

# URBACT

## Pioneers Accelerator

The European learning programme for cities from Western Balkans

### GENERAL INVITATION

**Final Showcasing Event & Ceremony**

17 September 2026 in Sarajevo City hall



**Final Showcasing Event & Ceremony**  
*in Sarajevo*  
17 September 2026

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Montenegro

North Macedonia

Serbia

URBACT  Co-funded by  
the European Union  
Interreg

**Pioneers Accelerator programme**

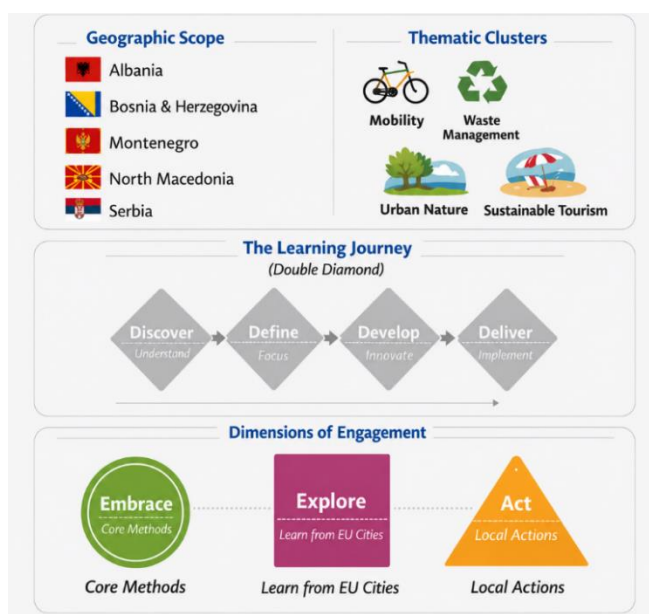
## URBACT Pioneers Accelerator – At a glance

URBACT Pioneers Accelerator is the bespoke learning programme **supporting 27 cities from the 5 EU accession countries in the Western Balkans**: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

Bringing together cities from the Western Balkans with European peers, URBACT experts, and local stakeholders, the programme has fostered a dynamic learning environment where European cooperation is turned into practical local action on the ground. At its core, the **learning programme is about nurturing a new generation of urban professionals' leaders**, who will be shaping the future of their cities in a new way, and be recognized as pioneers and trailblazers for their peers in the region.

Through a structured 18 – month journey combining capacity-building, peer exchange, study visits, and local Action Labs, participating local teams have:

- Developed and delivered **pilot actions addressing real urban challenges**, from sustainable mobility and tourism to waste management and urban nature;
- Strengthened **co-creation processes**, engaging citizen and stakeholders in shaping solutions and redefining priorities;
- Transformed initial ideas into **realistic, implementable actions with stronger local ownership and endorsement**;
- Built capacities for **storytelling and communication**, ensuring that results are visible, shared, and supported.



A defining feature of the programme is its emphasis on **learning by doing and visible change**. As highlighted by participants, transformation happens not only through strategic documents, but through **small, tangible actions that shift behaviours, build trust, and create momentum for change**.

The URBACT Pioneers Accelerator also demonstrates that **cities are key drivers of change in the EU enlargement context** - contributing to democratic resilience, stronger governance, and closer alignment with EU values through local action.

More information about the URBACT Pioneers Accelerator are available on the dedicated webpage: <https://urbact.eu/networks/urbact-pioneers-accelerator>

## About the event

**The URBACT Pioneers Accelerator Final Showcasing Event & Ceremony** taking place **17 September 2026** in Sarajevo will mark the culmination of this journey, offering a platform to present results, share lessons learned, and reaffirm the commitment of cities to continue shaping sustainable, inclusive, and future-oriented urban development pathways across the region.

The primary objective of the event is to demonstrate how cities in the Western Balkans are actively translating EU principles of sustainable and integrated urban development into practice. By showcasing tangible pilot actions and their local impact, the event will highlight the role of cities as key actors in advancing reforms aligned with the EU acquis and cohesion policy principles.

More specifically, the event aims to:

- **Showcase concrete achievements and impact** of pilot actions implemented by participating cities, with a strong emphasis on storytelling as a tool to communicate results, mobilise stakeholders, and sustain public support
- **Reinforce political commitment to sustainable urban development in the region**, with the unveiling of the **URBACT Pioneers Tree of Tomorrow** - a symbolic initiative bringing together the ambitions, visions and leadership of the cities participating in the Accelerator.
- **Position cities as drivers of the enlargement process**, demonstrating how local-level innovation, governance, and participation contribute to democratic resilience, socio-economic convergence, and the broader EU integration process.
- **Provide space for reflections and discussions** on key learning outcomes, future perspectives, identifying replicable practices and future opportunities for scaling up within the broader URBACT framework and EU policies.

### Expected Audience

- Mayors, elected representatives and local teams from participating cities
- Urban practitioners and experts from the region
- Representatives of EU institutions, including the European Commission
- Wider public and stakeholders involved and interested in sustainable urban development

## The Event Programme

17 September 2026: URBACT Pioneers Showcasing Event & Ceremony	
Please <a href="#">register here</a> .	
09h00 – 10h00	Registration, Welcome Coffee and the <b>URBACT Pioneers Gallery</b>
10h00 – 10h30	<b>Opening Session: URBACT Pioneers in numbers and stories</b> Promoting European values and Sustainable urban development across Western Balkans with an URBACT Method
10h30 – 10h45	<b>Sarajevo Welcome</b>
10h45 – 11h00	<b>Key note Speech: The Region with Great Potential</b>
11h00 – 11h50	Panel Session: <b>Accelerating the Sustainable Transformation in Europe</b>
11h50 – 12h30	<b>CEREMONY WITH MAYORS</b> <b>Growing Better Cities - The URBACT Pioneers Tree of Tomorrow</b>
12h30 – 13h30	Networking Lunch
13h30 – 15h00	<b>SPOTLIGHT ON URBACT PIONEERS' ON THE GROUND ACTIONS</b>
15h00 – 16h00	Panel Session: <b>Building Leadership Skills for Sustainable urban development</b>
16h00 – 16h30	<b>Closing session: From Pioneers to Leaders</b> What's next for Sustainable urban development in the Western Balkans?
19h30 – 22h00	<b>Evening Networking &amp; Celebration Cocktail</b> With Live Music