

URBACT
CITY FESTIVAL

29-30 September 2026 - Nicosia, Cyprus



Programme

URBACT City Festival

Nicosia, 29-30 September 2026

#URBACTfest

urbact.eu/city-festival-2026



URBACT



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Interreg



Δήμος Λευκωσίας
Nicosia Municipality

Monday, 28 September

17:30 - 21:00

Royal Hall - Grand Hall (Plenary)

Preparatory meeting for Action Planning Networks, Innovation Transfer networks, and Pioneers Accelerator cities *(upon invitation)*

Registration 17:00-17:30 Royal Hall

Closed meeting followed by dinner, for invited representatives of URBACT Action Planning Networks, Innovation Transfer Networks, and Pioneers Accelerator cities only.

Tuesday, 29 September

08:00 - 08:45

Registration

Eleftheria Square

08:45 - 09:30

Eleftheria Square

National networking coffee

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

09:30 - 10:15

Eleftheria Square - Plenary

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

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

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

Speakers:

- Charalambos Prountzos, Mayor of Nicosia
- Konstantinos Ioannou, Minister of Interior, Cyprus
- Themis Christophidou, European Commission's Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy

10:15 - 10:45

Eleftheria Square - Plenary

A trailer to the marketplace

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

10:45 - 12:30

Eleftheria Square

Local actions marketplace

Discover hundreds of local actions from European cities driving sustainable urban development!

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

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

13:00 - 14:00

National networking lunch

Royal Hall - Carrafa Room

14:30 - 15:30

Local actions in sessions

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

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

Session 1 Local economy

Eleftheria Square - Plenary

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

Guest cities:

Nyíregyháza (HU), Alghero (IT), Mangualde (PT), Grand Paris (FR), Celje (SI), Bielsko-Biała (PL), Dubrovnik (HR)

Session 2 Digital transition

Royal Hall - Gallery d'Avilla

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

Guest cities:

Mollet del Vallès (ES), Harnosand (SE), Arezzo (IT)

Session 3 Nature-based solutions

Eleftheria Square - Thematic sessions space

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

Guest cities:

Limerick (IE), Guimares (PT), Daugavpils (LV), [Urban Agenda for the EU Greening Cities Partnership](#)

Session 4 Health and wellbeing

Royal Hall - Rooftop

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

Guest cities:

Pombal (PT), Lyon (FR), Dobrich (BG)

Session 5 Mobility

Royal Hall - Loredano

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

Guest cities:

Creaccio (ES), Pentágono Urbano (PT), Brasov (RO), Intermunicipal Community of Viseu Dão Lafões (PT), Romagna Faentina (IT), Dienvidkurzeme (LV)

Session 6 Welcoming cities

Royal Hall - Grand Hall (Plenary)

This session looks at how municipalities incorporate civic participation to address declining trust in democracy, drawing on the experiences of cities of Fundão et Utrecht. This session built on the achievement of the URBACT networks [Agents of Co-Existence](#), [WELDI](#) and [Plan Einstein Academy](#) based on human rights-based migrant integration. Together, these cases highlight the capacities needed in municipalities to use civic participation to address contested issues and re-build civic trust.

Guest cities:

Fundão (PT), Utrecht (NL), Gdansk (PL)

16:00 - 17:00

Local actions in sessions (continues)

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

Session 7 Social data management

Royal Hall - Gallery d'Avilla

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

Guest cities:

Cinisello Balsamo (IT), Sligo (IE), Klaipeda (LT), Altea (ES) and ANCT / [Cities of Equality Partnership](#)

Session 8 Urban planning

Eleftheria Square - Plenary

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

Guest cities:

Osona (ES), Cesena (IT), Harnosand (SE), [Urban Agenda for the EU Greening Cities Partnership](#)

Session 9 Greening urban economies

Eleftheria Square - Thematic sessions space

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

Guest cities:

Fingal (IE), Wroclaw (PL), Aviles (ES), Copenhagen (DK), Munich (DE)

Session 10 Gender equality

Royal Hall - Rooftop

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

Guest cities:

Satu Mare (RO), Szabolcs 05 (HU), Vila Nova De Famalicão (PT), Zagreb (HR)

Session 11 Youth

Royal Hall - Loredano

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

Guest cities:

Perugia (IT), Viladecans (ES), Lezhe (AL), Daugavpils (LV), Rethymno (EL), Skawina (PL), Parma (IT), Kavala (EL)

Session 12 Storytelling for citizens' engagement

Royal Hall - Grand Hall (Plenary)

Urban change is full of stories, but some of the most important are also the hardest to tell. Climate action, democratic participation, heritage and long-term transformation rarely follow a simple path. They involve uncertainty, disagreement, contested meanings and slow or sometimes invisible change—elements that are often difficult to communicate and therefore disappear from official narratives.

This interactive session begins with a simple question: when a story is difficult to tell, is the problem the story itself—or the way we structure and choose to tell it?

In a live conversation, four URBACT networks—[Agents of Co-Existence](#), [ARCHETHICS](#), [Hydro-Heritage Cities](#) and [Cities After Dark](#)—share challenging stories from their urban-change journeys. Each story begins with a different task: giving citizens agency, holding multiple meanings, making an overlooked place visible, or challenging a dominant narrative.

Through two connected rounds, the speakers first open their stories by introducing the protagonists, audiences and tensions. They then reveal the turning points, emerging changes and formats that helped their stories travel. Short audience polls and reflections will explore how narrative arc and visual, digital, participatory, audio and experiential formats can make complex urban change more meaningful, accessible and engaging. The session closes with a live musical contribution, demonstrating how stories can also move through sound, rhythm and shared experience.

Guest cities:

Kekava (LV), Sombor (RS), Vila Nova de Cerveira (PT), Nicosia (CY), Banja Luka (BA)

08:30 - 09:00

Royal Hall - Carrafa Room

Welcome coffee

09:00 - 09:30

Royal Hall - Grand Hall (Plenary)

Highlights and preview of the day

Start early and fresh with getting a good snapshot about what's yet to come.

09.45 - 10.45

Local actions in sessions (continues)

The thematic discovery of URBACT cities continues in these sessions, which build on the experience of Innovation Transfer Networks' partners.

Session 13 Night-time cities

Royal Hall - Grand Hall (Plenary)

A liveable city is anchored by its public spaces, the connective tissue for community well-being and social inclusion. True liveability means embracing the "24-hour city": recognizing that a city vitality and social fabric don't end at sundown. Central to this is safety, not only through policing, but through gender-responsive, inclusive urban design. This session will allow a dialogue amongst the URBACT networks of [2NITE](#), [CITISENSE](#) and [Cities after Dark](#), looking into how these shared environments remain vibrant, safe, and welcoming throughout the day and into the night.

Guest cities:

Turin (IT), Tallinn (EE), Pireaus (EL), Naples (IT), Riga (LV), Braga (PT)

Session 14 Culture and heritage

Royal Hall - Gallery d'Avilla

Culture and cultural heritage as a laboratory of participation and inclusion

The session aims at focusing on culture and cultural heritage as driving forces for the regeneration of territories and communities, strengthening participation, inclusion, wellbeing and sense of belonging. The experiences of cities from the URBACT networks, [ARCHETHICS](#), [Hydro-Heritage Cities](#) and [REinventing Culture in Urban Places](#), will show how focusing on heritage and culture can help communities rediscover their roots and history, while supporting the empowerment of individuals and promoting a more equitable and democratic inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups.

Guest cities:

Cesena (IT), Ujbuda (HU)

Session 15 Housing

Royal Hall - Rooftop

From transfer to transformation: how European cities adapt innovative housing solutions

Across Europe, cities are searching for solutions to the housing affordability crisis, many are looking beyond their borders for inspiration. Yet successful housing projects transfer requires comprehensive methodology and institutional learning. This session brings together two URBACT networks, [Cities4Co-Housing](#) and [EmPowerIngUs](#), that have shared their innovative housing solutions with cities across Europe. They will reflect on what happened when their ideas travelled and what recommendations emerge for cities seeking to transfer housing solutions beyond the URBACT framework.

Guest cities:

Brussels (BE), Getafe (ES)

Session 16 Talent economy

Royal Hall - Loredano

The battle for talent: why will people choose your city?

European cities no longer compete only for investment, companies or visitors. They compete for people: young people, families, STEAM talent, entrepreneurs, remote workers, newcomers, people hoping to return and residents deciding whether to stay. This session will challenge three URBACT networks, [Future STEAM Cities](#), [C4Talent](#), and [Residents of the Future](#) to highlight how talent is not only attracted by jobs, but also by opportunity, belonging, quality of life and future prospects.

Guest cities:

Aveiro (PT), Nyíregyháza (HU), Saint-Quentin (FR), Kolding (DK)

11.00 - 12.00

Royal Hall - Grand Hall (Plenary)

Future urban challenges and cities' capacities: how can EU best support cities in times of uncertainty and change?

In this session, the City Festival will highlight the **role of cities in achieving EU priorities** and discuss **ideas about future funding opportunities for cities** in the framework of the next EU financial programming period (2028-2034). We will look not only at the future URBACT, but also at other European initiatives and programmes like the European Urban Initiative (EUI) and ESPON that offer tailored support and knowledge for cities. The session will explore how the future programmes and their interplay could be designed, in order to make cities an accessible, coherent and appealing offer in times of uncertainty and change.

Speakers:

- **Elena Calistru**, President of the ECO section of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)
- **Tim Caulfield**, Director of European Urban Initiative (EUI)
- **Teofil Gherca**, URBACT Programme Director
- **Kieran McCarthy**, Member of the European Committee of the Regions, Member of Cork City Council (IE)
- **Marcos Ros Sempere**, Member of the European Parliament
- **Hugo Sobral**, Deputy Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission
- **Wiktor Szydarowski**, Director of ESPON EGTC
- **Karen Van Dantzig**, Dutch Urban Envoy

12:00 - 12:30

Royal Hall - Grand Hall (Plenary)

Happy ending: closing plenary

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

12:30 - 14:00

Lunch

Royal Hall - Carrafa Room

14:30 - 16:30

City visits

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

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

Participation is by prior registration only.

19:00 - 00:00

Old GSP Square

Nicosia After Dark Party

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

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

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