network is approved. The Secretariat will then be in constant contact with this person when it comes to setting up and maintaining the network's webpage, communication trainings, and external communication in general.

## Role of the communication officer

The Network Communication Officer shall put together a **consistent communication plan**, with the support of all partner cities, and shall make sure the plan is implemented throughout the duration of the network (with adaptations when relevant). This person will also be in charge of **collecting and 'packaging' good stories, findings and other network products and diffusing them in English.** This person is also required to **upload new content to the relevant channels** in accordance to the planned activities – e.g., URBACT website, events, possible newsletters and other social media.

The Network Communication Officer shall also be **in touch, on a regular basis, with all the other Project Partners and URBACT expert(s)** to:

- > exchange and agree on the stories, news and any audio-visual material that is worth putting forward.
- > support and advise partners about their own local-level communication activities, in national languages. These should be in line with the main communication plan and comply with the EU publicity and visual regulations.

In addition to the network-level activities, which are further outlined below, all partner cities should have their communications at local level. In one hand this is justified to get more visibility to the network's mission and, consequently engaging more people on board the URBACT Local Group. In the other hand it is also a way to achieve local change, making sure the local target audiences are being reached out to.

### F.1.2. Communication plan

#### The roadmap of the network's communication


When completing the Application Form, the Lead Partner is required to provide some insights and directions for the overall communication of the network. It is a start of a **strategy, which sets out a "wish-list", supposed activities** that do not take into account unexpected circumstances. It assumes that the network will reach its final intended destination and it does so with conditions that favour success.

From the moment the network officially starts its activities and within six months (unless a different timeline is set in the call for networks), the network with the help of the communication officer has to submit to the Secretariat a **communication plan**.


The plan deals with the specifics at hand, including constraints (e.g., timewise or even in terms of resources and budget). It is the **roadmap**, the scheme towards the objectives that are outlined in the strategy. The communication plan is concrete in nature, it is a written account of an intended future course of action, within a timeframe. It should include the following sections:

- > Network **objectives**, sub-objectives and how they translate into communication objectives.
- > All **target audiences at network level**, from civil society groups (e.g., SMEs, retailers, teachers, children, ageing population, public servants, among others) to high-level people (e.g. elected representatives and decision-makers) to even EU institutions.
- > The intended **tailored messages to each one of the groups** that are targeted at network-level, taking into account a corresponding vocabulary and tone.
- > A list of **communication channels** which are fit to pass on these messages and reach out to the intended audiences and, thus, chosen to be set up by the Network Communication Officer
- > A map of **potential needs, challenges and leads** on how to face issues and fill the gaps
- > A **structured calendar** outlining milestones, general activities and opportunities for further dissemination
- > A **rough budget** for all intended communication activities and eventual communication costs per Project Partner.
- > A **series of indicators** that are linked to the different activities and that are monitored: monthly number of followers, attendance to a certain event, etc. The results should help evaluating the activities, but also constantly re-adapting the communication plan.

The plan must be **SMART**: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**imebound.

 Further guidance on how to produce a (SMART) communication plan will be provided to all communication officers in the first months of the networks.

In a nutshell, the communication plan is the backbone of all communication and dissemination actions – **at network-level and in English**. It requires in-depth information from what was first outlined in the strategy, in addition to the budget allocation for activities, the timeframe and the involved people – partners, external providers, basically “who does what”.

 **The network communication plan is a mandatory output, which must be sent to the URBACT’s Joint Secretariat ([communication@urbact.eu](mailto:communication@urbact.eu)).**

### F.1.3. Network branding

#### Network acronym, tagline and boilerplate

##### *An easy-to-grasp narrative*

Given both the EU requirements for transparency and the need for external communication standard material for all partners, there are certain things that need to be developed by networks before anything else.

The very first thing is to find a **suitable title for the network**. Acronyms that are hard to grasp should be avoided, instead catchy names that have to do with the network’s topic of work should be prioritised. Alongside the acronym, **a tagline – one-liner – shall also be chosen**. It should be a good match with the title and further explain the objectives of the project, as in the example from the ROOF Action Planning Network, “Ending homelessness”.

Now that a title and a tagline have been selected, in line with the overall objectives, the next step is to write down a **boilerplate** – a short introduction text, no more than 80 words. It can be challenging to encapsulate everything within a short paragraph, but the text should be concise and straight to the point. The boilerplate should always mention URBACT and the funding source (European Regional Development Fund co-finance), as well as the type of the network – Action Planning Network or Transfer Network.

Remember to always **use caps letters when writing URBACT**, instead of Urbact or urbact which are considered as an incorrect use of the programme brand.

 As soon as a network has agreed upon **the acronym, tagline and boilerplate**, this material **must be sent to the URBACT Joint Secretariat** ([communication@urbact.eu](mailto:communication@urbact.eu)).

## Visual identity

### *Making a network easily recognisable*

Each URBACT network has to develop its own visual identity that will make it both distinct and recognisable to an external audience. 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 below.

#### *F.1.4. Programme branding and EU requirements*

Alongside their network visual identity, **URBACT beneficiaries must always use URBACT/EU logo as seen below. Any kind of material produced by the network has to bear the URBACT/EU logo.** By doing it so, the network and partner cities benefit from the programme's wider communication and visibility. Outputs are, thus, associated with a bigger family of projects and knowledge.

The URBACT IV logo consists of two elements: the name of the programme to the left and the EU emblem to the right, with the written funding statements 'Co-funded by the European Union Interreg'. Henceforth, **these two elements cannot be split apart and must always appear together:**



There are a **series of requirements for transparency and common visibility**, which must be complied (EU Regulation 2021/1060), the ones concerning beneficiaries are further detailed below. To respect them is to acknowledge URBACT's joint brand value, which can only be recognisable when consistently applied. Using the URBACT's logo helps people to identify the programme, but also acts a guarantee of seriousness and quality.

### MAIN REQUIREMENTS



- > The **URBACT IV logo must be used whenever an event or an activity** that has been **financed by the URBACT Programme** takes place. It should also appear in all documents and goodies related to the event.
- > Specifically for **publications, reports and documents** produced in the course of the network cycle, the URBACT IV logo should be visibly showcased in the cover page.
- > Other materials used on a more regular basis – e.g., **agenda and presentations** – must also have the logo. Lead Partners should have this in mind when creating network's templates for partners.
- > **Any dissemination products**, likewise, need the logo properly displayed – e.g., notebooks, pens, games etc.

Given the EU common visibility requirements, the URBACT logo – just like other logos from the Interreg family – need to be used following certain rules:

#### Spacing

A margin must be left between the URBACT logo and other visual elements. A clear space – represented below with the pink squares – must remain around the logos at all times, both in height and in width. Within this area, no other graphics or logos may be placed.



Other logos to network products –like city logos- should not be bigger, in height, than URBACT's IV logo.

#### Colour

The standard brand uses the full colour version of the logo (see above). When it comes to background colours, the URBACT IV logo can be used with white and light backgrounds, as the example below with the Interreg logo:



According to the Communication and Visibility EU Regulation 2021/1060 annex IX, if there is no such alternative:

- > the logo should be used in its white version, with a white border around the EU emblem:
- > or a white background should be added exclusively to the corresponding area of the URBACT IV logo:



When absolutely necessary for printing or specific cases, a monochrome version of the URBACT IV logo can be reproduced. Otherwise, a white background should be added exclusively to the corresponding area of the URBACT IV logo:



## Size

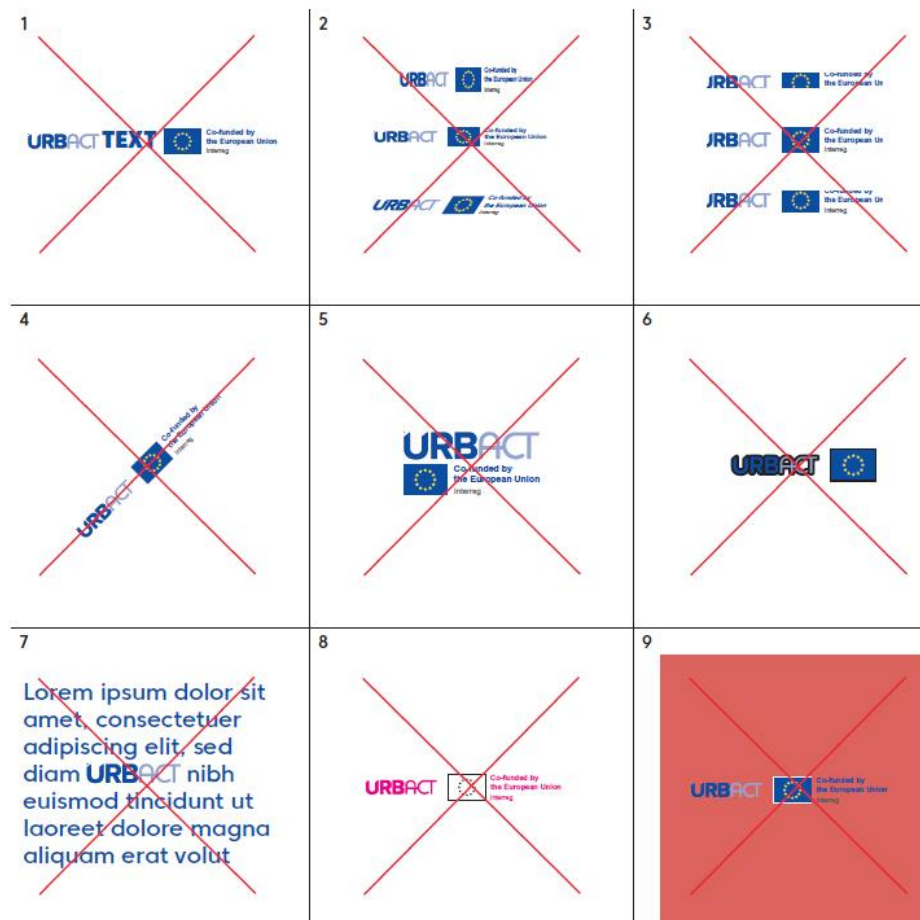
The URBACT IV logo and the financial statement ('Co-funded by the European Union Interreg') has to be visible and easy to read at all times.


If a beneficiary needs to produce smaller items, the URBACT Joint Secretariat should be contacted to advice. This comprehends goodies as USB sticks, pencils and pens.

## Incorrect use

Previous logos from the URBACT III Programme, can no longer be used. Likewise, no modifications of the URBACT IV logo will be accepted:

- > Do not change its typography.
- > Do not invert, tilt, rotate, distort or stretch it.
- > Do not cut the logo.
- > Do not change its composition.
- > Respect the colour and spacing guidance.



 All different versions of the URBACT IV logo are available to beneficiaries in closed channels.  
Should the **EU communication and visibilities requirements not be met**, the URBACT programme shall apply a **financial correction measure**, cancelling up to 3% of the support from ERDF to the operation concerned, as it is explained in the REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060 Art 50(3).

### F.1.5. A3 network poster

Following the REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060 Art 50(1) all URBACT beneficiaries – Lead Partners and Project Partners – **must produce an A3 poster within six months from the approval of the network.**

The poster has to present information about the network, including the financial support from the ERDF and the duration of the network – the boilerplate can be re-used in this occasion, either in English or in the local language. Naturally, the network and the URBACT IV logos must be showcased.

A banner cannot replace this poster, which must have a minimal size of a A3 paper or an equivalent electronic displayed.

The poster has to be placed in the buildings of the network partner’s institution, in a location that is readily visible to the public – e.g., entrance area. The poster needs to be hung for the whole duration of the project. The printing costs of the poster, as well as any eventual modifications, should be budgeted under network costs.

### F.1.6. Institutional website news

Following the REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060 Art 50(1) all URBACT beneficiaries – Lead Partners and Project Partners – **must publish a news about the network in their respective institutional websites**. This has to be done within six months from the approval of the network.

All networks' partners shall publish information about the network in their respective official websites. This news should provide a short description of the project, its objectives and intended results, partnership details and mention to the ERDF funding.

The network and the URBACT IV logos should be set in visible place, respecting the visual requirements described above. In addition, a link towards [www.urbact.eu](http://www.urbact.eu) shall be written in the end of the page.

### F.1.7. URBACT network webpage



Once **the network acronym, the tagline, the boilerplate and the logo** have been finalised, networks **must send them to the URBACT Secretariat**, so a dedicated network webpage shall be set up (see below). The Network Communication Officer will then receive a login to access the website back-end and take control of the webpage.

The URBACT website is the programme's main communication tool. It provides: necessary information about the programme activities and calls for networks; tools for the design and implementation of local strategies (Toolbox); useful insights and good practices on different topics (Knowledge-Hub), and it gives visibility to the work, practices and plans of all the URBACT networks.

The website receives 25 000 to 40 000 unique visitors a month, making it a powerful platform for the exposure of an URBACT network. The website has a diverse audience – such as Monitoring Committee members, the European Commission, urban practitioners worldwide, city officials, academics, NGO officials, citizens, various stakeholders and various other professions and entities – that are seeking interesting policy practices on specific topics, results of networks, events and much more. Since not all these individuals are familiar with URBACT it is important that the contents featured be conceived for a non-URBACT audience as well. In priority, practitioners are looking for clear, concrete, practical and synthetic information.

**All URBACT networks (even closed ones) benefit from a dedicated webpage** to communicate about good practices, case studies, recommendations or reports to an audience external to the beneficiary cities. In this sense, a network webpage acts as a “business card”.

For the network webpages, the Network Communication Officers are expected to create an **editorial planning – with articles, news, events and a library** – following the decisions agreed in the communication plan. The Network Communication Officer is then in charge of maintaining the network webpage on a regular basis but the Lead Expert and other Project Partners can upload different content, including articles, news, events, videos and other documents. The URBACT Secretariat strongly encourages people to take ownership of this space.

Depending on the type of the network and its methodological journey, the URBACT Joint Secretariat might require certain types of stories in specific points in time. The mandatory articles are further described in the Terms of Reference for each call for proposals

Since URBACT provides webpages for all networks, the latter **are strongly discouraged from developing external separate websites**, as it raises the question on the sustainability of such a website after the network is over, both in terms of hosting services and related costs. If, however, a network deems indispensable the existence of an additional website, it has to demonstrate its added value to the URBACT Secretariat ([communication@urbact.eu](mailto:communication@urbact.eu)) and wait for approval before setting up anything new.



URBACT is constantly working to improve support for its beneficiaries. This is the reason why **writing guidelines and other trainings are made available to beneficiaries** and, more specifically to the Network Communication Officers.

### F.1.8. Digital communication channels

As outlined in the network communication plan, suitable channels of communication shall be chosen to reach target audiences. This notably includes social media channels as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and newsletters. At programme level, URBACT maintains accounts on all previously mentioned media and it supports networks by re-posting their content.

While URBACT does not make any particular channel mandatory, **it is required for Network Communication Officers to set up an account on at least one social medium and regularly update it with content**. In this way, articles from the network webpage can be shared through social media and reposted by URBACT social media for greater visibility.

**The network social media channel should be exclusive to the network – not to a specific city.** Its content should always be held **in English** and the images should respect the communication and visual requirements – profile picture of the network logo and URBACT IV logo in the corner of cover images, if banners are available in such media. Project Partners are welcome to develop additional channels using local language, but this is not mandatory.

The Network Communication Officer should be responsible for the quality of what is being posted across channels. It is worth mentioning that no communication sometimes is better than bad communication. To help with that, the URBACT Joint Secretariat often organises trainings and guidance material. Once the network wraps up its activities, the social media accounts should be closed accordingly.

### F.1.9. Final product

Besides the local mandatory products, networks are expected to also deliver a final product. This output needs to **capture the experience of the network, any lessons learnt and policy recommendations**.

The final product can take whichever format the network's partners deem fit, in order to better reach the intended target audiences — series of thematic reports, publication, tools, videos, animations, etc. — the crucial thing is to consider the dissemination process for it. Final events can be a powerful way to spread this material, for example, as well as the network webpages.

Networks should be mindful of the communication and visual requirements using consistently the URBACT IV logo. The URBACT Programme also supports more green options for products, but should any printing material be done, the Lead Partner should send two copies of the product to the URBACT Joint Secretariat.



For any enquires or questions about communication activities, networks should reach out directly to the URBACT Joint Secretariat at **communication@urbact.eu**.

## F.2. Complementary activities

To maximise outreach and communication activities, attract interest and get more visibility, URBACT networks are recommended to look out the following:

### **F.2.1. Liaison with National URBACT Points**

National URBACT Points (NUP) are representatives of national ministries, associations of local authorities, universities or even consultancies who are in charge of communicating about URBACT activities, work and results, in their countries and in native languages. National URBACT Points operate in almost all EU countries covered by the URBACT Programme (see list of National URBACT Points [here](#)).

Network beneficiaries should **regularly communicate with the National URBACT Points** of their countries about local activities and work, so that the NUP can further communicate on national level. When relevant, network beneficiaries can invite NUP to their URBACT Local Group meetings or organise meetings between elected representatives and the NUP to further raise awareness about the URBACT programme.

Likewise, communication officers should regularly communicate about the network outputs and events to at least the National URBACT Points who speak the same language as the network beneficiaries. These network outputs can further be communicated or translated by NUP if the topic is relevant on national level.

### **F.2.2. Partnerships with other EU organisations/programmes**

When an URBACT network wants to influence or contribute to EU policies, strategies or missions, it is recommended that it identifies the relevant EU Commission's Directorate General, or other institution (Committee of the Regions, Council of Europe, Council of European Municipalities and Regions) that has a stake or interest on the topic of the network. People from these institutions can be interested in hearing the findings of the URBACT network and they can also be invited for discussions during network meetings.

When necessary, the URBACT Secretariat can make the connection between URBACT networks and relevant organisations/institutions.

### **F.2.3. Press releases**

An URBACT network can also reach to EU journalists and media with the help of press releases to inform them about significant work and actions at local level. The press releases can even act as invitations to some big events or study visits that the journalists would cover with a reportage.

While National URBACT Points can help the network identify relevant journalists at national level, the URBACT Secretariat can advise on EU journalists and media.

### **F.2.4. Events**

Events, online or in-person, are great opportunities for URBACT networks to showcase their work, findings and practices to a wider audience. Networks can contribute to or organise different types of events as follows:

#### **Network-level events**

Each network can organise an event to share and exchange good practices, case studies and recommendations to an audience external. It is up to the network to plan the communication of the event and target potential participants.

A network-level event can be organised in a variety of formats: face-to-face, online or hybrid. It is important, however, that the events are engaging for the participants, no matter the chosen format.

An URBACT network can also decide to co-organise an event with other URBACT networks working on the same challenge or topic.

The series of compulsory events depends on the type of network and foreseen journey. More information about it is available in the Terms of Reference of each call for networks.

### Programme-level events

The URBACT Secretariat organises events, in-person or online, on a regular basis for city representatives and experts from URBACT networks and beyond. Some of URBACT's flagship events are URBACT City Festival and capacity building activities such as Summer Universities or e-Universities.

URBACT networks are **always invited** and **strongly encouraged to contribute** to those events with thematic content, practices, presentations, demonstrations, videos, and other means.

### External events

To give greater visibility to the work, outputs or recommendations of an URBACT network, it is recommended that the network, and communication officer in particular, maps all existing or upcoming external events in relation to sustainable urban development, such as the European Week for Regions and Cities taking place every October online or in Brussels, the EU Cities Forum, the World Urban Forum taking place every two years across the world, European placemaking week, Urban Futures Conference and others. URBACT networks can then propose the organisation of thematic sessions in the framework of these events.

### Carbon-neutral approach to events

URBACT IV is committed to mainstreaming the green transition in its operations, and events are some of the powerful activities to do so. Therefore, URBACT strongly recommends to the beneficiaries to organise events in a carbon-neutral way. This means planning and reducing an event's carbon footprint, communication to the target audience on the subject and carbon offsetting for the event's emissions that cannot be avoided.

URBACT IV will provide its networks with a carbon calculator to measure their events' carbon footprints and offer guidance materials. One of the key ways to reduce an event's carbon footprint is holding it online or in a hybrid format. For a face-to-face event the biggest carbon footprint stems from participants' travel, therefore using alternative means of transportation to planes, such as trains, are recommended whenever possible. Another way to reduce the carbon footprint can be the reduction of meat during the meals or serving vegetarian and vegan dishes only in particular.

The second book of the URBACT IV Programme Manual is **entirely dedicated to the other activities delivered by the Programme**. Indeed, in addition to the URBACT Networks, two other strands of activities define the URBACT Programme: **Capacity Building** and the **Knowledge Hub**. Other activities will also be developed at Programme level such as Expertise, Communication, the National URBACT Points and Audit.

<b>A.</b>	<b>CAPACITY BUILDING AT PROGRAMME LEVEL.....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>KNOWLEDGE HUB .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>EXPERTISE AT PROGRAMME LEVEL .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION AT PROGRAMME LEVEL .....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>E.</b>	<b>NATIONAL URBACT POINTS.....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>F.</b>	<b>AUDIT AND IRREGULARITIES.....</b>	<b>142</b>

# A. CAPACITY BUILDING AT PROGRAMME LEVEL

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## A.1. Context & background

Capacity Building is one of the three strands of activities carried out by the URBACT III Programme, complementary to Exchange & Learning and Knowledge Sharing & Dissemination. URBACT understands Capacity-Building as being both a central strand of activities as well as transversal, occurring at different levels of the Programme activities.

Indeed, beyond capacity-building support provided during activities organised by the Programme, capacity-building is occurring at **network level**, during the transnational meetings through the exchange of practices and through the support provided by experts involved in these activities and by the URBACT Secretariat. This takes the form of both policy and process learning, with structured activities such as peer reviews, site visits and place analysis. Capacity building also happens between transnational meetings in the form of one-to-one coaching and online meetings with experts and project leaders. It is also taking place at **city level** through the work of the URBACT local groups and the transfer of knowledge from transnational level to local level. In many cases, beneficiaries also specifically develop activities to develop capacities at their local level on the basis of their network activities. Capacity building is also developed through **Knowledge Sharing and dissemination activities** whose aim is to further share good practices and lessons learned from the Exchange & Learning activities, to benefit a wider audience.

Under URBACT III, a lot of efforts have been put into structuring better the Capacity-Building support developed over the years, since 2002, and into enriching it to better respond to the needs of European cities. For instance, in 2020, a [URBACT online Toolbox](#) has been launched as part of the URBACT III website in order to make the Capacity-Building material developed during trainings and events accessible to a wider audience, in a versatile way. The Toolbox is structured around the Project management or Action Planning cycle. In the form of tools, the Toolbox provides a practical response to any city practitioner, also not direct beneficiaries, in need of support in one of the stages of the Project Management cycle.

Also, already prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, the URBACT III Programme, had put an emphasis on developing digital content to be accessible to a wider audience, developing its offer of webinars, online courses and tutorial videos. The format of URBACT Universities was also adapted to be delivered in a digital way, allowing additional outreach.

Furthermore, the URBACT offer for national trainings has been better structured and branded, notably for Transfer Networks, to become the URBACT Campus - a format which can now be easily replicated to answer the needs of different types of URBACT networks.

Finally, the curriculum of already well identified URBACT Capacity-Building actions, such as URBACT Universities, was enriched to better support cities to implement and further make use of funding available to resource their urban plans. A e-University was organised in 2022 to specifically tackled these issues and support cities on these matters.

## A.2. Values & Principles

Building on the progress made under URBACT III, the URBACT IV Programme shall continue to reinforce the key values underlying its Capacity-Building activities which are:

- > **learning by doing** which is thought to be achieved through practicing tools, self-reflecting and testing;
- > and **to learn how to learn**, how to find information as well as to develop tailored, pertinent solutions to local issues, without the Programme providing ready-made solutions.

With this in mind, URBACT is putting a strong emphasis on collective learning and building a community of practice for peers to exchange and learn from each other.

Following some of the principles highlighted in the URBACT III Capacity-Building Strategy, the following principles will be applied:

- Activities will be conceived and developed in a **modular way**. This will allow users to access content depending on their specific needs and level of knowledge. For instance, in the Toolbox, city practitioners have the possibility to access a source of primary and essential information on a topic or to “go deeper” and access more complex resources.
- Activities will be developed with **versatility** in mind: URBACT Capacity-Building activities shall address different types of networks and a variety of city practitioners. Yet, one resource can benefit several audiences and be used by beneficiaries with different backgrounds or knowledge. Therefore, content should be developed in the most flexible and generic way possible. For instance, guidance will be drafted as much as possible avoiding the use of jargon which would exclude certain audience. Tools and modules will be designed to be potentially re-used and made available to a wider audience, in order to reach urban professionals beyond those in URBACT-funded networks.
- For the **delivery** of Capacity-Building activities, URBACT will keep on adapting the developed content to the way it is delivered and to find the best way to deliver developed content. For instance, a specific content could be delivered first in an in-person **format** and then be adapted for an online course format, or vice versa. Online tools will be used whenever relevant as they allow for an extended outreach.
- In addition, the best way how to deliver developed content will also be looked after in terms of **partnerships**, making the best of structures already in place, such as the National URBACT Points, or building further cooperation with other organisations. For instance, the URBACT programme may develop further the cooperation undertaken in the past with the Committee of the Regions within their Young Elected People programme, in order to build the skills of city elected representatives.
- **National URBACT Points**, in particular, play an essential role in linking the Programme to national and regional stakeholders (refer to dedicated chapter for more information). The specific and key role of National URBACT points will be further considered to ensure delivery of Capacity-Building activities at national level and to spread further the key elements of the URBACT method.

The present Capacity Building strategy considers findings and recommendations provided in [URBACT III implementation report](#), [URBACT III impact evaluation report](#), closure surveys completed by URBACT beneficiaries and suggestions made over time by the Members of the URBACT Monitoring Committee. Still, the URBACT Secretariat will keep on identifying and improving on shortcomings such as, for instance, the link with managing authorities and an improved support to cities to access resources and funding as well as a more structured support to better include cross-cutting considerations in municipalities' working methods.

### **A.3. Objectives & Focus areas**

URBACT IV will answer to the INTERREG Specific Objective 1 (ISO 1): a better cooperation governance by enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement urban territorial strategies.

To reach this Specific Objective, one of the Programme main aims will be to Improve the capacity of urban stakeholders to design and implement sustainable urban development policies, practices and innovations in an integrated, participative and place-based way.

As a result, it is expected that: Urban practitioners in cities have increased their knowledge and capacity in relation to integrated sustainable urban development strategies. There is improved awareness of the entire URBACT community about carbon reduction and gender mainstreaming. Local stakeholders, lead partners and lead experts have improved their ability to use digital tools in their networks and their capacity to innovate.

Just like under URBACT III, Urban practitioners are considered as change agents: it is expected that through the development of their individual skills and knowledge, both enhancement of organisational/institutional capacity and better policy will be achieved.

Capacity-Building activities will therefore aim to build the skills of city practitioners on the following areas and indicative subsequent learning needs, related to the **URBACT Method**, which is to be understood, as the action-oriented, integrated and participatory approach of URBACT for sustainable urban development:

- > **Integrated Approach** to action planning (*horizontal, vertical, cross-sectoral and territorial integration*), strengthening cooperation between different sectors, levels of governance and balancing physical, environmental and social aspects.
  - Design and Produce Integrated Action Plans
  - Develop Multi-stakeholders Governance
  - Working across departments and with relevant stakeholders
- > **Participatory approach** to action planning, **encouraging citizen participation**
  - Set-up and engage a multi-stakeholder group
  - Understand and develop innovative participatory approaches in urban policies
- > **Project Management and Delivery**, strengthening urban governance to increase resilience of cities
  - Understand the intervention logic and Results Framework
  - Set indicators and develop monitoring/evaluation systems
  - Measure and assess impact
  - Funding & Resourcing: Design strategies to find resources to implement actions
  - Smarter use of EU funds – integration of multiple sources of funding
  - Implementation: Identify and overcome challenges linked to Implementation
- > **Place-Based approach**, strengthening the principles of sustainable urban development in the context of the New Leipzig Charter, helping cities to develop solutions specific to their territories, within their national context and thanks to the involvement of national urban policy stakeholders.

Capacity-Building activities will also help cities to consider the three cross-cutting priorities which have been highlighted by the Programme as key challenges for cities over the period 2021-2027: Gender equality, Green transition and Digital transition. Capacity-Building activities will build on work already undertaken under URBACT III to tackle these topics, notably in synergies with UIII Capitalisation Projects.

- > **Gender equality:** The URBACT IV programme is committed to improving gender mainstreaming in its methods, across all urban challenges and in the planning processes of all URBACT cities. A curriculum of 5 modules on how to integrate a gender perspective throughout the Project Management cycle is ready to be delivered to support partners in URBACT networks.
- > **Digital transition:** The Programme's objective is to support cities in making the most of new digital solutions offered to them and to help them identify where these solutions can make a difference for their local urban policies. An online course comprising 6 modules has been developed to help cities to "[Keep up with digital transition](#)". It was launched in March 2023 and will be used as a support to beneficiaries.
- > **Green transition:** URBACT is committed to improving the awareness on adaptation to climate change, and cities' capacity to implement solutions. The objectives are to build URBACT cities' capacity to work in a low carbon way, as well as to support their capability to achieve their climate neutral targets. A needs analysis has been performed in this regard to examine in details cities' learning needs and some support will be developed accordingly.

### **Reinforced linked between Knowledge and Capacity-Building activities**

Some of the URBACT capacity-building content mentioned above has been developed following activities carried out under the Knowledge Hub, notably on Gender equality ([Gender-equal City report](#)) and on Digital transition, with the [TechPlace](#) project. Furthermore, other contents, for instance on Public Procurement or the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals, were developed following activities

of networks. Outcomes of these networks were adapted to support and become part of Knowledge and/or capacity-Building activities.

Evidently, both knowledge and capacity-building activities can share specific objectives when it comes to increase knowledge and know-how. Therefore, some knowledge activities can evolve into capacity-building activities (e.g. workshops and training) and, likewise, capacity-building activities can seize from the outreach and awareness-raising potential from the Knowledge Hub. This will be particularly important when designing outputs related to the URBACT IV cross-cutting priorities as described above and the URBACT Programme will, in general, seek to strengthen and amplify connections between knowledge and capacity-building activities.

In general, the development of Capacity-Building activities will be informed thanks to an on-going beneficiary' needs analysis. The direct link to cities that the URBACT IV Programme developed over the years, as well as constant attention paid to their issues and expectations allows the Programme to rapidly adapt its activities and to answer their needs in the most appropriate manner, filling in gaps in terms of skills, knowledge and know-how.

#### **A.4. Target audience**

As stated already in the Programme Manual, Capacity-Building is a central strand for the entire URBACT IV programme and therefore the target audience is quite broad.

On the one hand, URBACT Capacity-Building activities target all urban players from EU 27 Member States, Norway and Switzerland, IPA countries, and NDICI countries (Ukraine and Moldova) willing to develop integrated strategies and action plans for sustainable urban development, primarily urban professionals and decision-makers, but also stakeholders such as residents, NGOs, businesses and end-users. More specific actions can be carried out towards targeted audiences such as potential applicants, Lead Partners of networks, First Level Controllers, National URBACT Points as well as experts involved in networks or in the delivery of Capacity-Building actions, following a "Train the trainers" approach.

On the other hand, the target audience also comprises other key players in sustainable urban development at national, regional or local level involved in the design and implementation of integrated urban strategies/ action plans even though not as formal beneficiaries of URBACT networking activities, i.e. non-URBACT cities implementing article 11, innovative actions or part of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

As stated in the Cooperation Programme, the specificities of the IPA and NDICI cities participating in URBACT should be addressed through a dedicated needs analysis exercise and dedicated Capacity-Building support. Through their involvement in URBACT networks, cities from IPA and NDICI countries will receive support related to the design of integrated action plans for Sustainable Urban Development and will have the opportunity to share experience with EU peers supporting the preparation of these countries for accession to the EU.

#### **A.5. Activities**

URBACT Capacity-building activities should both:

- > Complement programme activities by **enhancing capacities of urban players** for the design and implementation of integrated sustainable urban policies. Such actions will assist beneficiaries in delivering high quality outputs. They will focus mainly on the use of tools, instruments and methods supporting integrated and participatory approaches to sustainable urban development. They shall cover the design, funding, implementation and

monitoring of integrated strategies and action plans. They shall also enhance capacities of targeted stakeholders in developing innovative responses to specific policy challenges they face in relation with urban development (environmental, social and economic challenges, etc.).

- > Support the **successful delivery of programme activities** and most particularly networking activities by enhancing capacities to deliver these activities.

To ensure the efficient delivery of programme activities, and more especially networking activities, the URBACT Secretariat may develop trainings on “technical issues” such as project development (e.g. in line with specific calls for proposals, during network phase 1, etc.), network management (reporting, finance, partnership management), certification and audit, etc. Such trainings may also focus on the “URBACT method”, communication (e.g. social media, digital communication) to train key stakeholders in charge of supporting the delivery of programme level activities such as communication, knowledge-sharing, or even capacity-building as such. These activities can target direct beneficiaries (LP of approved networks) as well as potential applicants, FLC, experts, NUP and others

The Secretariat will propose bi-annual Capacity Building workplans, starting with 2023-2024.

Key activities will include the following:

### **URBACT University & e-University**

These events are large transnational capacity-building events aiming to provide URBACT partners and their local stakeholders with tools and methods to develop integrated and participatory approaches for the design and implementation of urban policies. Project partners from all URBACT networks in one call come together to “learn by doing”, working on a city challenge, sharing good practices and testing different tools they can then apply at local level, more specifically in the work of their local groups at city level. This is the main training event that builds up the skills and capacities of urban professionals taking part in the URBACT Programme. These events are usually organised over three intensive days and represent a big investment for the URBACT Joint Secretariat. URBACT Universities proved highly successful under URBACT II (Krakow 2011 and Dublin 2013) and URBACT III (Rotterdam 2016) and a digital version of this curriculum was developed with the e-University 2020 and Implementation e-University 2022. This event usually takes place early at the beginning of a network cycle in order to help network partners launch their work. These events also represent excellent community-building opportunities. In the future, it could be considered to organised shorter, thematic version of this type of event with, for instance, a specific focus on the cross-cutting priorities.

### **URBACT Campus**

This national type of training event aims to reach out to stakeholders in network partner cities, in national language, within a specific country or jointly across several countries, language permitting. There is a benefit for the national level to be involved in such actions as they provide an interesting opportunity to foster dialogue between national and local players on urban policies and allow project partners to better understand the national context in which they are operating. In this regard, the National URBACT Points also have a key role to play in the delivery of these seminars at national and local level. In the future, collaboration with the EUI for the delivery of this type of events could be particularly interesting.

### **Other ad hoc capacity-building actions**

These activities are based on an established need and may also be developed on a specific thematic or for specific stakeholder groups involved in the design and implementation of sustainable urban policies (e.g. elected representatives, Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes, national authorities, etc.). Priority shall be given to transnational activities that can reach stakeholders across countries. Nevertheless, building on the identification of needs in a specific country, the URBACT Secretariat may also organise such activities at national level.

## **URBACT Online Toolbox**

The URBACT Online Toolbox which has been launched, as part of the URBACT website, in 2020 is the repository of all the support material developed through URBACT Capacity-Building activities, which is made available in a structured way to all city practitioners, URBACT beneficiaries or not. As such it is a key instrument for the Capacity-Building strand of the URBACT Programme.

It is composed of tools, animations, written guidance in digital format and courses, in the shape of excerpts of online webinars or training modules. In the future, it is foreseen to enrich it with additional content, where relevant. However, primarily, the focus will be on improving and disseminating the content developed under URBACT III. For instance, it is foreseen as part of the editorial management of the URBACT website to better curate the content within the URBACT Toolbox and to adapt it in a more agile way when a need arises. Also, it is considered to include a “Toolbox focus” within the URBACT monthly newsletter, in order to, each time, highlight specific content of the Toolbox.

## **Coordination with the European Urban Initiative**

As stated in its Cooperation Programme, URBACT IV will also support the Strand B1 of the **European Urban Initiative** with which the Programme will coordinate. Tools and practices developed by the EUI will be shared with cities participating in URBACT capacity building activities and URBACT cities will be able to participate in EUI capacity building activities. For instance, cities joining URBACT networks will be encouraged to join EUI Capacity-Building events on relevant topics and to apply to **peer reviews** and **city-to-city exchanges**, notably to potentially extend activities or partnerships started within URBACT networks. Reciprocally, some tools and Capacity-Building content developed by the URBACT programme will be available for the European Urban Initiative to use during its Capacity-Building events or to highlight on its knowledge platform, Portico.

In addition, activities may also be organised jointly. For instance, joint EUI/URBACT Capacity-Building activities could be organised, notably at national level, such as joint Campus. Detailed activities will be further defined within a Partnership agreement.

As stated above, Capacity-building activities will be further developed over the course of the programme, considering the needs of URBACT beneficiaries. A workplan with a first list of activities foreseen to take place under the URBACT IV Programme will be presented and an update performed bi-annually to the Monitoring Committee. Capacity-building actions and related budget will be approved on an ongoing basis by the URBACT Monitoring Committee.

### **A.6. Available budget**

The URBACT IV Monitoring Committee has approved a total of EUR 5 119 813 for the design and implementation of Capacity-Building activities.

This budget will cover all Capacity-Building activities described above including the costs related to the expertise support needed to design and develop them.

### **A.7. Monitoring & Evaluation**

Under URBACT IV, two indicators linked to the specific objective ISO 6.1, are especially dedicated to Capacity-Building:

- > An **output indicator** measuring the number of participations in joint training schemes for which the target is set at 2400 for the year 2029.

PA1	ISO6.1	RCO85	Participations in joint training schemes	participations	500	2400
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- > A **result indicator** measuring the number of participants completing a joint training schemes for which the target is 1920 for the year 2029 and which will be calculated on the basis of certificates provided to participants.

PA1	ISO6.1	RCR81	Completion of joint training schemes	participants	0.00	2021-2027	1,920.00	Certificate
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The cohort for these two indicators will be the participants from all types of networks in major Programme-level Capacity-Building events such as Universities, e-Universities or Campus which should happen at least every two years.

On top of this, page views on the Toolbox will be monitored on a regular basis on the website, in order to measure outreach of the content made available there.

# B. KNOWLEDGE HUB

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## B.1. Context & principles of the Knowledge Hub

From URBACT I to URBACT IV, capitalisation of knowledge and urban good practices has been a distinctive operation of the programme. Since 2002, the programme has put in place different actions to collect, process, and disseminate practices coming from URBACT networks and beyond. These actions came in different formats, from publications to events, city labs, working groups, trainings and workshops.

Some main knowledge productions over these years include studies like “Cities facing the Crisis: impact and responses, 2010”; Capitalisation Workstreams and related publications like “Cities of Tomorrow-Action Today” in 2012; URBACT City Festivals from 2015 to date; “The Right to Housing” platform created together with Urban Innovative Actions in 2021 (<https://right2housing.eu/>); joint workshops at the European Week for Regions and Cities with Interact, Interreg Europe and ESPON; four URBACT City Labs, from 2018 to 2020, to support the revision of the Leipzig Charter; the programme’s presence and contribution to the meetings of the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU since 2016; the “Strategic Public Procurement Online Course” with its seven video modules in 2021; working groups and follow up “Gender Equal Cities” report in 2022; and the Walk’n’Roll Cities Guidebook “Innovations in mobility and public space” in 2023.

Moving forward, the term “capitalisation of knowledge” largely used until URBACT III (2014 – 2020) shall be replaced by the term “Knowledge Hub”. This is conceived as a space of dialogue, analysis, process, and identification of knowledge, experience and good practices coming from cities that should be widely accessible and used by policy makers and city practitioners in Europe, but also beyond.

In line with the 2021-2027 EU Cohesion Policy, the URBACT Knowledge Hub will contribute to the Policy Objective 5. Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development for all types of territories. In addition, as stated in its Cooperation Programme, URBACT IV (2021 – 2027) will play a role as a knowledge broker – bringing urban actors together to facilitate knowledge sharing, interconnecting with the European Urban Initiative (EUI), and also as a knowledge producer – developing new products building on existing URBACT experience, those from EUI and from complementary European projects/programmes.

To this end, URBACT will contribute to EUI’s strand B2 on knowledge, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication. It will provide input to the Knowledge Sharing Platform, Portico, with knowledge and methods on sustainable urban development that are gained through URBACT networks and URBACT knowledge activities, including to the benefit of the Urban Agenda for the EU. In addition, URBACT can work closely with other Interreg C programmes and their knowledge platforms (e.g. Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platforms, ESPON Database and Thematic Action Plans, etc.), both organising joint activities on shared priorities and target groups (URBACT IV Cooperation Programme, p. 27)

The present Knowledge Hub strategy considers findings and recommendations provided in URBACT III implementation report, URBACT III impact evaluation report, closure surveys completed by URBACT beneficiaries, study on the URBACT III National URBACT Points, and suggestions made over time by the Members of the URBACT Monitoring Committee. Generally speaking, although the studies and evaluations of what used to be called “capitalisation” activities are positive, this strategy will try to tackle identified shortcomings like the lack of involvement or awareness of National URBACT Points and members of the URBACT Monitoring Committee in the design and implementation of knowledge activities. Similarly, in contrast with the previous programming period, Knowledge Hub activities and especially URBACT’s contribution to the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU will be subject to evaluations or reviews.

Activities defined under this Knowledge Hub strategy shall be mainly:

Demand-driven: Content to be produced shall be mainly needs-driven following consultation of URBACT cities, URBACT Monitoring Committee members, National URBACT Points, partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU, and the European Commission. Knowledge actions shall then fill existing gaps at city, national and EU levels.

Events-led: Knowledge Hub activities will largely occur through events, meetings, trainings or workshops to maximise the uptake of knowledge and good practices by policy makers working on urban development. Besides events being the most impactful ways for knowledge uptake and use, this events-led principle will enable the programme to meet the Specific Objectives in relation to number of people participated in programme level events and to the number of people who have increased their knowledge as a result of their participation in URBACT programme level events.

Rich in diversity and formats: to support knowledge dissemination, knowledge outputs will come in a variety of formats, more accessible than reports, more visual, more attractive and easier to read. This will be done with the help of infographics, short videos, creative presentations, dedicated webpages and other formats. Translated materials will also be made available to increase outreach. To contribute to the worldwide efforts to carbon neutrality, knowledge production will come mainly in an online format. Outputs of each knowledge activity will be designed considering the views and proposals of the Knowledge Hub target audiences as presented below and will be made available at [urbact.eu/knowledge-hub](http://urbact.eu/knowledge-hub)

Participatory: Proposals submitted to the URBACT Monitoring Committee (MC) will be designed and implemented following consultation with MC members, National URBACT Points, URBACT cities and Validated Experts.

Actions will follow the knowledge development process as presented under the section “methodology for implementation”.

## **B.2. Focus areas**

The URBACT Programme shall develop knowledge activities, actions and outputs in relation to the topics of URBACT networks, the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU; the needs of URBACT beneficiaries; the demands and needs of the European Commission, the URBACT Monitoring Committee members and the National URBACT Points, and in coordination with the European Urban Initiative to avoid overlapping and to explore synergies or complementarities.

At the same time, the Knowledge Strategy and related workplans will ensure that the three programme's topics as stated in the Cooperation Programme are tackled:

- ) **Gender equality:** building on the URBACT III work on this topic, with working groups, publications on “Gender Equal Cities”, video modules on how to integrate the gender dimension in public procurement and thematic tools.
- ) **Green transition:** particularly in terms of energy transition, organic and local food production, green procurement, circular economy and, more broadly, climate action.
- ) **Digital transition:** following up past and existing initiatives of the programme, like TechPlace, which led to the [“Keeping Up with the Digital Transition”](#) online course in 2023.

Specific training on gender equality, digital transition and climate action will be compulsory for all URBACT Networks (URBACT IV Cooperation Programme, p. 41).

### B.3. Target audience

The URBACT Knowledge Hub shares the same target audiences that are outlined in URBACT's communication strategy. Nonetheless, special emphasis is given to actors who can influence urban policy-making, as follows:

- ) City practitioners and elected representatives within city administrations, municipalities, local authorities and specialised agencies – both URBACT beneficiaries and non-URBACT cities.
- ) Decision-makers from metropolitan and regional bodies.
- ) Members of the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the European Union
- ) Relevant stakeholders from Member and Partner States, IPA and NDICI countries, ministries and other national institutions.
- ) Managing Authorities
- ) The European Commission, related DGs, other EU institutions and programmes.

### B.4. Knowledge Hub Objectives

One of the three aims of URBACT IV set in the Cooperation Programme is:

**“To ensure that URBACT knowledge and practice is made accessible to practitioners and policymakers to feed into local, regional, national, and European urban policies, in particular through the European Urban Initiative; and contributing to the Urban Agenda for the EU.”**

Expected results: urban practitioners and policy makers increasingly access URBACT knowledge and URBACT city experiences inspire local, regional, national and European urban policy.

The Knowledge Hub will therefore aim to:

#### **4.1. Capitalise on and put forward the outputs and work of URBACT Networks, beneficiary cities and URBACT-labelled Good Practices**

This will include work and outputs of URBACT IV Networks but also networks and knowledge produced under URBACT II and URBACT III.

#### **4.2. Respond to the thematic needs from beneficiary cities**

The URBACT Secretariat will identify needs coming for URBACT IV cities and Experts and will propose relevant actions that respond to these needs.

#### **4.3. Build on URBACT III knowledge outputs and to continue their dissemination and uptake**

All knowledge material produced under URBACT III, especially reports and case studies will be further promoted under URBACT IV, mainly through events. Similarly, these products will be the basis of further content production.

#### **4.4. Respond to the needs of the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU)**

In accordance with the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme (p.35) and following coordination with the EUI Secretariat, URBACT can provide support to UAEU with content production, presentation of case studies, or regular participation of URBACT experts, cities or members of the URBACT Secretariat in

the meetings of the ongoing or upcoming partnerships. When relevant, this will also include actions to facilitate the implementation of the action plans produced by the partnerships. Details for URBACT contribution to the partnerships will be presented regularly to the URBACT Monitoring Committee.

#### **4.5. To complement and enrich content developed by the European Urban Initiative, by other Interreg programmes and organisations/institutions working on sustainable urban development.**

This will be done through EUI's knowledge platform, Portico, and upon agreement with EUI and other programmes following their needs. This will be ensured with a Memorandum of Understanding.

#### **4.6. To strengthen and amplify connections between knowledge and capacity-building activities**

Some of URBACT capacity-building materials have been developed following activities carried out under Knowledge Hub (on gender and on digital transition in particular). Both knowledge and capacity-building activities can share specific objectives when it comes to increase of knowledge and know-how. Therefore, some knowledge activities can evolve into capacity-building activities (e.g. workshops and training) and, likewise, capacity-building activities can seize from the outreach and awareness-raising potential from the Knowledge Hub. This is particularly important when designing outputs that are related to the URBACT IV cross-cutting priorities (as defined in section 2, focus areas).

### **B.5. Methodology for implementation**

The Knowledge Hub strategy will unfold following the lifecycle of knowledge development consisting of:

- Identifying needs and existing content responding to these needs
- Analysing and processing the content to make it more accessible to a wider audience
- Storing the content (especially through the Knowledge Hub webpages)
- Sharing content through actions presented below
- Evaluating the actions
- Improving the actions

Building on the URBACT III experience, there will be two levels for activities:

#### **) The network level**

Different URBACT Networks that share similar thematic challenges will be invited to exchange their ideas and practices and, when relevant, develop joint events or knowledge outputs. This has been the case, for example, of three URBACT III Action Planning Networks (RiConnect, space4people, Thriving Streets) that have joined forces under the name "[Walk'n'Roll](#)" and co-produced a Cities Guidebook on "Innovations in Mobility and Public Space".

In other cases, if a subject from an ongoing network is deemed to be holistic and of great value to others – benefiting and influencing other cities – a new Knowledge Hub action can be based upon it. This is, for instance,

the case from the "[Localising the 2030 Agenda](#)" Knowledge Hub webpage, which is built around the experience of one single network: the Global Goals for Cities pilot, which seeks to localise the UN Sustainable Development Goals at local level.

Naturally, actions will depend and evolve in accordance to the themes of the networks that are approved in the course of this programming period. They can be used to either enrich existing knowledge activities with fresh content; or to create brand-new actions and webpages.

## ) **The programme level**

Following needs from URBACT beneficiaries, Validated Experts, National URBACT Points, the needs of UAEU partnerships, or in reaction to new EU priorities and legislation, urban hot topics, unforeseen events or crises, external partnership opportunities, the URBACT Secretariat will propose and coordinate specific knowledge activities that will be approved by the MC committee.

### Bi-annual workplans

For Knowledge Hub activities, the Secretariat will propose bi-annual Knowledge Hub workplans, starting with 2023-2024.

Similar to a roadmap, workplans will include the knowledge offer with specific activities, an implementation framework, with timeline, and budget for both network and programme levels. Workplans will allow work organisation and anticipation for a period of two years, but will be flexible to adapt or include new activities in case of extraordinary needs and circumstances.

## **B.6. Actions**

The bi-annual workplans will include a number of activities, most of which have been tested under URBACT III. Nevertheless, other activities can be defined in the course of the URBACT IV Programme. When designing the actions, the URBACT Secretariat will coordinate with European Urban Initiative to explore synergies, joint or complementary actions, and to avoid overlapping activities.

The URBACT IV Cooperation Programme identifies three activities (thematic communities, EU urban policy focused knowledge sharing, expertise support) but concrete actions under each are proposed below.

### **B.6.1. *Thematic communities:***

These will allow cities to meet and exchange on topics from URBACT Networks, including green, digital and gender-inclusive. Such exchanges will encourage network-led activities and will provide insight as to spotting common trends, challenges and any other developments among different networks. The exchanges will ensure a more integrated approach to the partner topic and produce up-to-date analysis of city policy and practice to share beyond URBACT, in particular through the EUJ and through contributions to the Urban Agenda for the EU. (URBACT IV Cooperation Programme, p.35)

Related actions shall include:

- Dedicated sessions with URBACT beneficiaries and experts during coordination and training events organised by the URBACT Secretariat.
- Extraordinary thematic sessions organised by the URBACT Secretariat following needs expressed by the partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU in agreement with European Urban Initiative (EUI).
- Thematic sessions capitalising on the experience, knowledge, good practices developed by the URBACT Programme, organised internally, as by the National URBACT Points for URBACT cities, but not exclusively; or externally through the participation in events organised by other entities.

### ***B.6.2. EU urban policy focused knowledge sharing:***

URBACT IV will aim to inspire and inform urban policies by making knowledge available to the wider European urban community -also through the European Urban Initiative. URBACT will also contribute specifically to the Urban Agenda for the EU through its participation in UDG and delivering on specific and approved actions of the partnerships or other forms of cooperation (URBACT IV Cooperation Programme, p.35).

Related actions shall include:

#### **EU City Labs on specific topics**

Following the successful past experiences of the 'Cities Fighting for the Right to Housing and Combating Homelessness' city lab, co-produced with FEANTSA in Paris (FR), December 2018; the series of the Leipzig Charter city labs, delivered between 2018 and 2020 in different countries, in partnership with the 2020 German EU Presidency, with the support of Eurocities and Urban Innovative Actions; the EU City Labs shall be further continued and improved in terms of format and method.

Under URBACT IV, an EU City Lab aims to disseminate thematic knowledge and expertise from an URBACT city at national and EU levels. These EU City Labs shall be organised in collaboration with the EUI when possible.

An EU City Lab is comprised of a series of events focusing on one topic (i.e. food) bringing together stakeholders from other countries, representatives of the European Commission, UAEU partnerships and others.

During the labs, the URBACT/UIA/EUI and other cities will unfold all the experience, knowledge, steps, methods, and actions they put in place on the subject matter. The labs will also capitalise on the experience of cities benefiting of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), Community led local development (CLLD) or other tools designed by Member States.

The URBACT Secretariat will co-design the curricula of all EU labs with EUI, URBACT Experts and National URBACT Points.

Ultimately, participants of the EU City Labs will increase their knowledge and know how on a specific. The number of people who have increased their knowledge will feed in the specific indicator of the URBACT programme.

Following proposals by the URBACT Secretariat, the URBACT Monitoring Committee will approve the funding and implementation of such City Labs, including additional budget for the National URBACT Points who will support the organisation of labs at national level.

### **Practice Transfer Initiatives**

This activity builds on the successful experience of five pilot National Practice Transfer Initiatives funded and implemented in Czechia/Slovakia, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, and Slovenia from June 2021 to December 2022 under URBACT III. This National Practice Transfer Initiative (NPTI) aimed to transfer a practice developed by an URBACT city through an URBACT Network (in the past Transfer Network), to non-URBACT cities, at national or macro-regional levels and in national languages.

An updated version of practice transfer initiatives at EU level with enhanced Interreg elements and cooperation, for example for IPA countries, and NDICI countries (Ukraine and Moldova), can also integrate knowledge content/outputs or tools developed under URBACT Knowledge Hub.

Following proposals by the URBACT Secretariat, the URBACT Monitoring Committee will approve the funding and implementation of such initiatives – including additional budget for the National URBACT Points.

### **Call for Good Practices:**

Building on the positive experience of the URBACT III call for good practices in 2017 that selected and awarded 97 good city practices around Europe for their positive results at local level, their participatory and integrated approach, and for their transferability potential, the URBACT programme will continue to gather and select good practices through a call to be launched in 2024. This call shall remain open for the whole URBACT IV programming period. Selected practices will integrate the good practice database of the URBACT website.

This action will allow:

- The formation of Transfer Networks, with some cities holding the good practice being Lead Partners of Transfer Networks.
- Further uptake and visibility of actions and plans produced by cities involved in URBACT networks.
- A wide repository of examples of sustainable city practices across Europe that can be updated regularly.

### **Other actions:**

- Regular thematic articles (at least two per month) on the URBACT website on different topics.

- Regular editorial updates on EUI's Portico (knowledge online platform) on different topics.
- Organising thematic sessions during events organised by the EUI and/or other external partners.
- Contributing to thematic sessions organised by the EUI and/or other external partners.
- Presentation of URBACT findings and experience to the partnerships of the UAEU.
- Organising or contributing to actions decided by the partnerships of the UAEU.
- Participation in UDG and DGUM meetings.

**Expertise support** is provided to build and manage knowledge on sustainable urban development. (URBACT IV Cooperation Programme, p.35)

Analysis, production, and dissemination of knowledge and outputs will largely depend on thematic experts (URBACT Validated Experts or contractors selected through calls for tenders). Commissioned by the URBACT Secretariat, experts will be in charge of producing relevant and impactful content for the target audiences of the Knowledge Hub.

**The URBACT website** will operate as URBACT's Knowledge Hub portal providing open access to knowledge, good practices and know-how around thematic priorities. It will be interlinked with, and selected outputs will be available on, the EUI knowledge sharing platform (Portico). Validated Experts can be commissioned to write in-depth thematic pieces.

**National URBACT Points**, in charge of communicating on URBACT activities and disseminating URBACT results at national level in local language, will play an important role in linking URBACT knowledge to national and regional stakeholders, as described above.

## **B.7. Available budget**

The URBACT IV Monitoring Committee has approved a total of EUR 3 158 276 for the design and implementation of knowledge activities.

This budget will cover all Knowledge Hub activities described above. In addition, it will cover the costs related to the tender for Editorial Support to the URBACT programme, which includes the monthly editorial planning of the URBACT Programme, the coordination of authors and drafting of news and articles, as well as the release of newsletters.

## **B.8. Outcomes and indicators**

The Knowledge Hub strategy, actions and dedicated activities will feed in the following indicators:

**Output Indicator ISO6.1. (ID O13)**

Participation in programme level<sup>11</sup> events aimed at knowledge sharing

*Target: 4 410 participants by 2029*

### **Result Indicator ISO6.1 (ID RI1)**

People with increased URBACT knowledge due to their participation in programme level events aimed at knowledge sharing

*Target: 3 528 people by 2029*

The result indicator will be based on self-evaluation questionnaires completed by participants.

In addition to these indicators, knowledge actions like URBACT City Labs, National Practice Transfer Initiatives, contribution to the UAEU will have specific objectives with related indicators, in addition to being evaluated by external experts and report on the impact made.

Similarly, surveys and questionnaires to the target audiences of the URBACT Knowledge Hub will help understand and report on the usefulness of knowledge outputs and activities. Finally, the following key indicators will be used to measure the performance of the URBACT Knowledge Hub pages of the URBACT website:

Key performance indicator 1: monthly average time spent in individual URBACT Knowledge Hub webpages

Key performance indicator 2: number of website unique views of individual Knowledge Hub webpages per month

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<sup>11</sup> Programme level events include online or in-person events organised by the URBACT programme such as the URBACT City Festivals, meetings and events organised under National Practice Transfer Initiatives, City Labs as described above, or thematic sessions at the URBACT University, URBACT Campus, coordination/training meeting with URBACT cities, thematic sessions at the European Week for the Regions and Cities, World Urban Forum, EU Cities Forum, EUI events, and any other external events.

## C. EXPERTISE AT PROGRAMME LEVEL

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### C.1. Expertise in the URBACT IV Cooperation programme

Expertise is key in the overall URBACT methodology.

The URBACT IV Cooperation Programme foresees that “*URBACT networks will be supported by international experts in integrated sustainable urban development. Expertise shall include both the urban topic of the networks as well as tools and methods for exchange and learning.*” The Cooperation Programme also foresees that “*Expertise support is provided to build and manage knowledge on sustainable urban development*” and that “*Programme-level capacity building will be supported by international experts in integrated sustainable urban development and green, digital and gender equality*”.

### C.2. The URBACT Pool of Experts

#### C.2.1. The Open Call for URBACT Experts

A permanent open call for URBACT Experts shall be launched at the beginning of the Programme and shall remain open for the whole duration of the Programme. Validation to the URBACT pool of expert opens the door to a variety of possible expertise missions for supporting approved URBACT networks and the URBACT Secretariat. The call defines the services to be performed to support URBACT networks and programme activities. It also sets out a series of assessment criteria to be applied to each application as well as the possible conflict of interest.

The Open Call shall be published on the URBACT website. The applicants may apply for the expert positions providing support at network and programme level.

An external service provider, selected through an open Call for Tender, shall support the URBACT Joint Secretariat with the assessment and, when appropriate, validation of the applications received from candidate URBACT Experts, following the assessment criteria outlined in the Call for Experts.

#### C.2.2. The Pool of Experts

The pool of URBACT Experts is composed of the applicants that have been validated after assessment for one or several expertise roles defined in the call either at network or programme level.

Validation for the URBACT IV pool of validated experts does not imply any contractual arrangements between the URBACT Managing Authority and the validated URBACT Experts. Only request from approved networks (network level expertise) or from the URBACT Secretariat (programme level expertise) shall lead to the conclusion of a contract.

### C.3. Different types of expertise at Programme Level

#### C.3.1. External Assessment Panel (Project Assessment)

The External Assessment Panel (EAP), which is normally recruited specifically for each call, shall be composed of up to 8 members in charge of assessing the eligible projects received by the URBACT Secretariat. The

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

- > Proven track record in similar work (i.e., of assessing applications for transnational cooperation projects)
- > Good knowledge of issues related to integrated and sustainable urban development (varied themes to ensure good coverage).
- > Understanding and experience of exchange and learning practices at European level
- > Understanding and experience of transfer of good practice at European level
- > Understanding and knowledge of European Cohesion Policy
- > Other relevant skills and competences considered relevant
- > Independence from cities, national authorities, and National or European networks involving local authorities

The External Assessment Panel Chair shall be appointed among the selected members.

The External Assessment Panel shall assess the eligible applications on the basis of the assessment criteria provided in the Call for Proposals to be approved by the Monitoring Committee. They can refer to the relevance of the topic, the coherence of the approach, the motivation and quality of the partnership, the quality of the proposed methodology, as well as other qualitative aspects of the overall application.

With a view to ensuring the funding of high-quality proposals, the External Assessment Panel may seek clarification from the candidate Lead partners by means of interviews and provide recommendations for improvements if necessary.

The External Assessment Panel shall proceed to the assessment of each eligible proposal and elaborate recommendations for approval or for improvement if the proposal is not recommended for funding. Based on this input, the URBACT Managing Authority shall submit a proposal of networks to be approved to the Monitoring Committee.

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

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST RULES FOR EAP MEMBERS**



- > EAP members must certify through, a declaration of non-conflict of interest, that they do not have any professional relation with the actors potentially involved in URBACT IV project proposals nor any interest in the projects that could be developed by cities and other public authorities within the framework of the Call for proposals they are involved in. In case there should be any change in the EAP member situation with regard to the above-mentioned elements, he/she should immediately inform in writing the URBACT Secretariat Director of the new situation. The latter will determine what action is required.
- > The position of EAP member is not compatible with the positions of Network Expert (neither Lead nor Ad-hoc Expert), Methods & Tools Programme Expert, National URBACT Point contact person, Programme Evaluator.

### C.3.2. Methods and Tools Programme Experts

Methods and Tools Programme Experts shall support the URBACT Secretariat in the following fields of activity:

- > Transnational exchange and learning: drawing on the lessons from previous projects, supporting the design and delivery of transnational network activities;
- > Capacity building: supporting the design and delivery of all activities foreseen in the Programme regarding capacity-building, including the URBACT University and the URBACT Toolbox;
- > Events: supporting the design and delivery of Programme events and other communication and dissemination activities;
- > Communication: articles or other communication materials related to methods and tools.

Methods and Tools Programme Experts shall be recruited by means of open calls for applicants published on the URBACT website. The external consultancy, recruited through a call for tender for the selection and assessment of URBACT experts, will be in charge of selecting the candidates.



#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST RULES FOR METHODS & TOOLS PROGRAMME EXPERTS**

- > The position of M&T PE is not compatible with the positions of Network Expert (neither Lead nor Ad-hoc Expert), National URBACT Point contact person, Programme Evaluator.

### C.3.3. Thematic and Strategic Expertise at Programme Level

The programme may commission experts to support the design and delivery of programme-level activities. Such activities may include:

- > The design and delivery of capacity building activities (e.g. URBACT University, trainings, etc.)
- > Knowledge capture: identifying, capturing and transferring knowledge and practice in sustainable urban development from URBACT networks;
- > Knowledge capitalisation activities (e.g. leading URBACT themes, contributing to the Urban Agenda, animating thematic communities of practice; designing and delivering thematic seminars or publications, studies, etc.)
- > Communication and dissemination activities (e.g. articles content for the website, presenting at external events, city festival, etc.)
- > Providing strategic support
- > Monitoring and Evaluation works
- > Other activities as considered necessary

This may be done following different processes depending on the expert's position and the duration of the mission:

#### **A. Network experts registered in the URBACT Pool of Experts with active contracts**

- The potential use of contracted network experts for programme activities is foreseen in their contract. The time they can devote to these activities upon request of the Joint Secretariat may amount to up to 30% of the time the Lead or Ad-hoc Experts are contracted to support the network. Nevertheless, the total number of appointed days (based on active contracts) for network and programme activities is limited to 186 days per expert.
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*Example: an expert is contracted as Lead or Ad-hoc Expert of a network for 40 days. This contract opens a potential of 12 days (40 days x 30%) to be provided at Programme level upon request of the URBACT Secretariat.*

Details and duration of this expert support shall be stipulated by means of amendments to their initial contract when the request for expertise is longer than 10 days. Details and duration of this expert support shall be stipulated by means of purchase orders if the request is shorter or equal to 10 days.

## **B. Experts registered in the URBACT pool of Experts without an active contract**

### **Short-term missions**

The Programme may commission experts of the URBACT pool of experts who do not have an active contract with URBACT for strategic or thematic expertise at Programme level.

For short-term missions, limited in time (e.g. contribution to a Programme event) and involving a maximum of 10 expertise days in total, this will be done by issuing a purchase order defining the tasks to be carried out.

The appointments for these short-term missions are limited to 30 expertise days over the entire duration of the URBACT IV Programme. For all contracted network experts these days will be used only in case the Programme days available in the contract (up to 30% of the contract values) are used in its entirety.


### **Longer term missions**

For longer term or recurring missions, or involving more than 10 expertise days, the Secretariat shall launch specific calls for expertise within the URBACT pool of experts. A contract will be offered to the selected candidate(s).

## **C. Open calls for expertise at programme level**

In particular cases (very specific expertise, competencies that are not available in the pool of experts or too limited, etc.), the URBACT Programme may launch open calls that shall be published on the URBACT website. A contract will be offered to the selected candidate(s).

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST RULES APPLICABLE TO THEMATIC / STRATEGIC EXPERTS AT PROGRAMME LEVEL**

 There is no specific conflict of interest a priori identified. The call for experts shall specify when the tasks will not be compatible with other expert positions in the URBACT Programme.

### **C.3.4. Budgetary elements for expertise at Programme level**

#### **External Assessment Panel**

The External Assessment Panel fees are based on a unit cost per application assessed. Since the work to be done can vary from one Call to another, this unit cost will be specified in the Terms of Reference of each call as well as in the expert contracts.

### **Methods & Tools Programme Experts**

The daily expertise fee for Method and Tools Programme Experts is set at Euros 750 per day (VAT EXCLUDED; all other taxes and charges included) for the whole duration of the URBACT IV Programme. The contracts of the M&T Programme Experts are concluded for a period of 2 years.

### **Thematic and Strategic expertise at Programme level**

The daily expertise fee for Thematic and Strategic experts at Programme level is usually set at Euros 750 per day (VAT EXCLUDED; all other taxes and charges included). However, in the frame of specific projects (for example network-led capitalisation activities), the daily expertise fee can be fixed at a lower level. In these specific projects, expert travel & accommodation costs may be either included or excluded in the daily fee. The latter conditions are specified in the expert contract or the purchase order.

## D. COMMUNICATION AT PROGRAMME LEVEL

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### D.1. Main objectives

The URBACT IV cooperation programme defines five communication objectives for the duration of the programme. These are designed to cover the whole programme cycle, but some objectives might be prioritised in specific moments in time. To monitor these objectives, the URBACT Secretariat has set some key performance indicators on which it will report regularly to the URBACT Monitoring Committee:

#### ***D.1.1. Raise awareness of URBACT's features to a wide range of (potential) beneficiaries***

- > Key performance indicator 1: monthly average of website visitors<sup>12</sup>
- > Key performance indicator 2: number of new website visitors every month
- > Key performance indicator 3: growing rate of social media's followership per month

#### ***D.1.2. Support beneficiaries and internal stakeholders when implementing and communicating on the actions and results of EU-funded projects***

- > Key performance indicator 1: satisfaction rate of URBACT networks' communication officers about trainings and support provided by the URBACT Secretariat

#### ***D.1.3. Ensure programme calls, results and other relevant information is made available to the widest number of people***

- > Key performance indicator 1: average of people visiting the webpage dedicated to an URBACT call (i.e. [urbact.eu/get-involved](http://urbact.eu/get-involved)) during the call for networks
- > Key performance indicators 1,2,3 as defined under objective 1 above

#### ***D.1.4. Facilitate the uptake of URBACT knowledge***

- > Key performance indicator 1: number of people who have increased their knowledge as a result of their participation in programme level events
- > Key performance indicator 2: number of website unique page views per month
- > Key performance indicator 3: monthly average time spent in individual URBACT Knowledge Hub webpages
- > Key performance indicator 4: number of website unique views of individual Knowledge Hub webpages per month

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<sup>12</sup> The baseline figures related to the URBACT website (page views, average time spent on the website, etc) are set in October 2022-date of launch of the new URBACT IV website

### ***D.1.5. Ensure a coordinated approach to programme activities and promotion, in particular with the European Urban Initiative.***

- > Key performance indicator 1: joint URBACT-EUI communication campaigns
- > Key performance indicator 2: joint sessions or events organised by National URBACT Points and EUI urban contact points
- > Key performance indicator 3: number of URBACT news and articles hosted on EUI website and EUI knowledge platform, Portico

## **D.2. Target audiences**

To further develop activities and achieve the objectives above, the URBACT Joint Secretariat – alongside corresponding service providers – shall create communication plans and campaigns at programme-level, with the aim to reach out to the following target audiences (as defined by URBACT Cooperation Programme, p.52):

- > URBACT cities and potential new beneficiaries.
- > Cohesion Policy stakeholders as Managing Authorities and cities implementing Cohesion Funds.
- > Multipliers: Member and Partner States, IPA and NDICI countries, European Commission (communication services), European Urban Initiative, Urban Agenda for the EU, European Parliament, Committee of Regions.
- > Public entities: Member and Partner States, DG Regio, EUI entrusted secretariat, UDG and DGUM.
- > Thematic knowledge organisations at European level – e.g. CEMR, Eurocities, ICLEI, OECD and UN-Habitat.
- > Wider urban community, incl. elected representatives

## **D.3. Communication channels**

URBACT will support a multi-level communication strategy, at European, national and local level. The following is a non-exhaustive list of the main channels that may evolve throughout the programme lifetime:

- > **URBACT website** (urbact.eu) meeting criteria for visibility and accessibility, in line with Article 46 Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and Article 46(b) CPR.
- > **Social media channels**, which might significantly evolve throughout the years according to developments of tools and user-experience profiles. As of April 2023, URBACT counts with the official channels below with the purposes:
  - Twitter – create engagement and increase visibility
  - Facebook – increase visibility and draw traffic to the website
  - LinkedIn – draw traffic to the website and create engagement
  - Instagram – increase visibility and create engagement
  - YouTube (video archive) – increase visibility
- > **Institutional and public relations through partnerships**, establishing mechanisms to coordinate relevant activities and share information with key stakeholders – i.e. EUI and ETC programmes. Further creating cooperation with organisations operating in Europe and beyond, which work on the subject of cities and sustainable urban development.
- > **Events** of all types, as in online, hybrid and face-to-face. Each event shall have its own specific objectives, reach, target audience and tailored content. These include flagship

events for outreach and knowledge sharing, as the URBACT City Festival, as well operations of strategic importance, as capacity-building trainings such as the URBACT Summer University and URBACT e-University. But also smaller, but no less relevant, events as policy labs, dedicated meetings with internal stakeholders and other external events organised by institutional partners – i.e. Cities Forum and European Week of Regions and Cities.

- > **Publications and outputs of various formats**, including print, digital and audio-visual, following the publicity requirements in order to support the programme's outreach, knowledge sharing and capacity-building actions.
- > **National URBACT Points** are also a channel of communication to reach certain target audiences in national language – at local, regional and national level. They adapt URBACT's communications to their national contexts.

#### D.4. URBACT IV visual identity and graphic charter

URBACT IV has one distinctive logo as foreseen by EU Regulation 2021/1060:



This URBACT IV logo must be present in all activities and outputs produced by the URBACT Secretariat, National URBACT Points, URBACT experts and URBACT beneficiaries funded by the URBACT programme. Products that do not bear the URBACT IV logo will not be eligible to reimbursement of related costs.

The logo must be used in a way that the financial statement ('Co-funded by the European Union Interreg') is visible and easy to read at all times.

It is not possible to change, to invert, tilt, rotate, distort, stretch or cut the logo, change the colour, composition, or spacing.

In addition, following URBACT's IV graphic charter and editorial guidelines, **URBACT** must be written in capital letters at all times.

An URBACT IV communication toolkit will be available for communication and promotional purposes and shall comprise the following elements:

- > URBACT IV logo
- > A graphic charter presenting the colour palette and other elements to be respected
- > Infographic presenting the main features of the URBACT IV programme
- > Powerpoint presentation of the URBACT IV programme
- > Word templates
- > Visual for the background of online meetings
- > Visuals (favicons) for the social media avatars
- > Visuals for Social Media banners and posts (in particular Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)
- > URBACT roll up (totem)
- > An infographic per type of network to visually present the features of each network
- > URBACT IV lanyards for event participants' badges

More elements may be added in the toolkit in the course of the URBACT IV programme following needs and requests by URBACT stakeholders.

Further dedicated visuals will be developed for communication campaigns around calls for networks, for major events and activities.

All these elements will be available for use and adaptation in national languages by the National URBACT Points.

## **D.5. Coordination of communication activities at programme level**

As per Article 48 Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, the URBACT Joint Secretariat has appointed a communication officer who is in charge of the implementation of communication and visibility actions. This person is working within the Unit for Communication and Knowledge.

This person and the whole Unit for Communication and Knowledge will make sure that the communication strategy, visibility and regulatory requirements are respected at all levels, local through the URBACT cities visibility actions, at network level through URBACT networks' communication officers, at national level through the National URBACT Points, and at EU level during events and other activities.

The Unit shall also work closely with the national communication coordinator in France.

## **D.6. Budget**

The URBACT IV programming committee designated a total budget of EUR 5 345 000 for communication and visibility purposes from 2021 to 2029. This represents 5.7% of the total programme budget.

This budget shall be used to cover costs in relation to the organisation of programme events like URBACT City Festivals and other communication events, to the production of communication materials, to the management of social media, to website developments and to other communication needs that may occur in the course of the URBACT IV programme.

# E. NATIONAL URBACT POINTS

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## E.1. National URBACT Points in the URBACT IV Cooperation programme

As stated at the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme, one of the aims of the URBACT programme is to “Ensure that URBACT knowledge and practice is made accessible to urban practitioners and policymakers to feed into local, regional, national and European urban policies, in particular through the European Urban Initiative; and contributing to the Urban Agenda for the EU”.

One of the means to achieve this aim are “National URBACT Points who are in charge of communicating on URBACT activities and disseminating URBACT results at national level in local language. They play an important role in linking URBACT knowledge to national and regional stakeholders and in stimulating a wide participation in networks and capacity-building activities. They can support programme capacity building efforts at national level, adapt and translate programme methods and tools into national language.”

In regard to the set-up of Urban Contact Points under European Urban Initiative, the URBACT IV cooperation programme also states that “National URBACT Points will also aim at linking with the Cohesion policy requirements and programmes in complementarity with the European Urban Initiative Contact Points. In line with ‘Implementing the New Leipzig Charter’, member states are called to look for a common narrative and clear division of tasks and where possible, to have the same structure when setting up national contact points for URBACT, the European urban initiative and any other urban national point.”

Under URBACT IV, IPA and NDICI countries can also appoint National URBACT Points to deliver missions and activities but these will be funded by the IPA/ NDICI budget available for the URBACT programme.

## E.2. Missions of National URBACT Points

Building on the experience of URBACT III National URBACT Points, and on the needs and perspectives of URBACT III beneficiary cities, Monitoring Committee members and National URBACT Points who participated in the study on National URBACT Points of August 2020, the missions of National URBACT Points under URBACT IV will touch upon:

- > Communication & dissemination of URBACT calls, activities, thematic content and good practices about integrated urban development
- > National networking
- > Support to URBACT beneficiary cities
- > Coordination with the URBACT Secretariat, National Authorities & EUI Urban Contact Points

These missions are further described under article 6.

## E.3. Target audience of National URBACT Points

The National URBACT Points shall target their activities to the following audiences:

- > urban practitioners and policy-makers at local, regional and national levels (including where relevant Managing Authorities of ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes)
- > potential beneficiaries, especially cities that have not been yet involved in URBACT networks and small and medium-sized cities
- > the national “URBACT community” (partners, experts, etc. involved in URBACT networks)

## **E.4. Profile of National URBACT Points**

National Authorities should select and appoint National URBACT Points following their national rules/consultations and on the basis of the following requirements:

**A public or equivalent or not for profit body to act as National URBACT Point. This body will have to name the main contact person(s) for the URBACT Secretariat and National Authority.**

**The appointed National URBACT Point has to have:**

- > Experience with sustainable integrated urban development and knowledge of EU and national policy framework and instruments;
- > Experience and capacity to communicate in national language relevant content targeting various audiences through digital communications tools (webpage, newsletters, social media, etc.) and in events;
- > Experience and capacity to organise and deliver events at national level (eg URBACT infodays, National Capacity-building seminars, etc.) including designing programmes, inviting speakers, managing registration, etc.
- > Capacity to reach out to a large number of local authorities;
- > Capacity to dialogue with national authorities responsible for urban policies (relevant ministries, Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes, etc.);
- > Capacity to communicate with the URBACT Secretariat and other EN-speaking stakeholders in English.

The time spent on National URBACT Point activities is estimated to one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), that can be filled by one or more people. This FTE can be either financed or co-financed according to the budget limits per NUP. In some small countries or countries with few cities involved in URBACT, a part time equivalent may be more suitable.

## **E.5. Missions to be delivered by National URBACT Points**

All National URBACT Points are expected to deliver mandatory missions as described below. The URBACT Secretariat shall provide all the necessary guidance, information, material, training, coordination for National URBACT Points to deliver their missions.

### ***E.5.1. Mandatory missions***

#### **Communication & dissemination of calls, activities, thematic content and good practices about integrated urban development**

The National URBACT Points shall contribute to the implementation of the URBACT communication strategy, more especially by ensuring communications on the URBACT programme, and when relevant on European Urban Initiative, and other EU programmes/funds/opportunities for local authorities, in national languages and at national level. Under this mission, it is expected from the National URBACT Points to:

- > Organise at least a dedicated infoday or session per year to present URBACT, calls for networks, workshops and sessions on the thematic content and good practices coming from URBACT cities/networks/activities. Joint infodays or sessions with European Urban Initiative Urban Contact Points should be privileged.

- > Update the National URBACT Point webpage of the URBACT website at least once a month with news, articles or other materials.
- > Contribute to events (stands, public presentation, moderation) organised by other organisations/institutions on urban development like European Urban Initiative, Council of European Municipalities and Regions, and others.
- > Use at least one social medium (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram or other) to communicate and engage with current and potential URBACT beneficiaries.
- > Use a national newsletter to communicate the news and events of the URBACT programme (either through existing newsletters or a newsletter created by the National URBACT Point for this reason).
- > Produce digital materials (infographics, videos, visuals) to communicate on the URBACT programme activities and calls.
- > Translate news/articles/content from EN to national languages when necessary.
- > Carry out other activities and outputs that National URBACT Points consider relevant at national level

Communication activities, tools and channels should be combined as much as possible with those of the EUI contact points. When NUP organise an event that brings in content/speakers from EUI and vice versa, EUI/NUP points will decide if and which costs of this event can be covered by NUP or EUI budget. . Similarly, the respective national contact points can decide to co-finance joint outputs or other activities.

### **National networking**

National URBACT Points shall support and enhance the dialogue amongst local authorities, in particular amongst URBACT beneficiary partners, between national authorities and URBACT beneficiaries, and when relevant amongst URBACT and EUI beneficiaries. Under this mission, it is expected from all the National URBACT Points to organise at least one meeting per year amongst the following:

- > -Meetings/workshops for URBACT cities to exchange on their challenges and progress in relation to their URBACT activities: URBACT Local Groups, actions, and opportunities for funding integrated action plans or transfer plans.
- > -Meetings amongst national and local authorities involved in URBACT for possible take up of knowledge/activities or for supporting the work of cities.
- > -Meetings/sessions amongst URBACT cities and funders (Managing Authorities, European commission's DGs or agencies, sponsors, etc).
- > -Other meetings or events that enhance the dialogue amongst local authorities, or local authorities and national authorities.

Upon the discretion of National URBACT Points, all the above-mentioned meetings can bring together EUI beneficiaries.

### **Support to URBACT beneficiaries**

National URBACT Point shall support the efforts of URBACT beneficiaries in designing, implementing, funding, and communicating local policies. Under this mission, it is expected from the National URBACT Points to:

- > Contribute to URBACT Local Group meetings, present the benefits of URBACT networks to meetings elected officials, etc. This should be organised after consultation with the URBACT beneficiaries and especially when there are specific needs.
- > Link local authorities with funding opportunities at EU and national levels through dedicated meeting (online or in-person) or with making relevant information available. To this end, National URBACT Points should coordinate, amongst others, with EUI contact points for the presentation of funding opportunities from the EUI.
- > Exchange with local authorities on the best ways to communicate local work, results and outputs communication outputs at national level.
- > Carry out other activities and outputs that National URBACT Points seem relevant at national level.

## **Coordination**

National URBACT Point shall coordinate with different stakeholders for the successful delivery of their missions and for the objectives of the URBACT programme. Under this mission, it is expected from the National URBACT Points to coordinate with:

### **URBACT Secretariat:**

Coordination is conceived as a two-way exchange and sharing of information between the URBACT Secretariat and the National URBACT Points. It can be about:

- > Feeding in the National URBACT Secretariat about national needs and priorities in terms of knowledge management and capacity-building;
- > Launching surveys and sharing results to the URBACT Secretariat
- > Other topics

Coordination will happen through:

- > Regular online communication (email correspondence, online collaborative platform, phone calls, webinars).
- > One in-person coordination/training meeting per year, when relevant joint or combined with the meeting of the European Urban Initiative Urban Contact Points.

### **National Authority following up the URBACT Programme**

National URBACT Points should have regular contact with the National Authority/ Authorities (in case of a cooperation between 2 or more countries) in charge of the URBACT programme, especially when it comes to defining annual priorities and workplan, to communicating national urban policies and national needs to the URBACT Secretariat for the design of knowledge and capacity-building activities, and to enhancing the dialogue between local and national levels.

### **Urban Contact Points under European Urban Initiative**

National URBACT Points shall have regular contact with the Urban Contact Points of the European Urban Initiative to exchange on their respective priorities and activities, on their communication channels and tools, and on how to provide a complementary package of activities to cities. When possible, they should organise joint activities or events in an effort to avoid duplication of activities.

## **E.5.2. Complementary activities**

Some National URBACT Points can request from the Secretariat or can be asked by the URBACT Secretariat to carry out complementary activities. In this case, extra/complementary funding will be available for National URBACT Points via the budget of URBACT programme operations (Knowledge-

Capitalisation, Capacity-building, Communication). National URBACT Points shall also coordinate with EUI contact points about the complementary activities to be put in place.

### **Support the URBACT Secretariat with capacity-building activities**

To ensure the successful delivery of capacity-building activities at national and EU levels, the URBACT Secretariat shall ask for the support of National URBACT Points for the organization of capacity-building events for cities (eg national capacity-building seminars for URBACT partners (National Campus), URBACT Summer University, or online capacity-building sessions, etc.), and more specifically support for logistics (eg providing venue for events, supporting registration process), identification of service providers (eg interpretation, trainers, speakers), relaying information/ invitation emails, etc.

In addition to activities proposed by the URBACT Secretariat, National URBACT Points can also propose to deliver on their own additional capacity-building activities for the cities of their countries using URBACT tools and content. Linkages with relevant capacity-building activities initiated by EUI should be considered.

Budget for this activity will be provided by the capacity-building operation.

### **Support the URBACT Secretariat with knowledge activities**

To maximise the take up of knowledge hub (capitalisation) activities at local and national levels, National URBACT Points can ask from the URBACT Secretariat to deliver knowledge activities at national level or can be asked by the URBACT Secretariat to organise policy labs, thematic sessions.

The URBACT Secretariat will coordinate with the relevant National URBACT Points for the delivery of the activities and the corresponding additional budget. Linkages with relevant knowledge activities initiated by EUI should also be considered.

Budget for this activity will be provided by the knowledge-capitalisation operation.

### **National Practice Transfer Initiatives or similar**

To maximise the take up and transfer of thematic content and practices, National Practice Transfer Initiatives can take place in some countries following a call to National URBACT Points. A National Practice Transfer Initiative (NPTI) aims to transfer a good practice, which was transferred, adapted, or developed under an URBACT network, to non-URBACT cities, at national level and in national languages. An updated version of NPTI can also integrate knowledge content/outputs or tools developed under URBACT Knowledge Hub.

National Practice Transfer Initiatives under URBACT IV will take into consideration the experience and lessons drawn from the five pilot National Practice Transfer Initiatives implemented in Czechia/Slovakia, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, and Slovenia from June 2021 to December 2022 under URBACT III.

Following interest by National URBACT Points who want to deliver an NPTI and assessment by the Secretariat, the URBACT Monitoring Committee will be the one approving the NPTI and corresponding budget coming from the knowledge-capitalisation operation.

### **Other complementary activities**

National URBACT Points could be requested by the URBACT Secretariat to deliver specific activities that do not fall under the missions or complementary activities described above.

## **E.6. Green events and activities**

In the framework of URBACT IV green strategy for all the activities of the programme, National URBACT Points shall take measures to reduce or offset the carbon emissions of their events, activities and outputs. Further guidance will be provided by the URBACT Secretariat but when possible first measures can include the organisation of carbon-neutral events in eco-friendly venues with local and vegetarian/vegan food, the organisation on online meetings, encouraging participants to use trains rather than planes and private cars for their trips, avoiding the use of plastic objects (bottles, cutlery, etc.). National URBACT Points should avoid to print publications or produce materials and gadgets, any exceptions must be justified to the URBACT Secretariat. Whenever print is necessary, National URBACT Points should be mindful of using recycled paper or materials that can be upcycled or recycled after use.

## **E.7. Framework for implementation**

### ***E.7.1. Provisions in the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme***

As stated in the URBACT IV Cooperation Programme, “Each Member/ Partner State shall appoint, in agreement with the Managing Authority, a public or equivalent or not for profit body in their country that shall operate as National URBACT Point. The conditions of this appointment shall be laid down in a convention between the selected body and the Managing Authority.” (p.36)

### ***E.7.2. Procedure for the appointment by national authorities***

Member/ Partner states, IPA<sup>13</sup> and NDICI<sup>14</sup> countries willing to appoint their National URBACT Points shall submit an online or paper “form for the appointment of National URBACT Point”. In this form, they shall present the proposed organization, outline the experience and capacities of the organisation against the missions described in this factsheet, and explain why the organisation is in a position to perform the role of National URBACT Points in their country. It will be possible that 2 or several countries appoint a joint NUP (e.g. in countries with a shared language). The appointment form will include questions about the appointment of the EUI contact point in order to facilitate the appointment of a single urban contact point by Member or Partner State, IPA and NDICI countries that would carry out functions both for URBACT and EUI.

Following the appointment of the National URBACT Point, an agreement form shall be signed between the URBACT Managing Authority and the appointed organisation. The agreement will include the missions and complementary activities described above.

The agreement shall cover a three-and-a-half-year period. It can be automatically renewed one time. When needed, the agreement can be extended by means of amendment for a last period of one year maximum in order to cover the final stage of the Programme.

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<sup>13</sup> Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Countries: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

<sup>14</sup> Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument Countries: Ukraine and Moldova

### **E.7.3. Management and coordination of the National URBACT Points**

The National URBACT Points shall establish an initial 2-year work plan in cooperation with the URBACT Secretariat. The national authority responsible for URBACT can take part in this process. A second work plan will be established later to cover the period until end of the agreement. In the case where NUP and EUI contact points are the same, a single workplan for both NUP and EUI can be agreed in coordination with URBACT and EUI Secretariats. Similarly, joint contact points are expected to produce joint activity and financial reports, according to the procedure set up in January 2025. .

A person within the URBACT Secretariat will be dedicated to the coordination of National URBACT Points and to the coordination with the EUI Secretariat when it comes to the activities of the EUI Contact Points and synergies with the National URBACT Points.

Coordination of National URBACT Points shall be based on:

- > At least one in-person coordination meeting per year between the URBACT Secretariat and all NUPs. When relevant, this meeting or part of it can be co-organised with EUI Secretariat and host EUI contact points.
- > Webinars. When relevant, this meeting or part of it can be co-organised with EUI Secretariat and host EUI contact points.
- > Ongoing flow of information on programme and networks activities through digital means
- > Ad hoc trainings to support service delivery.
- > Participation of National URBACT Points in key URBACT activities when relevant (e.g. Programme level events such as conferences, summer universities, etc).
- > Other activities when relevant.

The National URBACT Points shall be accountable to the URBACT Managing Authority. They will provide regular reporting on delivery of their missions to the URBACT Secretariat, who in turn will report on NUPs activities and performance to the Monitoring Committee.

The URBACT Secretariat shall encourage the National URBACT Point to contribute to the following desirable results:

- > Increased number of cities apply to URBACT calls for networks  
No. of partners applied, no. of new partners applied
- > Urban practitioners' access URBACT online resources.
- > No. of visitors per country to the URBACT website
- > Non-URBACT practitioners know about URBACT and what it offers
- > No. of non-URBACT practitioners, having participated in NUP events or activities, saying that they know what URBACT offers
- > Practitioners and policy makers have increased their knowledge as a result of visiting NUP pages, or participating in national activities. No. of practitioners with increased knowledge

## **E.8. Budgetary elements, reporting and reimbursement**

For Member States, a total of EUR 6 150 000 is available for National URBACT Point operation under URBACT IV from 2023 to 2029, out of which EUR 150 000 are dedicated to the coordination of the operation (mainly costs related to the organisation of coordination meetings). This budget is allocated from the ERDF fund.

The first 3,5-year agreement signed between the National URBACT Point and the URBACT Managing Authority made available a budget of EUR 140 000 per country for the three and a half period per National URBACT Point

(on the basis of 25 National URBACT Points in Member states). This budget covered staff costs and other costs in relation to organisation of events, travel costs, communication costs, etc.

Following approval of the URBACT Monitoring Committee on 12-13 June 2025, the overall NUP budget has been increased with EUR 900 000 (allocation from IPA and NDICI fund), in order to finance activities of NUPs in the 5 IPA countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and in the 2 NDICI countries (Ukraine and Moldova) from 2023 to 2029.

For the 5 IPA countries, the budget for the first 3,5-year agreement is EUR 85 000 per country. For Ukraine and Moldova, the budget allocated in the first period of the agreement is EUR 50 000 for each country.

Following approval of the URBACT Monitoring Committee on 17 February 2026, for the second 3,5-year period of the agreement, from 1 July 2026 to 31 December 2029, the budget allocation is as followed:

- For Member states: EUR 140 000 per country
- For IPA countries; EUR 110 000 per country
- For Moldova: EUR 25 000
- For Ukraine: EUR 75 000 (as no budget was spent during the first period of the agreement).

Additional budget for the complementary activities can be provided upon request of the National URBACT Points to the URBACT Secretariat or upon request of the URBACT Secretariat to the URBACT Monitoring Committee Members.

To simplify the financial reporting and reimbursement of NUP costs, Simplified Costs Option as foreseen by REGULATION (EU) 2021/1060, 24 June 2021, will be used.

Each NUP shall choose between two costs calculation options:

Option 1 is based on provisional real cost for the dedicated staff, external expertise and other services and equipment. Office administration and travel accommodation shall represent a flat rate of 10% and 15% of the staff costs respectively.

Option 2 is based on the provisional real cost of the dedicated staff and a flat rate for the other NUP's costs. The flat rate for other costs shall represent 40% of the staff costs. Only the staff costs shall be estimated in the provisional budget and reported in the yearly financial report.

In both options, the flat rate shall be automatic and will not need any kind of justification.

# F. AUDIT AND IRREGULARITIES

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## F.1. Second Level Audit

### F.1.1. *Audit Authority*

The French National Audit Authority for European Funds (AnAFé), hereafter known as the 'audit authority', is responsible for drawing up, after consulting the managing authority, an audit strategy (AS) based on a risk assessment, taking account of the description of the management and control system, and to monitor and annually update the AS for the programme concerned.

This AS has been drawn up by the AnAFé, and approved by the group of auditors (article 48 point 1 of regulation (EU) 1059/2021).

The AS is held by the AnAFé to be available to the European Commission and is issued to it upon de-mand.

### F.1.2. *The Group of Auditors*

The audit authority is assisted by a Group of Auditors (GoA) which it chairs and whose organisation and activities are described in the current Internal Regulations.

The GoA is made up of representatives of member States who have no connection with the beneficiaries, the managing authority, or people or services involved in carrying out the management checks. Each representative is asked to provide a declaration of independence and competence, accompanied by an organigram of the structure in which they are employed.

The Joint Secretariat is responsible to constitute and update the list of members of the GoA.

### F.1.3. *Second level control process*

Audits of operations are carried out by the service provider contracted to support the AA for the audit activities.

Audits of operations are carried out under the validation of the competent member of the GOA in the conditions stipulated in the internal regulations of the programme.

Model documents are proposed by the service provider and validated by the GoA together with their potential development. The audit methodologies used respect those of the AnAFé, especially concerning the supervision of the work.

The European Commission selects a common operations sample using a statistical sampling method for operations audits that must be devised by the audit authorities for the Interreg programmes in receipt of support from the EU funds for each financial year.

The sampling unit corresponds to the cumulative expenditure declared during the financial year by a partner of the project in an operation.

The information necessary for selecting a common sample is provided to the Commission by the MA by 1 August at latest following each financial year at the latest. This information issued in a standardised electronic form, is exhaustive and corresponds to the expenditure declared to the Commission by the MA for the reference financial year.

The Commission informs the audit authorities of the Interreg programmes involved in the selected common sample by 1 September at the latest, in order to allow these authorities to carry out the operations audits.

## **F.2. Irregularities**

The AA communicates the information on the results of these audits as well as any financial correction made in relation to individual irregularities discovered, in the annual control reports which must be submitted to the Commission on 15 February following the end of the financial year at the latest.

Following its evaluation of the results of the operations audits, the Commission calculates an overall extrapolated error rate for the Interreg included in the population from which the common sample has been selected, for the purposes of its own insurance process.

When the overall extrapolated error rate in question is higher than 2% of the total expenditure declared for the Interreg programmes in the population from which the common sample has been selected, the Commission calculates an overall residual error rate, taking account of the financial corrections applied by the authorities responsible for the Interreg programmes concerning the individual irregularities discovered by the audits of the selected operations.

When the overall residual error rate is higher than 2% of the expenditure declared for the Interreg programmes included in the population from which the common sample has been selected, the Commission determines whether it is necessary to ask the audit authority of a specific Interreg programme or group of programmes which are the most affected, to carry out supplementary audit work for a deeper evaluation of the error rate and to set out the corrective measures required for the Interreg programmes involved in the irregularities discovered.

Based on an evaluation of the results of the supplementary audit work requested, the Commission may require further financial corrections to be applied to the Interreg programmes involved in the irregularities discovered. In this case, the authority responsible for the Interreg programme makes the required financial corrections in accordance with article 103 of regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

The work and its validation will be documented in a detailed manner (statements listing the files examined, the results file by file of the re-examination, corrections made) by the member State(s) concerned and the documentation will be sent to the managing Authority/Joint Secretariat.

**URBACT**



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